



Licensing Information Posted on the Internet

Ensuring the health and safety of children in child care is a top priority for the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (OCC). In *Pathways and Partnerships for Child Care Excellence* (2010), OCC states:

Health and safety is the foundation of quality in child care. It is the paramount concern of every parent. Under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, every State must operate a system of child care licensing, but in many States, those standards are not high enough to ensure the health and safety of children, they do not apply to many settings in which young children are cared for, and monitoring to ensure compliance with standards is not adequate. OCC is stepping up our work with States, Territories, and Tribes to strengthen standards to ensure safety, health, and well-being, while supporting child care providers to meet standards.

OCC has made a commitment to work with States to strengthen licensing systems. These systems, which include child care licensing regulations and monitoring and enforcement policies, help provide a baseline of protection for the health and safety of children in out-of-home care. Licensing helps prevent various forms of harm to children—risks from the spread of disease, fire and other building safety hazards, injury, and developmental impairment from the lack of healthy relationships with adults, adequate supervision, and/or developmentally appropriate activities.

In support of OCC's commitment to strong licensing systems, the National Center of Child Care Quality Improvement has developed a series of issue briefs to explore state trends in licensing policies and regulations. The purpose of this paper is to assist state licensing and child care administrators in assessing and enhancing the information they provide to families on the internet. Almost all States maintain a Web site that allows consumers to search for child care providers using criteria such as name of a provider, provider type, geographic location, types of care provided, and quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) level. Some States allow for searches based on whether a provider accepts state child care subsidy payments. Resources for evaluating and choosing child care such as checklists or links to child care resource and referral agencies are also commonly provided.

Access to information about a provider's licensed status and the findings from an onsite monitoring visit can provide critical information about the safety and quality of care. Some States post full licensing inspection reports, while others post only information about rule violations, complaints, and enforcement actions taken against facilities. Many Web sites include statements disclaiming responsibility or liability for use of the information or for any data inaccuracies.

In the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) Child Care Licensing Programs and Policies Survey for 2011, State licensing agencies were asked if licensing inspection reports were available on the Internet for parent and public access. The data show that:

- Sixteen States post the full inspection report;
- Thirteen States post a summary of the report;
- Thirteen States plan to post inspection reports; and

- Eight States do not post reports.

Providers want assurance of fairness and consistency regarding information on the Internet that may affect their business. In some States, providers are given an opportunity to first review the posting or publicly respond when complaints or deficiencies are posted. Another common question is whether to post unconfirmed complaints. In the NARA Child Care Licensing Programs and Policies Survey for 2011, 8 States reported posting all complaints while 19 States included only complaints that had been substantiated.

What Happens When Child Care Inspections and Complaints Are Made Available on the Internet? (2004), by Ann Witte and Magaly Queralt, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, presents evidence from Broward County, FL, that placing child care inspection and complaint reports on the Internet in a readily available and accessible format, when combined with media coverage of its availability, is associated with changes in child care inspectors' behavior and the quality of care available in a community. It suggests that displaying the inspectors' names and contact information prominently on the first page of the report contributes to the change in behavior. Data indicate that after reports were made available online inspectors performed more inspections and gave more mixed reviews to centers, (i.e., centers were more likely to receive fines or violation notices sometimes rather than always or never). The quality of care subsidized children received increased significantly after inspection and complaint reports were placed on the Internet. The full report is available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w10227.pdf>.

The following provides details about some of the States that post licensing information about child care providers on the Internet for parents to search.¹

State Web Sites

- The **Arizona** Department of Health Services provides program information, licensing survey dates, citations, date corrected, and any enforcement actions.
<http://www.azcarecheck.com>
- The **Arkansas** Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education provides program information, including QRIS rating, visit dates, violations cited, and substantiated complaints.
<https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dccece/cclas/FacilitySearch.aspx>
- The **Colorado** Department of Human Services allows a search using a map of facility locations or a list of providers. Users can save a program's file and compare it against other programs' summary sheets. Information includes a summary of a facility's licensing history, along with lists of inspection dates and the reason for the visit; complaints filed against a facility and findings; child abuse investigations and followup; adverse licensing actions; and critical incidents with a severity rating. Providers are asked to view their own records, and there is a process through which they can have information that should not be made public expunged.
<http://www.colorado.gov/apps/cdhs/childcare/lookup/index.jsf>
- The **Florida** Department for Children and Families provides program information, including Gold Star Accreditation; type of inspection and dates, including arrival and departure times; a copy of the inspection checklist; and substantiated complaints.
<http://204.90.20.58/childcare/provider/providersearch.aspx>

¹ The Office of Child Care's National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement does not endorse any non-Federal practice, organization, publication, or resource.

