



# National Consumer Education Resources to Help States and Preschool Development Grant Grantees: 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 from webinar participants who attended the June 13, 2019, webinar [“National Consumer Education Resources to Help State and Preschool Development Grant Grantees.”](#)

Experts from the [National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement \(NCPFCE\)](#), [National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment \(NCASE\)](#), and the [Preschool Development Grant B-5 \(PDG\)](#) helped the [State Capacity Building Center](#) prepare this document.

## 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](mailto:CapacityBuildingCenter@icf.com)).

## Resources for Families and Providers

**It can be difficult for parents to find child care. What information or resources are available to help guide families when they can't find child care?**

- ◆ It is frustrating for parents when they can't find child care that meets their needs. It can also be difficult to explain why this happens and to provide information and resources to help parents through this time. [ChildCare.gov](http://ChildCare.gov) addresses this issue by providing guidance to families, such as considering different child care settings, reaching out to the local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency for assistance, and expanding their child care search radius to see more options. States and territories can use this



[ChildCare.gov](http://ChildCare.gov) information on their own websites or in written materials to help families who are facing this challenge.

### How do we support providers with consumer education and engagement information? Do you have resources that providers can use?

- ◆ There are many ways to support child care providers with consumer education and engagement information. Child care providers are often busy and may not have time to create their own materials. Here are some ideas that you can use in your state or territory to support child care providers:
  - Create sample handouts for providers to use with families to communicate about quality.
  - Create social media posts for providers to use.
  - If your state or territory has a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), create posters or banners so providers can advertise their level on their door or post a sign in the yard. This helps create awareness about quality and can help parents make their child care decisions.
- ◆ The [School-Age Consumer Education Toolkit](#) from NCASE provides parent and family engagement resources along with state examples.

### What type of consumer education information is available to families when they are looking for child care for different age groups?

- ◆ The state and territory consumer education website should have information for families on how to search for child care for different age groups. [ChildCare.gov](http://ChildCare.gov) can help families find their states' consumer education websites and can link them directly to their states' child care search pages. Some state and territory searches on the consumer education websites may include filters for searching by age. If your state or territory does not already do this, consider adding this search feature to help enhance your zip-code based child care search.
- ◆ Many state child care search tools include school-age child care. If your state child care search does not include school-age programs or does not include the full range of school-age program available in your state, encourage the family to contact the local CCR&R agency, YMCA, or Boys and Girls Club for information on school-age child care. Additionally, these programs often have information on how families may use CCDF subsidies to pay for care.

## Resources for Enhancing Consumer Education Websites

### How can we ensure that the consumer education information, such as the website, social media, and other written material, is written in plain language? Is there a certain readability level that states and territories should use in their consumer education materials?

- ◆ One resource that states and territories can use for plain language guidance is [plainlanguage.gov](http://plainlanguage.gov). This website provides guidelines, examples, and free online training for states and territories to use. This site provides information that will help you write clearly. In short, plain language is about being concise and clear—and writing as you would speak. Using plain language on your consumer education website will allow stakeholders to find the information they're looking for and then be able to use what they find.
- ◆ You can also find plain language tips throughout NCPFCE's [Foundations for Quality: A Consumer Education and Engagement Series](#), specifically the [Consumer Education Websites: A Guide to Creating a Family-Friendly Experience](#) and [Consumer Engagement: Using Social Media to Engage Families](#) resources. These tips are based on the federal plain language guidelines and are tailored to include specific early childhood and school-age child care examples. In these guides, you can also find tips to enhance readability and learn about how writing content at certain reading levels can increase understanding.



- ◆ An eighth-grade reading level is widely accepted as an appropriate target for information meant for the general public. For easier reading, aim for a sixth-grade level when developing content for parents.
- ◆ The Flesch-Kincaid readability test can be useful to measure the grade-level of your content. You may find this readability test in your word processing software. You can also use plain language strategies to help lower the reading level. For example, try shorter sentences and words with fewer syllables.
- ◆ Some states and territories may have guidance or regulations on which reading level should be used in material that is presented to the public. Check your state or territory agency guidelines before you create consumer education materials to make sure you are following the appropriate guidelines.

