



Data Integration and Data Governance Structures That Support Consumer Education Websites: Questions and Answers from the “Ask Me Anything” Webinar

This document answers common state and territory questions about Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) consumer education website requirements and innovative practices for website design. A strong understanding of these requirements and practices will help you provide high-quality consumer education information to families.

This document was prepared in response to questions raised by webinar participants who attended the October 10, 2019, webinar [“Data Integration and Data Governance Structures That Support Consumer Education Websites”](#) and the October 24, 2019, webinar [“Ask Me Anything: Data Integration and Data Governance Structures That Support Consumer Education Websites.”](#) Experts from ICF’s Information Technology team helped the [Child Care State Capacity Building Center](#) (SCBC) prepare this document.

How Data Support an Effective Child Care Search Tool

What methods can be used to understand what users are looking for in a child care search? States may think certain information presented in a certain way would be useful for users. However, users may have completely different thoughts about what may be helpful. In the state child care search example provided in this webinar, how did states connect with the public to gain insight on what the public actually wanted, and what would actually be useful to them in a child care search?

Additional Questions?

If you have questions about whether your planned website enhancements meet CCDF requirements, please consult with your [Office of Child Care regional office](#) for guidance.

If you would like additional technical assistance on developing and enhancing your consumer education website, contact the State Capacity Building Center (CapacityBuildingCenter@icf.com).

- ◆ Based on SCBC’s work with states and existing research on child care decision-making and user experience design, states are likely to use multiple methods to collect information from users to guide web development, including focus groups, client journey mapping, surveys, existing research on child care decision-making, and data analysis of website analytics.

- ◆ Using multiple user feedback methods is good practice because it allows development teams to evaluate all findings. This helps reduce biases that may come from interpreting findings from a single source. Research questions typically focus on identifying current workflows, the needs of families, pain points in accessing information and services, and the goals and motivations of a specific audience.
- ◆ In planning this work, states should clearly define what they want to learn about a specific audience segment before selecting research methods.
- ◆ Consider conducting user research to find out what other aspects of a child care search might be helpful for the families in your state or territory. SCBC’s [Improving Consumer Education Websites with User Research](#) (2019) can help you determine which method might work best for collecting information from families.

What features do family-friendly child care searches include?

- ◆ Here are some strategies to make your child care search more family friendly:
 - Make your child care search filters more dynamic so that families can choose more than one item in their search criteria list. For example, some families may need to search for both infant *and* school-age care. Offering the option to search for more than one feature at a time will make your search more user friendly by better supporting families’ search needs. Minnesota’s consumer education website, [ParentAware.org](#) (n.d.), offers this option.
 - In addition to including program type as a filter, allow families to search for care by the age group served. This will let them find all programs or providers that may serve school-age children. New Mexico offers this option on its consumer education website through its [Child Care Search](#) (n.d.).
 - Include a map in your search results, so families can see where the providers are located.
 - In child care search results, clearly indicate quality level or star rating for each provider, so families can immediately see the quality ratings of programs and providers in their search results.
 - Incorporate inspection reports, substantiated complaints, and corrective actions directly into the provider-detail page of the search results, so families can learn about a program or provider’s record on meeting health and safety requirements.
 - Include additional care attributes in your search so that families can search for their specific care needs. For example, the [Oklahoma Child Care Locator](#) (2017) includes the following elements:
 - **Transportation:** Families with school-age children have the option to search for programs and providers that offer transportation to and from their child’s school.
 - **Summer camp services:** Families can limit their child care search to programs and providers that offer summer camp.
 - **Expanded schedule information:** Families can indicate whether they need child care during specific times of the year, such as summer, year round, school vacation, school year only, and so on. Including this kind of scheduling information offers families a more customized search experience.
 - **Subsidies:** Families can search for providers and programs that accept subsidies.
 - **Note:** Incorporating these additional search filters into your child care search tool may mean that you need to collect and maintain additional data from programs to ensure continued accuracy.
- ◆ Once you enhance your child care search or consumer education website, promote your efforts! Make sure you have a plan to inform your stakeholders and families. Write a feature article for your monthly newsletter or place a promotional blurb on email communications. Be sure to highlight enhancements at statewide meetings with stakeholders and use social media to promote your new resources. You can learn more about

using social media to promote your consumer education website during the [“Using Social Media to Enhance Your Web Presence”](#) webinar on Thursday, November 14, 2019.

- ◆ After you add a resource or enhance a feature on your consumer education website and promote your efforts, use web analytics to track web traffic. Review user data to refine your communication efforts and help drive traffic to your website. SCBC’s [“Using Data to Inform Your Website”](#) (2019) webinar explores how to use tools such as Google Analytics to understand how consumers use your website and social media platforms. It also covers how to interpret and act upon these data to improve user experience on your consumer education website. This webinar also explores search engine optimization techniques to help your website get recognized when families are searching for consumer education resources online. Additionally, SCBC’s [Guide for Measuring Web Traffic and Engagement](#) (2019) and [Guide for Increasing Search Engine Optimization](#) (2019) provide more detailed guidance.

Some child care searches include an “on my route” search feature, which allows users to search for care on their way home, to work, or to another location. For additional Google assisted mapping, our state found significant “per search” costs. Are there any resources you can share about adding these features to our site, without us incurring additional (or significant) costs?