- The **Georgia** Department of Early Care and Learning provides program information, including prekindergarten slots in the child care program; type of inspection, including technical assistance visits; inspection dates, including arrival times; and copies of the inspection report, including findings, plan of improvement, correction deadline, and dates of previous violations.
<http://dec.al.ga.gov/ProviderSearch/SiteSearch.aspx?childcare=y&newsearch=y>.
- The **Indiana** Family and Social Services Administration provides program information, including the QRIS level. Under inspection information, the date, type of correction needed, action needed to correct issue, date resolved, and provider response are listed. Under complaint information, the date of any validated complaints, issue, closed date, and provider response are provided. Under enforcement information, the date, type of enforcement, description, enforcement decision, and termination date are provided.
<https://secure.in.gov/apps/fssa/carefinder/index.html>
- The **Louisiana** Department of Children and Family Services provides program information, including accreditation and QRIS level. Dates of the last 15 inspections are listed and, when deficiencies are found, a link to the statement of deficiencies is provided that cites the standard and the findings.
<http://carefacility.dss.louisiana.gov/>
- The **Maryland** State Department of Education provides program information when a provider name or address is entered; dates of inspection, inspection type, and whether any item under a regulatory category was not in compliance.
<http://msdecompliancereports.org/msdesearch.asp>
- The **Michigan** Department of Human Services provides program information about child care facilities and a copy of inspection reports and complaint investigation reports. Effective February 2005, complaint investigation reports that determine no violation of rule or statute are not placed on the Web site, and reports with violations are removed from the site after two years.
http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/brs_cdc/sr_lfl.asp
- The **Montana** Department of Public Health and Human Services provides information about child care facilities, including the type and status of inspection reports and a link to the survey tool that shows when a plan of correction for any violation was accepted.
<http://ccubs-sanswrite.hhs.mt.gov/MontanaPublic/ProviderSearch.aspx>
- The **Nebraska** Department of Health and Human Services provides information about both licensed and inactive child care facilities. Search results include disciplinary action taken against a facility, and contain scanned documentation of the licensing action.
<http://www.nebraska.gov/LISSearch/search.cgi>
- The **New Hampshire** Bureau of Child Care Licensing provides information about when programs received a licensing visit, the result of the visit, and a copy of the statement of findings when violations were found.
<http://childcaresearch.dhhs.nh.gov/Mylicense%20Verification/Search.aspx?facility=Y>
- The **New York** State Office of Children and Family Services provides a search function for name, type, location, whether medication can be administered, and whether nontraditional hour care is provided. It cites any rules that were violated in the last 24 months and whether they were corrected as of the last inspection, and any enforcement actions since 2003.
http://it.ocfs.ny.gov/ccfs_facilitysearch/
- The **North Carolina** Division of Child Development provides the following information: a program's permit type, which includes star level and license status; a glossary of terms; and the provider's email and Web site address. Also provided are a sanitation report date, score, and rating; the rating points that are used to determine the rated license level; dates and types of monitoring visits, specific observations of rule violations,

and whether corrected; and any action taken against the facility.

