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# Supporting Families Access to Child Care and Early Education: A Descriptive Profile of States' Consumer Education Websites

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# Overview

## Introduction

For most families, the process of finding and paying for child care is challenging, particularly for families with low incomes. Families often turn to friends, family members, or the internet to find recommendations about child care options. Characteristics of families - their work schedules, transportation availability, geographic location, income, composition, and ages of their children - and the local supply of child care can all influence their child care search and decision. Access to information about child care and early education options can provide a critical support for families as they engage in the search process.

Consumer education can help raise families' awareness about the range of early care and education (ECE) options available; let them know about the availability of financial assistance for child care or about local, public programs available at no cost (i.e. Early Head Start/Head Start and public prekindergarten); and inform families about what influences the quality of child care (e.g. the role of licensing and the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)). As a result of recent policy changes to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the federal program that offers guidance and funds to states, territories, and tribes to administer child care subsidies for families with low incomes, states have created consumer education websites to help parents make informed choices about ECE options.

## Purpose

This descriptive study explored the ECE-related consumer education activities described in the FY 2019-2021 CCDF State Plans and the types of consumer education information available on states' ECE consumer education websites (i.e., states' official consumer education website, Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) website, and child care search engines). Using a multi-dimensional family centered definition of access, we sought to understand how states' ECE consumer education websites support access to child care information. We examined the extent to which information is easy to find, addresses affordability, helps parents understand how ECE supports child development, and addresses parents' needs (for example, accommodates their work schedules and their geographic location).

## Research Questions

This study addressed the following two research questions:

- What is the current status of state ECE consumer education efforts (described in CCDF State Plans and websites) in providing information to families, with attention to the features and information commonly included across consumer education websites?
- To what extent do existing ECE consumer education plans and websites support access to child care by offering useful information and resources for families (operationalized using the family-centered, multi-dimensional definition of access)?

## Methods

Information for this report was collected from a review of the FY 2019-2021 CCDF Plans and states' ECE consumer education websites in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in the summer of 2020, which included when available, the states' official consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites. For the review of CCDF State Plans, information about consumer education from seven components of the plans was collected, coded for themes, and summarized by dimensions of the access definition. For the consumer education website scans, the research team collected information

from consumer education websites based on a protocol the team developed of website measures that aligned with CCDF requirements for consumer education websites and addressed the dimensions in the access definition. The research team also conducted simulated online child care searches, from 10 randomly selected cities/towns, to better understand the search results parents might encounter when conducting a typical online search for child care and how likely families are to find states' consumer education websites.

## Key Findings and Highlights

This descriptive study provides several insights to families' access to information through state ECE consumer education websites and offers several recommendations for state consumer education websites.

- States' consumer education websites commonly provided information about the availability of child care subsidies to help families find affordable care and about quality ratings and licensing to promote families' understanding of child care quality.
- Only eight states provided comprehensive information about child care through their consumer education websites that addressed every access dimension. That is, the website was easy to find, addressed affordability, informed child development, and met parent's needs (e.g., fit their work schedule, was close to work/home).
- Only six states integrated their consumer education websites into a single site, which suggests that states could make child care information available across state websites easier to navigate (for example, by integrating their consumer education, QRIS, and child care search into a single website).
- States' consumer education websites may be difficult for families to find; the user experience scan found that state consumer education websites were listed in search results of just 17% of the local child care searches conducted.

# Introduction

High-quality, stable child care is a critical support for children's development and families' economic well-being.[1] For most families, however, the process of finding and paying for child care is challenging. Families ultimately select child care arrangements that accommodate their unique circumstances and multiple constraints related to income, employment, family composition, transportation, and availability of child care options in their community.[2,3] Effective consumer education activities can support families in the child care decision-making process by providing information about child care and resources about children's development. Consumer education can raise families' awareness about the range of care options available, the availability of child care assistance, programs that are available at no cost (e.g., Early Head Start/Head Start and public pre-kindergarten), the role of licensing, and the meaning of quality ratings in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) when selecting a child care provider.[4]

The need for effective consumer education is evident when reviewing key findings from the literature on child care decision making. The literature examines multiple factors that can make the child care search process challenging and provides insights into the context and process of decision making (including the information considered when searching for care), the number of providers considered, the length of the search, and the constraints/barriers within a search. For example, child care decisions are often made quickly among parents with low incomes due to family needs, work schedules, and work requirements. A study in one state revealed that over 80 percent of eligible parents who had applied for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) made decisions within two weeks, with some families making decisions in one day.[5] Parents rely heavily on friends and families with children for recommendations about child care and also report using the internet.[6,7] The child care search

process varies by income, with families with higher incomes slightly more likely to ask friends and families compared to families with lower incomes. Parents of infants and toddlers are more likely to search for care because of work-related reasons than parents of preschoolers, who are more likely to search for care because of the child's educational and social needs.[8] Employment hours and schedule, transportation options, geographic location, and local market conditions all pose significant barriers to accessing child care for families and may limit the likelihood of search initiation and successful search outcomes.[9] All of these factors indicate that families need better access to information to inform their child care search.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 required states to provide consumer education to help improve parents' access to information to make informed choices about child care and to promote family involvement in the development of children in child care settings.[10] The 2016 CCDF Final Rule, which provided additional clarity on how to implement the CCDBG Act of 2014, included the following key provisions related to consumer education:

- States must create and maintain a consumer education website that includes a list of child care providers searchable by ZIP code, differentiating between licensed and license-exempt providers, and indicating if any the provider has any substantiated health and safety violations. The website should also include any information about the quality of the providers who accept child care subsidies as determined by the State (e.g., a quality rating and improvement system [QRIS] level) and/or all providers' ratings available if the state has a quality rating system. There are 12 required components for websites including information about the State and providers and user experience requirements. Full compliance was required by September 2019.
- Information about child care assistance, other benefit programs, and child development have to be made available to parents through either the consumer education website, resource and referral agencies, or other partners.
- States must provide families receiving CCDF with a provider-specific consumer education Statement that includes a summary of the State's health and safety and licensing policies.
- States need to post the annual number of deaths, serious injuries, and instances of substantiated child abuse that occurred in all CCDF-eligible child care settings.
- States must also establish a hotline for parental complaints of possible health and safety violations.
- Each of these consumer education efforts must provide the widest possible access to people with limited English proficiency and people with disabilities.

The purpose of this report is not to evaluate state's compliance with the consumer education requirements in the CCDBG reauthorization law or 2016 CCDF Final Rule. Rather, this report highlights states' strategies for providing consumer education to families and the type of information states provide. It provides an overview of states' consumer education efforts described in their FY 2019–2021 CCDF Plans and the results of a website scan, conducted between June 30th and August 15th, 2020, of states' websites, including their consumer education website, Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) website. This report uses a family-centered definition of access to analyze the extent to which states' consumer education plans and websites promote access to information that informs families' child care choices.

