



Including School-Age Features in Your Consumer Education Website: 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 September 12, 2019, webinar [“Don’t Forget about School-Age Child Care in Your Consumer Education Website”](#) and the September 26, 2019, webinar [“Ask Me Anything: Don’t Forget about School-Age Child Care in Your Consumer Education Website.”](#) Experts from the National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (NCASE) helped the [Child Care State Capacity Building Center](#) (SCBC) prepare this document.

School-Age Features and Resources

Why is it important to include school-age features on the consumer education website?

- ◆ In fiscal year 2016, nearly half of all children served through CCDF subsidies were school-age children, according to NCASE’s [State School-Age Data Profiles Database](#) (2018). On average, subsidies serve over 600,000 school-age children each month. Parents of school-age children seek care for afterschool hours during the school year, and care during the summer months, when school is not in session. School-age families can have more complicated care needs than those looking for full-day, year-round infant, toddler, and preschool care because it often requires a mix of part-time and full-time care, depending on the time of year.

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).



- ◆ A large proportion of children who are served through subsidies are school-age, suggesting there is significant demand for school-age care. As such, many families who access consumer education websites will be searching for care that serves this age group. This means that including school-age-friendly elements on your consumer education website is important for accommodating all segments of your target audience. In addition, some families will be searching for care for children of different ages, whose needs may vary. If families can use your consumer education website to easily search for care that meets their specific needs and to quickly find helpful resources, they will likely continue to use your site as a resource and share their positive experience with other families.
- ◆ We also know that 71 percent of school-age children served through subsidies are served in child care centers, while one-quarter are served in family child care homes, according to NCASE’s [State School-Age Data Profiles Database](#) (2018). A very small percentage of school-age children are served in their own home. These numbers vary from state to state, with some states serving much higher percentages of school-age children in family child care homes.

How can I enhance our child care search feature to include more elements that are relevant to school-age families?

- ◆ Here are some strategies to make your child care search more school-age 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 the search needs of families. 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 additional school-age-friendly care attributes in your search so that families can search for their specific school-age care needs. The [Oklahoma Child Care Locator](#) (2017) includes the following elements:
 - **Transportation:** Families have the option to indicate whether children need transportation to and from their school.
 - **Summer camp services:** Families can limit their child care search to programs that offer summer camp.
 - **Expanded schedule information:** Families can indicate whether they need child care during specific times of the year, such as school year only, year round, summer care, school vacation care, and so on. Including this kind of scheduling information offers families a more customized search experience.
 - **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.
- ◆ Consider conducting user research to find out which aspects of a child care search might be helpful for 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.
- ◆ Once you enhance your consumer education website with school-age features, 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.

What resources should we include for school-age families on the consumer education website?

- ◆ There are many reputable resources to help families of school-age children. A low-cost, low-effort strategy for enhancing your consumer education website is adding or expanding a school-age resource section where you post useful links or resources that you create. By posting school-age friendly resources on your consumer education website, you enhance user experience for your school-age family audience by organizing a variety of resources in one place.
- ◆ It may be helpful to post resources that fall under the following categories:
 - **Choosing care resources**
 - What your school-age care options are
 - How you should select a quality school-age program
 - What your school-age summer care options are
 - What you should look for in quality summer care
 - **Child development best practice resources**
 - School-age developmental milestones and child development information
 - Summer-learning-loss information
 - Reading resources
 - Family activities
 - Games that promote learning
- ◆ You can leverage existing resources; there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Simply include links to the following reputable resources to expand your resource inventory:
 - [ChildCare.gov](#) (n.d.): This website has information on school-age care that states and territories can share on their own websites. They can use information directly from any portion of the ChildCare.gov website, so they do not have to spend time creating content.
 - [“CDC’s Developmental Milestones”](#) (2019): This web page has information on developmental milestones during the school-age years (ages 6–14).
 - [NCASE Resource Library](#) (n.d.): This collection has a number of resources about consumer education, quality, and other issues that pertain to school-age child care. Most of the resources in the library are geared toward child care programs or state-level administrators and partners, but some resources speak



directly to parents. NCASE’s [School-Age Consumer Education Toolkit](#) (2018) also provides additional resources.

How can I leverage partnerships to support these school-age friendly enhancements?

- ◆ Partners can contribute to data sharing, which would support school-age enhancements to your child care search. For instance, child care resource and referral agencies may collect information about more specific programming attributes (for example, transportation provided, schools served). Other state departments may have information on license-exempt summer camps. If you can collaborate with that agency and determine how to share these data, you may be able to expand your search database to include this type of care.
- ◆ Afterschool networks can help promote your school-age friendly consumer education website, child care search, and other resources via social media or other communication efforts.
- ◆ You can partner with stakeholders to develop targeted resources related to school-age care (for example, “Summer Care: What Are Your Options?” or “Family Reading Lists”). Then, cross-promote these resources on the stakeholders’ website and your own consumer education page.

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment Resources

- ◆ [NCASE Resource Library](#) (n.d.): This resource library offers tools, profiles, and information that are relevant to school-age child care. It includes the [State School-Age Data Profiles Database](#) (2018), which provides national, state, and territory data profiles with information about school-age children served through CCDF.
- ◆ [School Age Consumer Education Toolkit](#) (2018): This toolkit includes consumer education information on school-age children’s physical, social, and emotional health and development. It shares resources, state examples, and engagement efforts with parents and families. In addition, this toolkit features a video that shows the importance of afterschool and summer care for families and includes data and details about the experiences of children who are served through federal subsidies.

SCBC Resources

- ◆ [“Consumer Education Webinar Series”](#) (2019): This web page shares resources from each national webinar and “Ask Me Anything” session.
- ◆ [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.
- ◆ [Improving Consumer Education Websites with User Research](#) (2019): This guide summarizes key methods that are widely applied in user-experience research and design. It also highlights best practices and key considerations in conducting user research to help states and territories enhance their consumer education websites.



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