<http://ncchildcaresearch.dhhs.state.nc.us/search.asp>

- The **Ohio** Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Child Care and Development provides program information on their Web site, which includes: National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation, QRIS level, program participation in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program, and whether the program offers publicly funded child care. Program demographics can be searched by location, type of facility, and age groups in which care is needed. Inspections are available and reflect the noncompliance findings which are categorized as fully or partially compliant. The information also specifies if the noncompliance was fully, partially, or not addressed by the provider.
<http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/cdc/query.asp>
- The **Oklahoma** Department of Human Services provides a Child Care Locator tool on its Web site. The search results include monitoring visit dates and the number of confirmed noncompliances by general category. Complaint allegations are also listed by general category and whether substantiated or unsubstantiated/uncertain.
<http://204.87.68.21/childcarefind/>
- The **Oregon** Employment Department Child Care Division has a searchable database with complaint information about child care facilities that are actively licensed, are in the process of becoming licensed, or that were found to be providing illegal child care. The information displayed includes only complaints that were found valid, and violations that were observed as part of the on-site complaint assessment. It is also noted whether the violation was corrected during the on-site complaint assessment.
http://www.oregon.gov/EMPLOY/CCD/Pages/complaints.aspx#Complaint_History and
<http://www.emp.state.or.us/ccd-complaints/>
- The **Pennsylvania** Department of Public Welfare has a searchable database that includes a wide array of early childhood programs and can be searched by access to public transportation, languages spoken, and special accommodations. Certification or licensing history includes the date and reason for inspection, noncompliance areas, correction required, provider's plan of correction and correction date, and status, as well as any waivers or negative sanctions.
<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/ProviderSearch/pgm/PSWEL.aspx>
- The **South Carolina** Division of Child Care Services within the Department of Social Services has a searchable database of licensed child care providers that provides a list of deficiencies found during licensing reviews and complaint information.
<http://childcare.sc.gov/main/general/facilities/search/index.aspx>
- The **Texas** Department of Family and Protective Services makes available information about providers, including their email address and whether they are licensed, registered, or listed, or have been involuntarily suspended or revoked from operating. For each facility, there is an explanation of the monitoring process and weighted standards; the number of inspections, assessments, self-reported incidents, and reports; and a 2-year summary for that facility (e.g., of the 864 standards that were evaluated for compliance at this operation, 16 deficiencies were cited). For each deficiency, the following details are provided: the standard risk level, whether the deficiency was corrected during the visit, the correction deadline date, the date the correction was verified, and additional narrative. The information is updated nightly. The online compliance history does not include deficiencies or corrective or adverse actions until after the child care provider has had due process or waived his or her rights.
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care/CCLNET/Source/CPA/ppSearchTXChildCare2.aspx

- The **Utah** Bureau of Child Development Web site provides a licensing history that includes inspection date and type, the finding category (cited, repeat cited), the noncompliance level, the rule, the finding, and the date the correction was verified. It includes substantiated complaint allegations and cited findings for the past 2 years but does not include any inspections completed in the last 30 days. Rule violations are classified as Level 1, 2, or 3 violations, depending on both the seriousness of harm to a child that could result from the violation, as well as the likelihood that harm will occur. Level 1 findings are categorized as “cited” findings the first time they occur. Level 2 and 3 findings are initially classified as “technical assistance” findings and not cited if corrected and not repeated.
<http://health.utah.gov/licensing/findaprovider.htm>
- The **Vermont** Child Development Division’s Bright Futures Child Care Information Center includes licensed and registered child care providers, program information such as the star-level quality rating and accreditation, whether the provider is accepting referrals, and its vacancy information. Under regulatory history, rule violations, corrected dates, and terms and conditions for addressing violations are provided.
<http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us>.
- The **Virginia** Department of Social Services provides information about both licensed and regulated unlicensed providers, including the licensing inspector’s name and telephone number. For each inspection, the following information is provided: whether it was complaint related, areas reviewed, technical assistance provided, overview comments, violation description, and action to be taken.
<http://www.dss.state.va.us/facility/search/licensed.cgi>
- The **Washington** Department of Early Learning has a licensed child care information tool called Child Care Check. Families are encouraged to first identify providers that meet their needs through Child Care Aware of Washington and written guidance on finding and choosing child care. The searchable online database of licensed, certified, unlicensed, and closed child care providers requires the name or phone number of a provider to access licensing information, such as how long a provider has been licensed and the licensor’s name and phone number. Licensing history includes information about valid licensing complaints and whether they were self-reported, a list of all program staff and the status of their background checks, and licensing inspections with a link to the reports. Under Frequently Asked Questions, the circumstances under which a provider is listed as “no referral” are explained.
<https://apps.del.wa.gov/check/CheckSearch.aspx>.
- The **Wisconsin** Department of Children and Families provides information about licensed and certified providers through either a basic or advanced search that includes star level and that shows the location of providers on a map. Licensing history includes the inspection date, rule summary, a description of the violation, and a link to the correction plan.
<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/licensed/search.htm>.