## A Family-Centered Definition of Access

Families seeking child care weigh multiple factors related to their children's unique characteristics, their family circumstances, and the communities in which they live. The *access definition* that provides a framework for this report was developed by a panel of research and policy experts to acknowledge the complexity of finding and using child care and the importance of addressing families' preferences, needs, and constraints when developing policy solutions).[11] The definition was informed by the

literature on child care decision-making and identifies four interrelated dimensions: with *reasonable effort*, all families can find and use *affordable* care that *meets the family's needs* and *supports their children's development*. The definition goes beyond the availability of "slots" and instead highlights the array of factors that support or constrain families. Policymakers can use the definition with an equity lens to identify policy options that address known disparities in access to child care. A focus on *equitable* access emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing early care and education (ECE) experiences across families from multiple geographic areas; as well as racial/ethnic, language, and income groups. Additionally, this focus aligns consumer education with CCDF activities (e.g., provision of subsidies, promotion of quality improvement, protection of health and safety) and the wider array of supports for families and young children.[12]

Though the access definition serves as a helpful tool for analyzing states' consumer education efforts, it is important to clarify that the information available from the websites represents a narrower portion of each access dimension. Thus, the analysis did not offer comprehensive coverage of each dimension, but instead highlights key indicators of access that could be reviewed on the websites.

With this caveat in mind, this report uses the access definition as a lens for examining parents' access to information about their child care options based on states' consumer education plans and activities—specifically the consumer education provided through states' websites. This report provides a landscape of the consumer education efforts of the 50 states and the District of Columbia using information from States' FY 2019-2021 CCDF State Plans and States' consumer education websites (i.e., the state's consumer education, child care search, and quality rating and improvement (QRIS) websites) to answer two research questions:

1. What is the current status of state consumer education efforts (CCDF plans and websites) in providing information to families, with attention to the features and information commonly included across consumer education websites?

2. To what extent do existing consumer education plans and websites support access to child care by offering useful information and resources (operationalized using the family-centered, multi-dimensional definition of access)?

The findings presented in this report describe the extent to which states' consumer education plans and websites address the four dimensions of the access definition and the strategies for consumer education that are more commonly and less commonly employed by States. This in-depth review helps to explain the range and variation in state approaches and develop hypotheses about the implications of these differences for parents' experiences searching for child care and other information about children's development. Finally, findings about states' consumer education efforts are discussed in the context of a simulated child care search experience.

## Organization of the Report

The report is organized into the following sections:

- We describe our methodology for reviewing consumer education activities in the FY 2019-2021 CCDF State Plans and for reviewing the consumer education websites (i.e., states' consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites).

- For each access dimension, we summarize the related key findings from a scan of FY 2019- 2021 CCDF State Plans of consumer education activities and related websites. We also highlight innovative state practices for providing information to parents through their state consumer education websites.

- We analyzed how states' consumer education websites aligned with all four access dimensions.

- To examine how likely parents might be to use the state consumer education websites in their child care search, we summarize the findings from our user experience scan for online child care information.

- We conclude with recommendations to help states strengthen their state consumer education websites, particularly as states look ahead to their FY 2022–2024 CCDF State plans. We discuss limitations of this study and next steps for further examination of states' consumer education activities.

# Methodology

Information for this report was collected from two sources: 1) the FY 2019-2021 CCDF Plans from 49 states and the District of Columbia,[a] and 2) states' consumer education and related websites in the summer of 2020, which included (when available) the states' official consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites.

1. **FY 2019-2021 CCDF Plans.** These plans serve as the application for CCDF funds and follow a prescribed format/template, with states responding to specific questions about how they intend to implement their child care programs and services.[13] Within states' CCDF Plans, most information related to consumer education is available in Section 2: "Promote Family Engagement through Outreach and Consumer Education." We analyzed sections of the states' CCDF plans related to states' consumer education website using the access definition dimensions (see Appendix B for a full list of consumer education components reviewed and considered for inclusion). Table 1 includes these seven sections and the interrelated access definition dimensions that each section aligns with. To support analysis, we entered responses to each statement in Table 1 from all state CCDF plans into a spreadsheet and summarized themes.

**Table 1.** Consumer education components of CCDF plans analyzed in relation to the access dimensions

| CCDF State Plan Section and Consumer Education Component | Access Definition Dimension |
|---|---|
| **Section 2.3:** Ways the Lead Agency ensures that its website is consumer-friendly and easily accessible. | Reasonable Effort |
| **Section 2.3.5b:** The types of ECE providers included/excluded from parents' website search (e.g., licensed CCDF, licensed non-CCDF, license-exempt center CCDF, license-exempt family care CCDF, license-exempt non-CCDF, relative, other). | Meets Parents' Needs |
| **Section 2.3.6a**: The provider-specific metrics of quality parents can access on the consumer education website (e.g., state QRIS, national accreditation, enhanced licensing, Early Head Start (EHS)/ Head Start (HS) standards, pre-kindergarten standards, other). | Supports Child Development |
| **Section 2.3.6b:** Whether parents can access quality metrics on all/ some types of ECE. | Supports Child Development |
| **Sections 2.4.1 and 2.5.1**: Ways Lead Agencies provide information to parents on child care services, child development, and social services. | Reasonable Effort, Affordability, Supports Child Development |
| **Section 2.1.1:** Strategies the Lead Agency or partners use to provide outreach and services to eligible families for whom English is not their first language (e.g., applications, informational materials, and websites are available in multiple languages, Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations, bilingual caseworkers or translators available, partnership with community-based organizations, other). | Meets Parents' Needs |

[a] At the time of review, the plan for Wyoming was not available.

| CCDF State Plan Section and Consumer Education Component | Access Definition Dimension |
|---|---|
| **Section 2.1.2**: What strategies do the Lead Agency or partners utilize to provide outreach and services to eligible families with a person(s) with a disability (e.g., applications and public informational materials available in Braille and other communication formats, websites that are accessible – Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, caseworkers with specialized training/ experience working with individuals with disabilities). | Meets Parents' Needs |

2. **Consumer Education websites.** Between June 30th and August 15th, 2020, a team of Child Trends researchers used a protocol (described in the Website Measures section), to review websites and record content and features available to parents using consumer education websites.

   The CCDBG Act requires states to provide consumer education information to parents through a website that is consumer-friendly and easily accessible. While the CCDBG Act only requires one official state consumer education website, most states have multiple websites developed directly by the CCDF Lead Agency (or indirectly through funding to subsidiary organizations, for example, local child care resource and referral agencies [CCR&Rs]) or by other organizations and companies that provide information that parents can use to inform their child care decisions. This landscape of states' consumer education websites focuses on three primary websites:

   a. the official consumer education website (designated by the Lead Agency) (50 states and the District of Columbia)
   b. when available, a state-wide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) website (46 states)
   c. when available, a state-wide child care search website (49 states and the District of Columbia)

   Some states integrate two or more of these websites, while other states have three separate websites (i.e., separate web hosts). Across our review, we identified websites using childcare.gov. Childcare.gov is the centralized platform operated by the Office of Child Care in the Administration of Children and Families. Childcare.gov contains links to states' "official" consumer education websites (i.e., the website designated in their CCDF plan). Appendix A provides image screenshots of how consumer education websites were linked on the childcare.gov website at the time of this review.

   In addition to the consumer education website, childcare.gov provides a link to the QRIS website for each state with a QRIS. The general aims of a QRIS are to support quality improvement in ECE programs and to facilitate awareness of quality among parents and the public.[14] QRIS websites may share information about quality ratings for parents and offer details for providers about how to participate in the QRIS.

   Statewide child care search engines are also linked on childcare.gov. The CCDBG Act requires states to provide a list of all licensed providers who receive child care subsidies that is searchable by ZIP code.