### **How do we know if families are able to find and use the information on our consumer education website? How could we improve or enhance this?**

- ◆ One way to understand how families use your consumer education website is to conduct user research and testing of the content on the website. User research seeks to understand users’ expectations, behaviors, needs, and motivations when they engage with products like consumer education websites. User-centered approaches also help increase satisfaction with the website.
- ◆ User testing evaluates how stakeholder groups interact with a website and helps identify and verify gaps in how a design meets their needs. User testing is key to successful product development and can help a state or territory determine if its consumer education website is helping stakeholders accomplish tasks, answer questions, and find the information they are looking for. It can also help states and territories figure out if their websites are helping them meet their defined consumer education goals.
- ◆ Two upcoming webinars hosted by the State Capacity Building Center will offer more information on this topic:
  - [Using Data to Inform Your Website](#) will highlight how states and territories can use web engagement tools and data to understand how consumers use their website. The webinar will be offered on June 11, 2019.
  - [Top 10 Actions to Improve Website Content and Design](#) will highlight how to use different user research techniques to help improve content and the website design. The webinar, presented in partnership with NCPFCE, is scheduled for August 8, 2019.
- ◆ Inviting families’ input early in the development process and creating opportunities for ongoing engagement will help ensure you include information families value on your consumer education website. It’s also helpful to get input from stakeholders who represent all of the families you are trying to reach. NCPFCE’s [Consumer Engagement: Strategies for Engaging Families](#) resource offers tips, strategies, and examples you can use to get feedback from families and other stakeholders—everything from surveys, focus groups, data walks, and parent cafes.

### **What elements of school-age child care could states and territories incorporate into their consumer education websites?**

- ◆ School-age child care is critical for many families and supported significantly by CCDF funds. According to recent data, 45 percent of all children served through CCDF subsidies are school-age. As such, it is important to integrate and enhance information about school-age child care on consumer education websites to address the needs of families with school-age children. The following are ways that states and territories can enhance information about school-age child care on their consumer education websites:
  - Some state and territory child care searches include a filter for searching for child care by child age. If your state or territory doesn’t already do this, consider adding this to help enhance your zip-code search. Including an age filter may broaden the child care options for families with school-age children. Searching by program type only, such as “school-age programs,” might not include family child care providers, who often serve school-age children.



- Consumer education websites often include a description of the types of child care options available. Consider including information about the age ranges that child care providers and programs serve in this description.
- Consider including information about available transportation to and from school for school-year afterschool programs.
- Consider including links to state afterschool networks.

**Consumer education websites can serve families with different needs. What are some best practices and ways in which the consumer education website can offer information about developmental screening for children, what to look for in child care for different age groups, inclusion practices, and ways to address summer learning loss?**

- ◆ NCPFCE recently convened a group of parents to discuss consumer education and consumer education websites. One of the messages that emerged from this group was how much they appreciated welcoming messages that conveyed appreciation for their important roles as their children’s first and most important teachers. Regardless of their children’s ages, prominent, strengths-based messages can go a long way toward making families feel welcome and excited about exploring website content. For example, “You are the expert on your child and family. Look for a child care provider who asks for and respects your input.” *Consumer Education Websites: A [Guide to Creating a Family-Friendly Experience](#)* resource has many more examples of strengths-based key messages.
- ◆ States and territories do not have to create new resources to provide information on these topics. If you do not have a resource to share, this is an opportunity for you to build partnerships with other state agencies, advocacy groups, foundations, and other stakeholders that may have already developed resources or have information they can share on these topics. The consumer education website can be a platform for you to build and enhance these partnerships. The following are resources and ideas you can use to offer various key information to families on the consumer education website.
  - **Developmental screening information.** ChildCare.gov provides information on [child health and development](#) that states and territories can use on their websites or in printed materials. In addition, ChildCare.gov links to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, which has excellent resources on [developmental milestones](#) for young children.
  - **Parenting education and support:** ChildCare.gov also provides information on parents support and education, by providing a variety of resources on [child development](#), including understanding your child’s health and development, addressing challenging behavior, partnering with your child care provider, and connecting with your community. Additionally, the CDC website provides [positive parenting tips](#) available for parents with children of all ages (0-17 years).
  - **Choosing quality child care.** Searching for and selecting child care can be an overwhelming process for parents. ChildCare.gov offers [checklists](#) and other resources that families may find helpful as they start the process of searching for and selecting child care. States and territories can leverage these resources by linking to them on their consumer education websites. These resources can help families better understand their child care options and what they should look for when choosing high-quality child care.
  - **Inclusion.** ChildCare.gov provides a helpful overview of the range of [services available for children with disabilities](#), as well as specific state and territory-based information and links. Local CCR&R agencies may also be able to connect families with organizations that provide additional support. Some CCR&R agencies have inclusion specialists on staff who may have more information and resources for families who have questions about inclusive care.
  - **Addressing summer learning loss.** [The summer learning tipsheets](#) from NCASE address summer learning loss and present ways that providers and parents can support school-age children throughout the summer to offset this challenge.



