



What is the National Child Care Website (childcare.gov)?

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 calls for the development of a National Child Care Website (childcare.gov) to disseminate family-friendly, publicly available child care consumer education information for parents, providers, and the general public to help families access safe, high-quality child care services in their community. Childcare.gov will be devoted to parents and provide access to a location-based search for child care providers that meets parents' needs and supports the efforts of States and Territories to connect families to quality child care. Childcare.gov will rely on publicly available data that are provided by State and Territory child care agencies, CCDBG grantees, and partner agencies.

Decisions made by States and Territories now will determine costs and efficiencies for their websites for many years to come. Resources planned by the childcare.gov project will help States save planning and implementation dollars, drive users to their sites, and simplify the alignment and integration of data needed in State websites and the national childcare.gov site.

This summary provides an overview of the challenges that families face in searching for child care, how childcare.gov will help States and Territories to address these challenges, and how childcare.gov will help them meet their goals. Finally, this overview provides information about how to get more information, provide input, and become involved in the development of childcare.gov.

Why is it important to families?

Most families struggle to understand the range of child care options, assess the quality of care their child is receiving, and take action when the quality does not meet their expectations or threatens a child's development or well-being. From the research, we know that all families, but particularly low-income families, may experience the following:

- **Balancing multiple and often conflicting considerations** when selecting child care arrangements, e.g., cost, location, quality, work needs, special needs of children.
- Struggling to **understand the range of options** available to them.
- **Perceiving choices as limited**, considering few options, and making decisions quickly
- Relying on a **trusted network** for advice and recommendations.
- Having **limited awareness of supports and resources** available to them, including limited awareness of existing child care search tools and state-specific consumer education materials.



- **Challenges using existing websites** that are information packed but not user friendly.
- Be unaware of how to report problems when “things go wrong.”

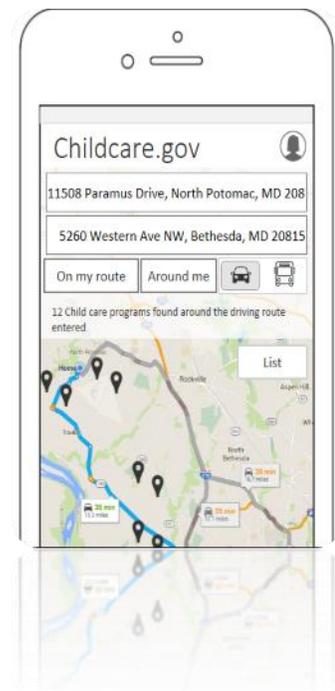
Based on focus groups conducted by the childcare.gov design team, families expressed support for childcare.gov and said that the website should be:

- **Mobile-friendly** and have a **simple and clean design** that allows searches near home or work.
- Provide information to help determine if the program is **healthy, safe, and affordable**.
- Provide information about a **program’s ability to meet specific needs**.
- Allow **comparisons across programs** and to **save searches**.
- Help **make connections with “real people”** and read what other parents say about a program.

How will it help support families?

Childcare.gov will include tools to help States and Territories build and expand their own consumer education websites at all levels of planning and readiness resulting in cost savings to States and Territories while improving services to families. Childcare.gov will:

- Help **raise parents’ awareness of state and local resources and supports**. Both the web and mobile designs include direct links to state-specific consumer materials about how to apply for child care assistance, information about the state’s quality rating and licensing systems, and additional family services in English and Spanish. It will also connect parents with child care resource and referral services.
- Include **robust search options** that will allow parents to search for child care on an interactive map by location or travel route, including public transportation. It will also allow parents to narrow searches based on specific needs, e.g., travel distance, quality rating, hours of operation, special needs, languages spoken, etc.
- Include **tools and supports to make searching for child care easier**, including the ability to make comparisons across programs and to save searches. It will also include a wizard to help families navigate the process of finding child care and finding financial assistance.
- Link with **social media** to allow sharing within a trusted network



How will childcare.gov help States and Territories?

- Provide States and Territories **with options to share information** with childcare.gov via direct links to their websites, comma separated values (CSV) data files, or application programming interfaces

(APIs). States will have access to various tools and guidance on how to share data from multiple data systems to compile the resource information for their state child care consumer education websites.

- Provide an **open-source template for a consumer education website** with web service capabilities that can save precious technology staff time and other resources. Using the resources from childcare.gov may drive traffic to local state and territory sites.
- Provide state and territory technical staff, staff working on consumer education websites, and local stakeholders who contribute to the State and Territories' consumer education and provider information **opportunities to engage directly with childcare.gov technical staff** reducing the burden of knowledge acquisition and information sharing on the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Administrator.
- Provide **opportunity for additional support as a design testing and beta release site** State or Territory.
- Provide state and territory lead agencies and partners with access to **data dashboards and analytics** including child care search preferences, the supply of child care programs, and gaps between parent preferences and local supply in regions of the State or Territory.

What is coming next?

Successful implementation of childcare.gov by October 2017 will require support for CCDBG grantees including CCDF Administrators, their database managers and web designers working together to set up state consumer education requirements. These leaders can expect to see and hear more about childcare.gov through a number of documents and engagement opportunities over the coming weeks and continuing into the next year of website development. Here are some of the ways you can find out more about childcare.gov and how to provide input, ask questions, and receive information and support.

- Webinars: The Office of Child Care (OCC) will host a series of webinars for CCDF Administrators, Data and Web Designers, Technical Assistance Centers, Federal Staff, and Stakeholders.
 - ◆ Join us on August 25th from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. ET. Register using the link below.
https://ccssn.adobeconnect.com/childcaregov_aug25/event/registration.html
- Opportunities for Input and Technical Assistance in September 2016:
 - ◆ Join us at the State and Territory Administrators Meeting (STAM) September 27—29 in Alexandria, VA.
 - ◆ Come for Coffee and find out more about technical assistance for state and territory teams who participate in the design testing and beta releases through the next year.
- Other Ways to Stay Connected to Childcare.gov
 - ◆ Subscribe to **Updates from Childcare.gov** to receive the most recent information about the development of the National Child Care Website twice per month.
 - ◆ **Childcare.gov Information Exchange** will begin August 31 from 2:00—4:00 p.m.ET and continue weekly, providing an opportunity to discuss state and territory specific issues with the design team. Other hours are available by appointment.

- ♦ **Childcare.gov Email:** Use askchildcaregov@icfi.com to ask questions about the technology or provide input about childcare.gov.

Additional Questions?

Additional information and related resources are available on OCC's website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/national-website-and-hotline-project>.

For any questions or comments related to childcare.gov, please contact askchildcaregov@icfi.com.

This document was developed with funds from Contract # HHSP233201500071I, Order # HHSP23337006T for the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission. askchildcaregov@icfi.com

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