## Website Measures

Informed by the goals of the CCDBG Act and Final Rule for consumer education and by empirical knowledge of parents' ECE search process and priorities, the project team developed a protocol to review state websites on consumer education, QRIS websites, and child care search engines. Researchers at Child Trends developed broad thematic questions that aligned with the requirements in the CCDBG Act and the Final Rule (e.g., Can parents who speak languages other than English fully access the consumer education website?) but also addressed dimensions in the access definition. The team then developed more specific measures of consumer education website information and features to include in the protocol. While we identified and reviewed 92 website measures, we ultimately

selected a subset (61) of measures for analysis. This subset was intended to provide a streamlined and simple portrait of consumer education websites and ways their features aligned with the access definition. Table 2 shows the final measures that were included in the protocol for reviewing states' official consumer education website and QRIS website, and the access dimensions into which they fall (See Appendix B for the full list of measures in the protocol that were considered for analyses). Unless otherwise noted in the table, all of the measures were dichotomous (i.e. Yes/No).

Similarly, Table 3 presents the final measures included in our analyses of states' child care search engines. Researchers followed the process of developing broad thematic questions, then more specific measures, which were coded into one of the access dimensions.

**Table 2.** Measures of states' official Consumer Education and QRIS websites that correspond to the access dimensions.

| | |
|---|---|
| Reasonable Effort | **What online resources do states provide to support web-based consumer education?** |
| | Does the state have an official consumer education website? |
| | Does the state have a separate QRIS website? |
| | Is there a child care search tool on the consumer education website? |
| | Is the child care search website included on the consumer education website the same as on childcare.gov? |
| Supports Child Development | **QRIS: Can parents learn about QRIS ratings of providers? / Can parents learn what QRIS ratings mean?** |
| | Does the website include an explanation of QRIS ratings or link to a QRIS website? |
| | Does the website explain why parents should care about QRIS or use QRIS ratings to inform their search? |
| | Does the website provide QRIS ratings? |
| | **Licensing: Can parents learn about the licensing status of providers? / Can parents learn what licensing means?** |
| | Does the consumer education website include an explanation of licensing or how to interpret licensing? |
| | Does the website contain a link that directs parents to a website with information on how to interpret licensing? |
| Affordability | **Can parents learn about free or reduced cost child care?** |
| | Does the website provide information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? |
| | Does the website provide a link to information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? |
| | Does the website provide information about identifying free child care? |
| | Can parents learn about other supports available to them? |
| | **Can parents learn about financial assistance programs to support themselves and their children?** |
| | TANF |
| | CCDF |
| | Early Head Start/ Head Start |
| | SNAP |
| | WIC |
| | Other |

| | |
|---|---|
| Meet Parents' Needs | **Can parents who speak languages other than English fully access the consumer education website?** |
| | Is the website available in Spanish? |
| | In how many languages (other than English and Spanish) is the website available? (No/1-100/100+) |
| | Is the full website available in Spanish and languages other than English and Spanish or only parts? |
| | Does the website provide a hotline phone number for parents to call? |

**Table 3.** Measures of states' child care search engines that correspond to the access dimensions

| | |
|---|---|
| Reasonable Effort | **Overview of Child Care Search Resources** |
| | Is this child care search engine listed on the childcare.gov website? |
| | Does the child care search engine link back to the official consumer education website? |
| | What website hosts the child care search engine? (consumer education/QRIS/separate website) |
| | Is there a child care information hotline provided on the website? |
| Supports Child Development | **QRIS: Can parents learn about QRIS ratings of providers? / Can parents learn what QRIS ratings mean?** |
| | Does the website include an explanation of QRIS ratings or link to a QRIS website? |
| | Are there QRIS ratings of providers on the child care search website? |
| | **Licensing: Can parents learn about the licensing status of providers? / Can parents learn what licensing means?** |
| | Licensing status |
| | Licensing violations |
| | Does the website provide information about the importance of licensing? |
| | Does the website contain a link to the consumer education or other website about the importance of licensing or how to interpret licensing? |
| Affordability | **Can parents learn about where reduced cost or no cost child care are available?** |
| | Does the website provide information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? |
| | Does the website provide a link to information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? |
| | Does the website provide information about identifying child care that is available at no cost (e.g. EHS/HS or public pre-kindergarten programs)? |
| | Can parents learn about other supports available to them? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Meet Parents' Needs | **Can parents get information on provider characteristics that are important to them?** |
| | Can parents learn about the price of care? |
| | Can parents learn whether the provider accepts subsidies? |
| | **By what features can parents search for providers?** |
| | Location (ZIP code, city, county, home address, location, and radius, route to and from work) |
| | Transportation |
| | Type of care (center, home-based, EHS/HS, Tribal) |
| | QRIS ratings |
| | Child age |
| | Hours of operation |
| | Child disability status |
| | Language abilities of staff |
| | Language of instruction |

# Findings

Findings from our analyses of consumer education activities reported in the FY 2019-2021 CCDF State Plans and from our review of websites (official state consumer education and QRIS websites, and child care search engines) are organized according to the four access dimensions: reasonable effort, affordability, supports child development, and meets parents' needs. For each dimension, we report state totals for the website measures we used, list the states that had certain website features, and highlight any innovative, individual state practices.

## Overview of Websites

**51 Official Consumer Education Websites.** Between June 30th and August 15th, 2020, a team of Child Trends researchers visited childcare.gov to access the state consumer education websites. At the time of the review, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had an official consumer education website linked on childcare.gov.

**46 QRIS Websites.** At the time of the scan, 45 states and the District of Columbia had a website linked under the QRIS tab on childcare.gov; five states did not have a website linked to the QRIS tab. For four states with a website linked under the QRIS tab, the link was not to a statewide QRIS system. Instead, the website linked to webpages that provided information about identifying or selecting quality care. For example, in one state, the website linked to information about child care quality and provided information for plans to develop a statewide QRIS in the future.

**50 Child Care Search Engines.** 49 States and the District of Columbia had a child care search engine linked on the childcare.gov website (an additional state had a link that was broken at the time of search).

## Reasonable Effort

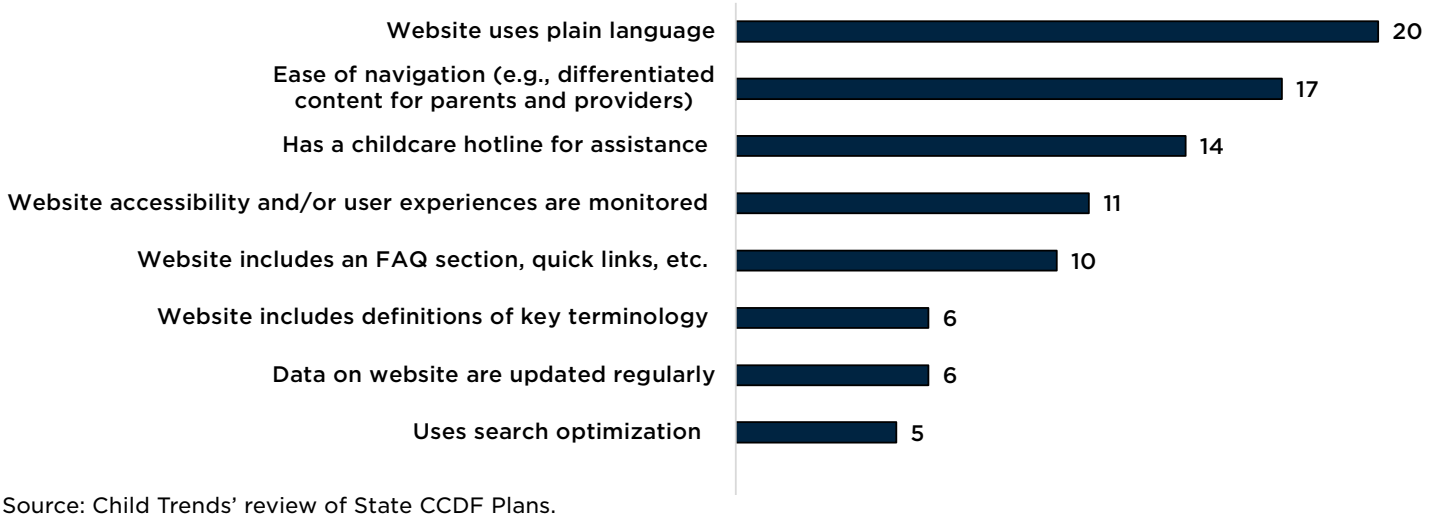
The *reasonable effort* dimension of the access definition is intended to cover aspects of a family's experiences trying to find an arrangement for their child. It captures, for example, the availability of early care and education (ECE) programs for children, the licensed capacity of programs to serve children, the estimated vacancy for children in a given area, and the availability of information for