- ◆ The cost of providing route-based search options can vary significantly depending on the features you need and your website’s content management system. In exploring the addition of a route-based search option, you should identify user needs up front and identify a range of viable options, including alternatives to a route-based search. Then, you should identify options that will meet user needs within a fixed budget while weighing the tradeoffs for different options.
- ◆ You should also establish a clear set of requirements up front and conduct research to see which existing tools or modules might fit within your website’s content management system. Development teams can also explore application program interfaces (API) that may be available to maximize the use of existing geospatial information from Google or other sources.
- ◆ **Note:** To use “on my route” and other mapping features in your search tool, you must format your data for geographic information systems. Be sure to consult the geocoding tool you will be using to ensure your program-address data is properly formatted to support this feature.

Data Governance and Data Integration

What exactly is data governance, and how does it relate to enhancing my consumer education website?

- ◆ Data governance is the means by which organizations or groups of organizations make decisions about their collective information assets. It works as both an organizational process and a structure. Data governance establishes responsibility for data and allows agency staff and data partners to collaboratively and continuously improve data quality through the systematic creation and enforcement of policies, roles, responsibilities, and procedures.
- ◆ Data governance is essential to successfully planning, implementing, and using a child care consumer education search tool because it ensures that those who use and contribute to the data are represented in the decision-making process at both the strategic and implementation levels. When creating a new system that requires the collaboration of organizations that may not have worked together before, you must set clear roles, responsibilities, and processes for accomplishing the work. In addition, integrating data from multiple sources requires ongoing decisions about how data will be defined, matched, stored, updated, reported, and protected. A solid data governance plan allows these decisions to be made consistently and with input and buy-in from all partners.
- ◆ Data governance is relevant to consumer education websites for two key components: (1) the child care search tool and (2) the aggregate reporting of deaths, serious injuries, and substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in child care settings. In both instances, several different agencies may collect the data needed to support the component.

- ◆ You can improve the functionality of a consumer education website’s child care search by combining data from several early childhood data sources. For the child care search, information on quality rating as well as licensing and inspection reports may be maintained by the agency responsible for licensing; information for license-exempt school-age and preschool programs may be maintained by departments of public health or education; finally, information on specific aspects of a program may be maintained by the child care resource and referral agency.
- ◆ For the aggregate data reporting requirement, information on deaths and serious injuries in child care may be collected by the child care licensing agency, whereas data on substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect will be collected by the agency responsible for child protection.

What is data integration?

- ◆ Data integration is simply the process by which you combine (or integrate) data from different sources in a way that gives users a unified view of the data.
- ◆ Once you have established a formal data governance process for maintaining and sharing data, your team will need to determine how to integrate data from different agencies. The integrated data can then support your enhanced child care search tool.

For states that have more robust search tools, how do they go about identifying and integrating the data to support it?

- ◆ Bring together stakeholders who can benefit from the new search tool as well as those who might benefit from the development of a comprehensive child care dataset. Bring them together early, keep them engaged on an ongoing basis, and work with them collaboratively to establish a vision for the online child care search tool.
- ◆ Leverage their voices to help build the case for the time and investment required to build the enhanced child care search tool and work on the related data integration. The website’s vision should drive the data needs and help identify the data required to fulfill this vision and identify data gaps.
- ◆ You can improve a consumer education website’s search functionality by combining data from several early childhood data sources.
- ◆ Data integration succeeds with cross-agency collaboration. Data for a robust website are likely to come from multiple systems, like a child care licensing system, child care resource and referral system, quality rating and improvement system, and school-based data systems for preschool and school-age programs.
- ◆ Develop a data dictionary that establishes a common set of definitions for required data as well as priorities for implementation. Prepare to move forward incrementally when implementing the vision, using data that is required and easily accessible at first and expanding the data available from other websites over time.

SCBC Resources

- ◆ [Guide for Increasing Search Engine Optimization](#) (2019): This guide presents tools and resources you can use to make sure search engines can easily locate content that is relevant to users’ needs.
- ◆ [Guide for Measuring Web Traffic and Engagement](#) (2019): This guide offers best practices, strategies, and guidance for states and territories on the importance of digital analytics to information technology teams and web or digital marketing vendors, and it includes approaches that experts from those types of teams can use.
- ◆ [Designing Websites That Are Accessible for All Families](#) (2019): This guide offers best practices, strategies, and examples for state and territory staff members to consider as they work to ensure that their consumer education websites are accessible for people with disabilities.



- ◆ [“Consumer Education Webinar Series”](#) (2019): This web page shares resources from each national webinar and “Ask Me Anything” session.

Other Resources

- ◆ Berkeley Library, University of California. (2019). GIS (geographic information systems): Geocoding [Web page]. Retrieved from <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/gis/geocoding>
- ◆ Data Quality Campaign. (2018). *Roadmap for cross-agency data governance: Key focus areas to ensure quality implementation* [Guide]. Retrieved from <https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/roadmap-cross-agency-data-governance/>
- ◆ Early Childhood Data Collaborative. (2018). *Improving the lives of young children through data: Lessons learned from three early care and education data integration projects* [Brief]. Retrieved from https://www.ecedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ECDC_KIDSCOUNT_ECIDS_Report..pdf
- ◆ Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *INQUIRE data toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/inquire-data-toolkit>
- ◆ Privacy Technical Assistance Center, U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *Data governance and stewardship* [Brief, revised August 2015]. Retrieved from https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/Data_Governance_and_Stewardship_0.pdf
- ◆ Privacy Technical Assistance Center, U.S. Department of Education. (2011). Data governance checklist [Revised June 2015]. Retrieved from https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/Data%20Governance%20Checklist_0.pdf

The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

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