### How can we collaborate with the PDG B-5 grantees when enhancing our consumer education websites?

- ◆ The [PDG B-5 grants](#) present an opportunity for states and territories to enhance their consumer education and engagement information. Some states and territories are working to create enhanced consumer information through a website, social media, or through other channels. Partnering with the PDG B-5 grantee in your state or territory can help enhance and not duplicate information on the consumer education website.
- ◆ One priority of the PDG B-5 grants addresses how to maximize parental choice and knowledge about the state’s and territory’s mixed-delivery system of early childhood education program providers. Think about how the consumer education website can help contribute to that effort and how it might be able to expand on content to include additional information that is important to families in your state or territory.

### What resources are available to help us improve our consumer education and engagement efforts?

There are resources included in the [National Consumer Education Resources to Help State and Preschool Development Grant Grantees](#) webinar that took place on June 13, 2019 and referenced throughout this document. The following is the annotated version.

## SCBC Resources

- ◆ [Consumer Education Webinar Series](#) (2019): This website provides recorded webinars and resource guides to support states and territories consumer education efforts.
- ◆ [Designing Websites that are Accessible to All Families](#) (2019): This guide offers best practices, strategies, and examples for state and territory staff to consider as they work to ensure their consumer education websites are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- ◆ [Template for Displaying Serious Injuries, Deaths, and Instances of Substantiated Cases of Child Abuse in Child Care](#) (2019): This guide describes the requirements for posting aggregate data and provides an example of how states and territories can display the aggregate number of serious injuries, deaths, and instances of substantiated abuse in child care on their consumer education websites to meet CCDF regulations.
- ◆ [Best Practices for Consumer Education Websites: Translation](#) (2019): This resource guide offers best practices, strategies, and examples for states and territories to consider as they work to provide translated materials on their consumer education websites.
- ◆ Additional resources on user research, web engagement, search engine optimization, data governance, social media, and branding of consumer education websites will be posted on the [Consumer Education Webinar Series](#) home page throughout 2019.

## NCASE Resources

- ◆ [School-Age Consumer Education Toolkit](#) (2018): This resource shares consumer education information, including state examples and resources, on the physical, social, and emotional health and development of school-age children and engagement efforts with their parents and families. In addition, the toolkit features a video that shows the importance of afterschool and summer care for families with data and details about the experiences of children served through federal subsidies.
- ◆ [Summer Learning and Enrichment: Tips for School-Age Care Providers](#) (2019): This resource offers child care providers with ideas of things to think about before, during, and at the end of summer. Specific suggestions involve creating a plan for the summer months, building a relationship with families, engaging children in activities to help prevent the summer slide, and keeping children healthy and active.



- ◆ [Summer Learning Fun: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#) (2019): This resource gives parents and caregivers concrete ideas on how to engage their children in fun, meaningful learning activities throughout the summer. This concise, user-friendly tipsheet includes specific ideas for parents to promote reading and math learning, create opportunities for learning and staying active, and talk with their children, their children’s teachers, and their summertime child care provider to set them up for success. Summertime child care providers can share this tipsheet with families to further support summer learning and enrichment experiences for the children they serve.
- ◆ [Summer Programs and the Child Care and Development Fund](#) (2018): This FAQ and resource list is designed to offer an introduction of CCDF to summer program providers that serve children from low-income families and may be interested in serving families who use child care subsidies.

## NCPFCE Resources

- ◆ [Foundation for Quality: A Consumer Education and Engagement Series](#): The Foundations for Quality series is a collection of resources designed to help states, territories, and tribes and others responsible for consumer education and engagement in developing and implementing effective, family friendly consumer education and engagement strategies. It includes the following resources:
  - [Consumer Engagement: Orientation for Early Childhood and School-Age Care Professionals](#) (2018)
  - [Consumer Education Websites: A Guide to Creating a Family-Friendly Experience](#) (2018)
  - [Consumer Education Websites: Creating a Family-Friendly Experience Assessment Tool](#) (n.d.)
  - [Consumer Education: Using Social Media to Engage Families](#) (2018)
  - [Consumer Engagement: Strategies for Engaging Families](#) (2018)

## Additional Resources

- ◆ [Center for Plain Language](#)
- ◆ [Consumer Education resource page](#)
- ◆ [Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System website](https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/)<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/>
- ◆ Plain Language Action and Information Network, General Services Administration. (2011). *Federal plain language guidelines*. Retrieved from <https://plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/>
- ◆ Plain Language Action and Information Network, General Services Administration. (n.d.). *Plain language guidelines: Follow web standards*. Retrieved from <https://plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/web/>

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