families about ECE programs).[15] Sample indicators of reasonable effort include: (1) the supply of ECE programs, (2) desired capacity, (3) licensed capacity, (4) estimated vacancy, (5) geographical location, (6) availability of information about ECE programs, and (7) utilization of ECE programs. For this report, we defined *reasonable effort* as the extent to which states made their consumer education website(s) and the information within those sites easy for parents to locate and navigate. We examined what states planned to do to make their consumer education websites easy to locate and navigate in their FY 2019-2021 CCDF plans as context for our review of states' consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites.

## States' FY 2019 -2021 CCDF Plans: States' strategies for making the consumer education website consumer friendly and easily accessible

In their FY 2019-2021 Plans, states were asked (in Section 2.3) to describe their strategies for making their websites consumer friendly and easily accessible for families. As seen in Figure 1, the most commonly described strategies for making the website consumer friendly, as it relates to reasonable effort, were using plain language (20 states) and ensuring ease of navigation (17 states). The least commonly reported strategies were the inclusion of definitions of commonly used terminology (6), the regular update of data (6) and the use of search engine optimization or links with another state-run website (5).

**Figure 1.** Number of states that included each strategy in their CCDF state plan for making its website consumer-friendly and easily accessible




Source: Child Trends' review of State CCDF Plans.

States were asked (in Sections 2.4.1 and 2.5.1) how they would provide information to parents about child care services, aspects of child development, and information about other types of assistance they might be eligible for (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, Head Start/Early Head Start, etc.). The most common (46 states) outreach strategy states identified was sharing child care information through their state websites (including the state's consumer education, QRIS, and other state agency websites); 33 states said they offer information about other types of assistance/social services through state websites (18 of these states said this information is available on their consumer education website).

## States' Consumer Education Websites: How consumer education websites reduce burden for families and promote reasonable effort to access information and services

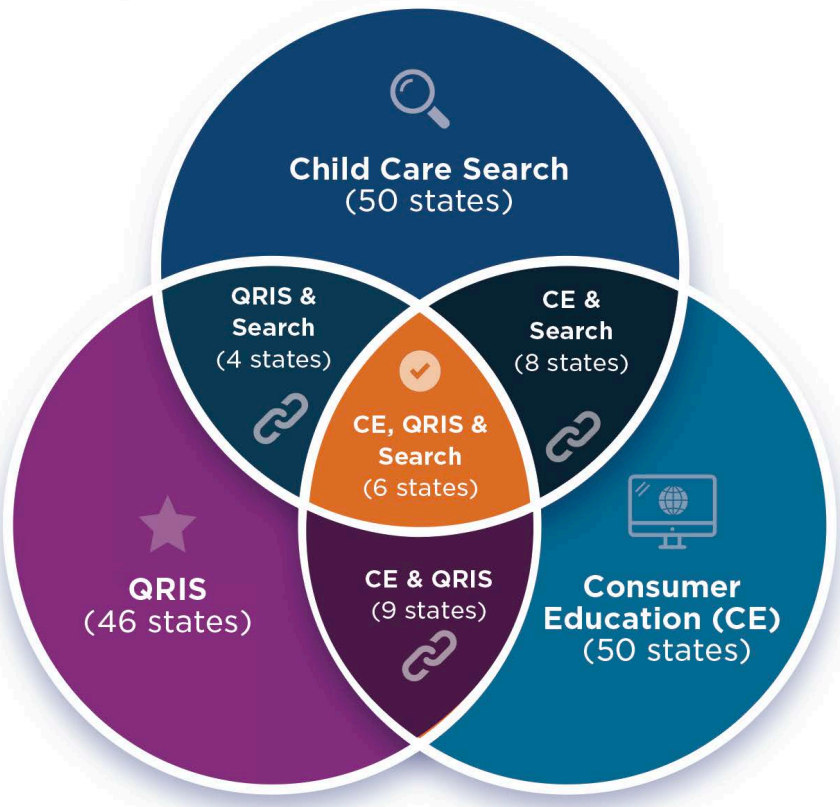
All 50 states and the District of Columbia have an official consumer education website linked on the childcare.gov website. These websites provide a variety of information such as information on child care subsidies, social services, child development, and factors that contribute to child care quality to support parents' child care decision-making and effort to find care.

With respect to reasonable effort, or how easily parents could find and navigate the consumer education information states provide, we sought to understand how states' consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites (linked on childcare.gov) were connected—that is, whether they were hosted on the same website or if the sites linked to one another, or if they were separate websites. Multiple, separate websites place burden on families to find and navigate each site for information they need related to child care and child development. It may also increase the chance that they might miss some of the information that is available.

As shown in Figure 2, we found the following when comparing the links for the consumer education, QRIS, and child care search engines found on childcare.gov:

- Six states **(CO, GA, ID, ME, MN, NM)** have the same website host their consumer education, QRIS, and child care search engines. In these states all of these information hubs for parents (and providers) are available on the same website, creating a single place where parents can find information about selecting quality child care and searching for a provider.
- Eight states **(CT, KY, ND, NE, OR, RI, SC, UT)** and the District of Columbia have the same website host their consumer education and child care search engine, but their QRIS information is housed on a separate website.
- Nine states **(FL, HI, KS, LA, NC, NJ, OK, VT, WA)** have the same website host their consumer education and QRIS websites, but the states' child care search engine is hosted on a different website.
- Four states **(IL, IN, MD, MT)** combine their QRIS and child search engines on the same website but have a separate website for their consumer education website.

**Figure 2.** Connections between state consumer education, QRIS and child care search websites




Source: Child Trends' analysis of childcare.gov website linkages as of 08/2020

In over a third of states (19 states),[b] parents need to go to three separate websites to access the states' consumer education, QRIS, and child care search engine. Similarly, parents in 21 states must go to two different websites to access all three features.

While only a few states host their consumer education, QRIS, and child care search functions on the same website, states provided links between websites. We found that states provided the following linkages between sites:

- Of the states that have separate consumer education and child care search websites, 20 states (55%) provide a link to the child care search website from their consumer education website and 7 states (MA, MT, SD, VA, WI, WV, WY) (19%) provide a link to the consumer education website from their child care search website.

States also commonly included child care search tools on their consumer education and QRIS websites when those websites were not housed on the same website as the child care search. We found that states utilized the following strategies for child care search tools:

- Of the states that have separate websites for consumer education and child care search, most (34, or 94%) of these states provide a child care search tool on the consumer education website.
- Of the states that do not have the same website for QRIS and the child care search, 33 (83%) have a child care search tool on their website.

Lastly, we looked at how often the states' websites contained a child care hotline for assistance with helping to find care.

- 30 states provide a child care hotline for assistance with finding care on their child care search site.
- 37 states provide a child care information hotline on their consumer education website.

### Summary

While only a few states (6) combined all three of their consumer education, QRIS, and child care search engine features into a single website, many states (21) had at least combined two of these features on one site and some states were providing links from one site to another. This suggests that most families using state websites need to navigate at least two websites to find the child care and child development information the state offers, and that they might have trouble finding these two sites in the instances where the sites are not linked to one another. Our review of CCDF state plans (see Figure 1) also revealed that few (5) states were currently working on search optimization for the consumer education website or linking with another state-run site, suggesting that families may have difficulty finding their state's consumer education website at all (see Box 1: User Experience Scan for more information about the likelihood of finding state consumer education websites in a child care search). This finding provides insights into where states could improve their websites to make information easier for parents to locate and navigate.

## Affordability

The *affordability* dimension of the access definition captures the cost of care to parents and providers. This dimension acknowledges the financial supports that some parents receive and the possibility that some arrangements may be provided at no cost for the family (including Head Start, public pre-kindergarten, and/or some care provided by family and friends). Sample indicators of affordability include: (1) the costs to parents (i.e., out-of-pocket ECE expenses); (2) parents' use of public programs that subsidize ECE costs (i.e., child care subsidies, Head Start, public pre-kindergarten, and scholarships/donations/grants); and 3) the cost to ECE programs of providing early care and education services (i.e., the advertised price of an ECE program and fundraising to cover per child costs).

[b] Three additional states (SD, WV, WY) do not have a QRIS or a QRIS website and are not included in this count.

For this report, we analyze the *affordability* dimension of the access definition as it relates to consumer education by examining the extent to which information related to the costs of child care is readily available to parents, including (1) information available about the financial supports to offset the cost of care (i.e. child care subsidies) or (2) information about programs that are provided at no cost (e.g., Head Start/Early Head Start and state pre-kindergarten), (3) the prices of individual providers, and (4) whether individual providers accept child care subsidies.

## States' FY 2019-2021 CCDF Plans: States' strategies for providing information on child care affordability

The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires states to provide parents with information about child care assistance and other benefit programs through either the consumer education website, resource and referral agencies, or other partners.

In their FY 2019-2021 CCDF State Plans, over half of states (26) said information about child care assistance is available on their consumer education website, and about half of states (23) indicated child care assistance information was available on another website (e.g. their QRIS website or another state website).

### State Highlight:

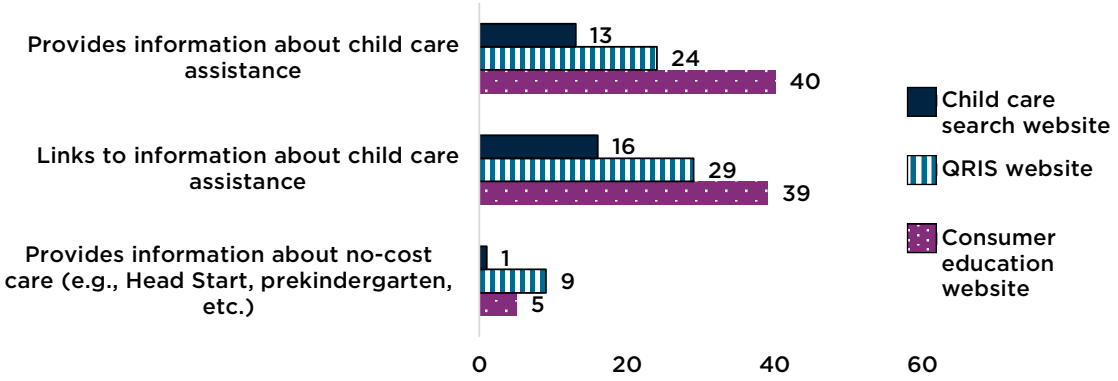
**Colorado**'s Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood utilizes a multi-pronged approach to communicate the availability of child care services provided through CCDF. It aligns the information available on its consumer education websites (www.coloradoshines.com) with its website for the Office of Early Childhood (www.coloradoofficeofearlychildhood.com). Parents can find information about applying for child care assistance on both sites.

## Consumer Education Websites: How consumer education websites provide information about affordability

While only about half of states indicated in their State CCDF Plan that information about child care assistance is available on their official consumer education website, the majority (40) of states' consumer education websites, at the time of our review, provided information on how to apply for child care subsidies and/or many states (39) provided a link to a child care subsidy application or additional program information (see Figure 3). States' QRIS and child care search websites also provided information on how to apply for a subsidy or included a link to information on how to apply for child care assistance. Twenty-three states provided information on applying for child care assistance on their QRIS website, and 29 states provided a link to this information on their QRIS website. Additionally, 13 states provided information on applying for child care assistance on their child care search website and 16 states provided a link to this information (See Table 2 for additional information). Some states tried to provide this information across their sites:

- DC, GA, MN, NY, OK, RI, and VT provided information about applying for child care assistance on their consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites (or across pages when the websites were integrated).

**Figure 3.** Number of state websites that provide information about child care assistance and publicly available no-cost care




Source: Child Trends' analysis of state consumer education websites in 2020

**Table 4.** Number of states that address indicators of affordability in their consumer education websites

| Website | Access Indicators | Total Number of States |
|---|---|---|
| **Consumer Education** | Does the website provide information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | **40** |
| | Does the website provide a LINK to information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | **39** |
| | Does the website provide information about identifying publicly available child care at no cost? | **5** |
| **QRIS** | Does the website provide information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | **24*** |
| | Does the website provide a LINK to information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | **29*** |
| | Does the website provide information about identifying publicly available child care at no cost? | **9*** |
| **Child Care Search** | Does the website provide information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | **13**** |
| | Does the website provide a LINK to information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | **16**** |
| | Does the website provide information about identifying publicly available child care at no cost? | **1**** |
| | Does the website show whether providers accept a child care subsidy? | **28**** |
| | Does the website show the price of the provider? | **9**** |

*Five states do not have a QRIS
** The child care search could not be accessed in one state.

While states commonly provided information to parents about how to apply for child care assistance, only a few states provided information on how to identify/apply for publicly available early care and education programs that are available at no cost for eligible families such as Head Start, Early Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs. As Figure 3 shows, only 5 states (CO, FL, NV, RI, WA) provided information about ECE available at no cost on their consumer education website, 9 states (CO, FL, MI, NV, OH, OR, PA, RI, WA) provided this information on their QRIS website, and RI was the only state that provided this information on their child care search website.

## State Highlight:

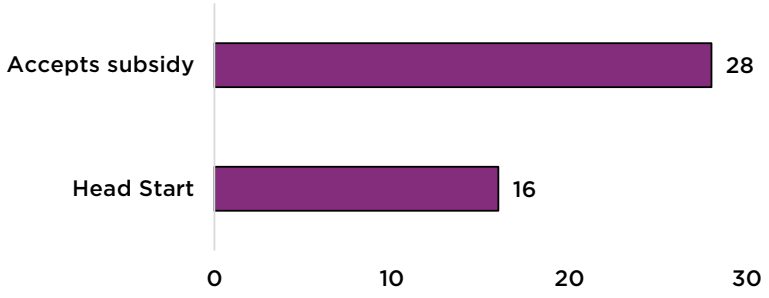
**Rhode Island** provides comprehensive information for parents about ECE programs that are available at no and/or reduced cost care across its consumer education, child care search, and QRIS websites.* Particularly on its consumer education website, RI prominently offers information about free and reduced cost care, including child care assistance, Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships, Family Home Visiting, Rhode Island Pre-K, and Public School Preschool programs.

https://exceed.ri.gov/families

*RI's consumer education and child care search are housed on the same website.

Moreover, some states' child care search engines help parents identify affordable care by allowing families to search for providers who accept subsidies or for care provided at no cost (i.e., Head Start programs or state pre-kindergarten programs). As seen in Figure 4, over half of states' child care search websites (28) allow families to search for providers who accept a child care subsidy and some states (16) allow families to search for Head Start programs.

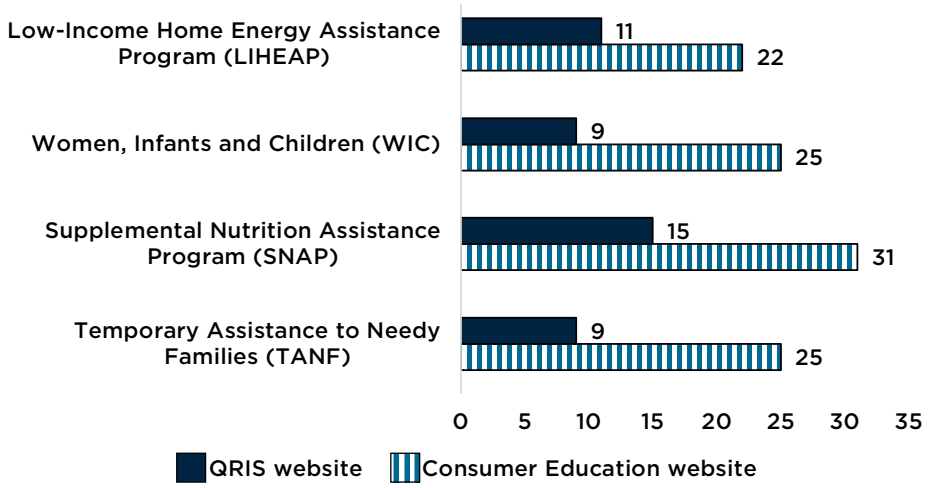
**Figure 4**. Number of state child care search websites that allow parents to search for providers who accept subsidies and/or Head Start programs




Source: Child Trends' analysis of child care search engines in 2020.

In addition to providing information about free and reduced-price early care and education programs, many consumer education websites and some QRIS websites also provide information about financial assistance programs that parents might be eligible for, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Figure 5 shows that half or more states provide information about TANF, SNAP, WIC, and LIHEAP to parents through their consumer education websites, but that less than a third of QRIS sites offer this information.

**Figure 5.** Number of states that provide information about financial assistance programs on their consumer education and/or QRIS websites




Source: Child Trends' analysis of state consumer education and QRIS websites in 2020.

Since the price of care is an important aspect of a child care decision and an indicator of the affordability dimension of child care access, we also examined whether a provider's price was listed in the child care search results on the states' child care search websites. Only 9 states (AR, CT, GA, IA, KY, MI, MN, PA, RI) included price information for providers in search results, or in Georgia's case, allowed parents to search by a weekly rate.

### State Highlight:

**Connecticut**'s child care search website allows parents to select several providers that they're interested in and compare results by ages served, hours of operation, and weekly prices by age groups.

https://www.211childcare.org/listings

### Summary

The majority of states (40) provide information on their official consumer education websites about child care assistance. However, states were much less likely to provide information about early care and education programs offered at no cost to eligible families such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and state pre-kindergarten programs across consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites. Similarly, over half (28) of states allow families to search for programs that accept subsidies, while 16 states allow families to search for Head Start programs. About half of all consumer education websites provide information about other financial supports including LIHEAP, WIC, SNAP, and TANF. Lastly, price information for individual providers, which can only be found on child care search websites, is available in only a few (9) states. Overall, as it relates to affordability, states have largely focused on providing information on child care assistance. Additional information about early care and education programs provided at no cost and prices for individual providers is needed.

## Supports Child Development

The *supports child development* dimension of the access definition encompasses program practices that promote positive child development. This dimension includes several indicators including: 1) an ECE program's designation of quality (e.g., a quality rating); 2) coordination of services within and

across ECE settings and other sectors, such as health; 3) practices that support children's stability in ECE arrangements/continuity of care; and 4) program practices that meet children's unique needs including provision of supports for children with developmental or physical disabilities, children who are homeless, and children who speak a language other than English).[16]

In this report, we analyze the *supports child development* dimension in relation to consumer education by examining the extent to which parents have access to information about program practices that promote positive child development. We looked to see if consumer education websites included information about a program's quality, information about licensing, and information about programs that *met children's unique needs* including program practices available for children with developmental or physical disabilities, children who are homeless, and children who speak a language other than English.

## States' FY 2019-2021 CCDF Plans: States' strategies for helping families support child development through consumer education

The CCDBG Act requires that states' consumer education websites include information about what licensing is and about individual providers' licensing inspection history, including if the provider has any substantiated health and safety violations. The website should also include searchable information about the quality of individual providers as determined by the state (e.g. a QRIS rating or level).

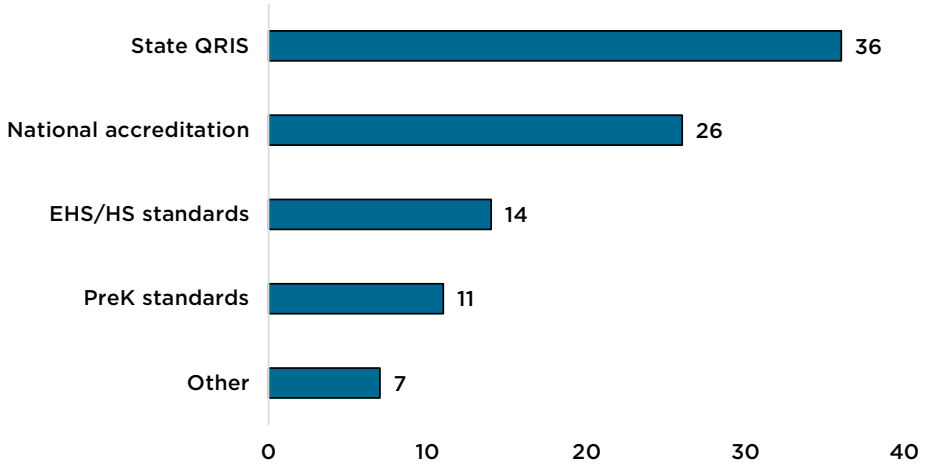
About half of states (23) said their consumer education website includes information about the importance of licensing and licensing/ inspection reports for individual providers, including information about where to find and/or how to interpret licensing reports.

Additionally, states' consumer education websites must include or link to a list of all licensed providers that parents can search. Listing providers who participate in the child care subsidy system, including licensed and license-exempt providers who receive a subsidy, on the website is at the discretion of the Lead Agency. Over half of states (28) reported that they list licensed providers participating in the subsidy system in the searchable list of providers on their website. Additionally, half (25) of states reported they list license-exempt centers and about half (23) list license-exempt family child care providers who participate in the subsidy system in the searchable list of providers. Some states (11) also indicated that they list Head Start, Early Head Start, public pre-kindergarten, and/or federally funded home visiting programs in their searchable list of providers.

States can also choose the specific quality information to provide for each child care provider for whom they have this information, based on what will help families easily understand whether a provider offers services that meet Lead Agency-specific best practices and standards or a nationally recognized, research-based set of criteria. The majority of states (36) reported that QRIS metrics are available for individual providers listed on their website. Other provider-specific quality metrics were less common but about half of states (26) offer national accreditation information, some states (14) included Early Head Start/ Head Start standards, and some states (11) included pre-kindergarten standards (See Figure 6).

Additionally, 13 states indicated that quality metrics can be found for all types of child care providers who they have listed on their website.

**Figure 6.** Number of states that indicated in their CCDF plans that they included each metric of quality that parents can access on the consumer education website




Note: School-age standards and enhanced licensing systems are not included in this figure.
Source: Child Trends' analysis of 2019-2021 CCDF State Plans.

## Consumer Education Websites: How consumer education websites address features of ECE quality and other features that support children's development

Across the three state websites, we reviewed whether the official consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites included information (or linked to information) about the importance of licensing/how to interpret licensing, the importance of quality ratings, and whether the site included provider-specific quality ratings. We also examined whether the child care search included the licensing status and licensing violations for individual providers. See Table 3 for the number of states that included (or linked to information) about licensing and/or quality ratings across the three types of websites.

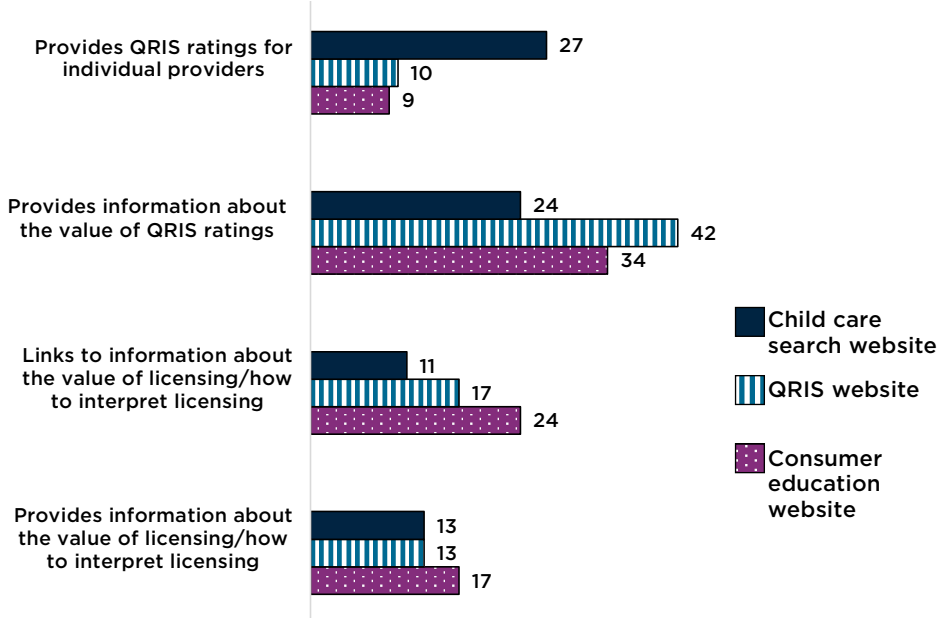
Similar to what states reported in their CCDF state plans, less than half (17) of states' consumer education websites included information for parents about the importance of licensing and why it matters in their child care selection (See Figure 7). States were also less likely to include this information on their QRIS website (13 states) or on their child care search site (13 states). However, states were more likely to link to information about the importance of licensing; 26 states did so on their child care search site, 24 states did so on their consumer education site, and 17 states did so on their QRIS website. Additionally, most states (39) included the licensing status for some, or all the providers listed on their child care search, and over half of states (29) included licensing violations for providers listed on their child care search.

Generally, states were more likely to provide information about the importance of quality ratings compared to information about licensing. States' QRIS websites were more likely than consumer education and child care search sites to explain a QRIS rating and why it matters (42 QRIS sites versus 34 consumer education and 24 child care search sites). States' child care search sites were more likely than QRIS and consumer education websites to offer individual provider quality ratings (27 child care search sites versus 10 QRIS and 9 consumer education sites).

**Table 5.** Number of states that address indicators of supports child development in their consumer education websites

| Website | Access Indicators | Total Number of States |
|---|---|---|
| **Consumer Education (CE)** | Does the website provide an explanation of QRIS ratings (i.e., what *is* a QRIS rating system)? | **34** |
| | Does the website explain why parents should care about/ use QRIS ratings? | **23** |
| | Does the website include QRIS ratings for providers? | **9** |
| | Does the website contain any statement about the value of licensing (why parents should care) or how to interpret licensing? | **17** |
| | Does the website contain a LINK that directs parents to another website on how to interpret licensing? | **24** |
| **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)** | Does the website provide an explanation of QRIS ratings (i.e., what is a QRIS rating system)? | **42** |
| | Does the website explain why parents should care about/ use QRIS ratings? | **32** |
| | Does the website include QRIS ratings for providers? | **17** |
| | Does the website contain any statement about the value of licensing (why parents should care) or how to interpret licensing? | **13** |
| | Does the website contain a LINK that directs parents to another website on how to interpret licensing? | **17** |
| **Child Care Search** | Does the website provide an explanation of QRIS ratings (i.e., what is a QRIS rating system? | **24** |
| | Does the website include QRIS ratings for providers? | **27** |
| | Does the website contain any statement about the value of licensing (why parents should care) or how to interpret licensing? | **13** |
| | Does the website contain a LINK that directs parents to another website on how to interpret licensing? | **11** |
| | Includes information about individual provider's licensing Status | **39** |
| | Includes information about individual provider's licensing violations | **29** |
| | Includes the option to search by child age | **29** |

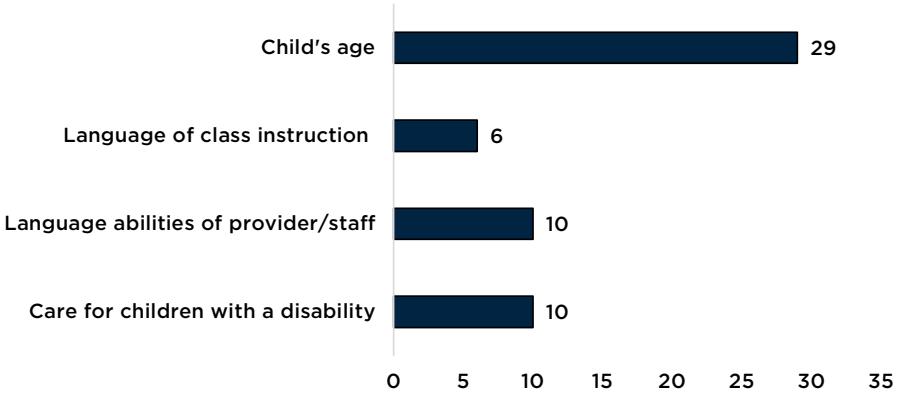
**Figure 7.** Number of states that provide features of ECE quality through states' consumer education websites




Source: Child Trends' analysis of state consumer education websites in 2020.

Lastly, related to parents' access to child care information that meets children's unique needs, in over half (29) of states families can search for care by a child's age; some states' child care search sites (10) allow for parents to search for providers that care for children with a disability; and some states also have the functionality for families to search for providers by the language abilities of staff (10) or the language of class instruction (6) See Figure 8 for additional state-by-state information.

**Figure 8.** Number of states with a child care search engine that allows parents to search by features that meet children's unique needs to support their development




Source: Child Trends' analysis of state child care search engines in 2020.

## Summary

Generally, for the *supports child development* dimension, states were more likely to provide information about the importance of quality ratings compared to licensing, and some states offer child care search engines with features that help identify programs that meet children's unique needs. Child care options are searchable by a child's age in over half of states. However, only some states allow for parents to search for providers that care for children with a disability; and similarly, only some states allow families to search for providers by the language abilities of staff or the language of class instruction.

### State Highlight:

**Utah**'s child care search, which is housed on the state's consumer education website, is the only state to offer all three of the website features identified as those that meet a child's unique needs. The search allows families to indicate the unique health needs/disability of their child. The provider's description then includes the specific needs with which the program has experience and/or training, and the number of staff that have received the Office of Child Care Special Needs Endorsement. The provider's description also includes the languages spoken by the provider/staff.

https://careaboutchildcare.utah.gov/parent/search.aspx

## Meets Parents' Needs

The *meets parents' needs* dimension of the access definition captures the extent to which parents have access to ECE options that align with their family's needs for child care arrangements. It encompasses indicators such as: 1) parent's preference for program type, 2) the location of the program/availability of transportation, and 3) program hours of operation or ECE features that align with a family's needs).[17] Prior research indicates that families' child care preferences differ by child, parent, family, and community characteristics.

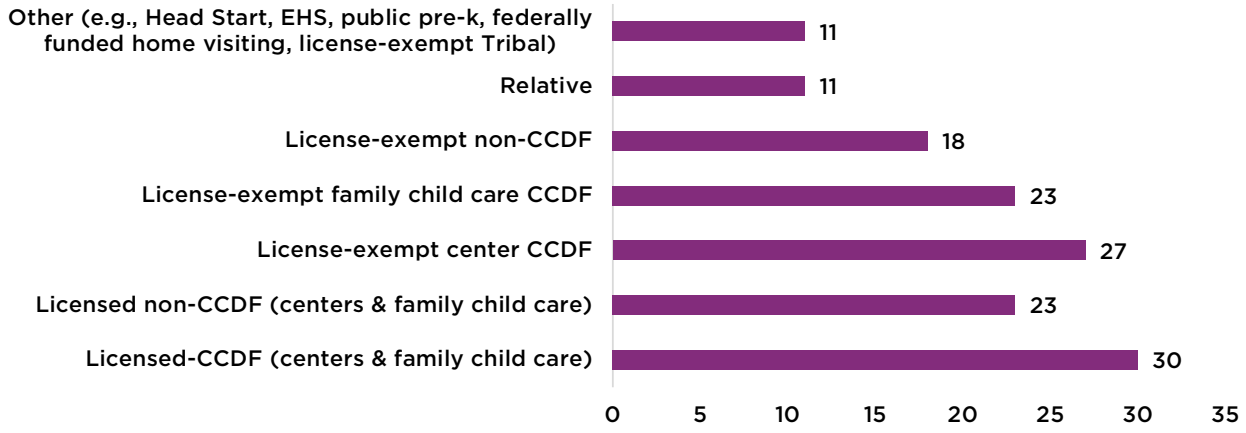
For this report, we analyzed the *meets parents' needs* dimension by examining the extent to which parents have access to information about programs that align with families' needs for child care arrangements, including 1) preferences/interest in different program types, 2) the location of the program/availability of transportation, and 3) program hours of operation. We also examined access to information about child care available in languages other than English.

### States' FY 2019-2021 CCDF Plans: States' strategies for meeting parents' needs through consumer education

#### Program Type

In their CCDF state plans, states were asked to list the types of providers included in their consumer education website search engine. As seen in Figure 9, states most frequently included licensed providers participating in CCDF (30) and license-exempt centers participating in CCDF (27). The least frequently included providers were relative care providers (11) and other providers (11) which included Head Start, Early Head Start, public pre-kindergarten, and license-exempt Tribal care providers.

**Figure 9.** Number of states that reported in their CCDF state plan that they include each type of ECE provider in their consumer education website search




Source: Child Trends' analysis of 2019-2021 State CCDF Plans.

### Providing consumer education to families that speak a language other than English

National data show that one in five individuals speak a language other than English at home.[18] States' consumer education efforts should provide the widest possible access to people with limited English proficiency. In their FY 2019-2021 CCDF state plans, the majority (32) of states said they offer their consumer website(s) in languages other than English.

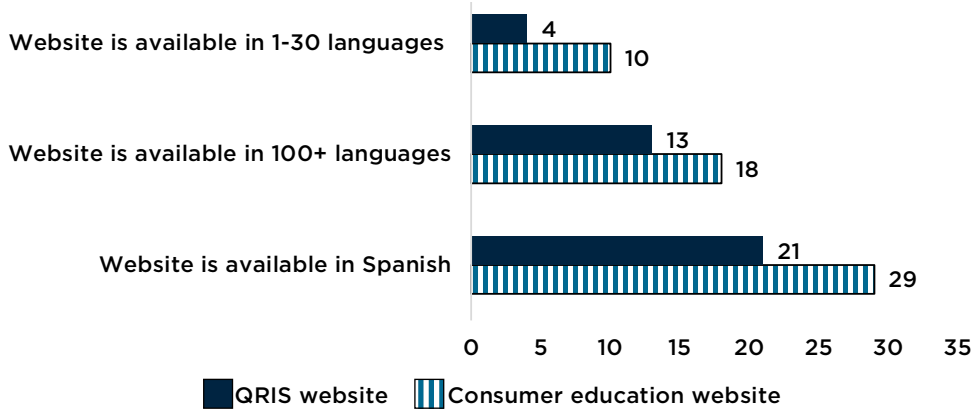
## Consumer Education Websites: How consumer education websites meet parents' needs when seeking care

### Language availability on consumer education websites

We examined states' efforts to make consumer education available in languages other than English, to allow for more equitable access to information about child care. Because Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language in the U.S.,[19] we explored whether states' consumer education websites were available in Spanish. We also explored the number of other languages beyond English and Spanish to which websites could be fully translated. The research team determined the number of other languages the website could be translated into by selecting the translate option on the website and counting the number of languages available in the menu. The websites with many language options available generally used a website translation service such as Google translate.

As seen in Figure 10, the consumer education website was fully available in Spanish in 29 States. An additional 4 states provided part of their consumer education website in Spanish (i.e. some content or headings were translated into Spanish). States' QRIS websites were fully available in Spanish in 21 states.

**Figure 10.** Number of states' consumer education websites offered in multiple languages




Source: Child Trends' analysis of state consumer education and QRIS websites in 2020.

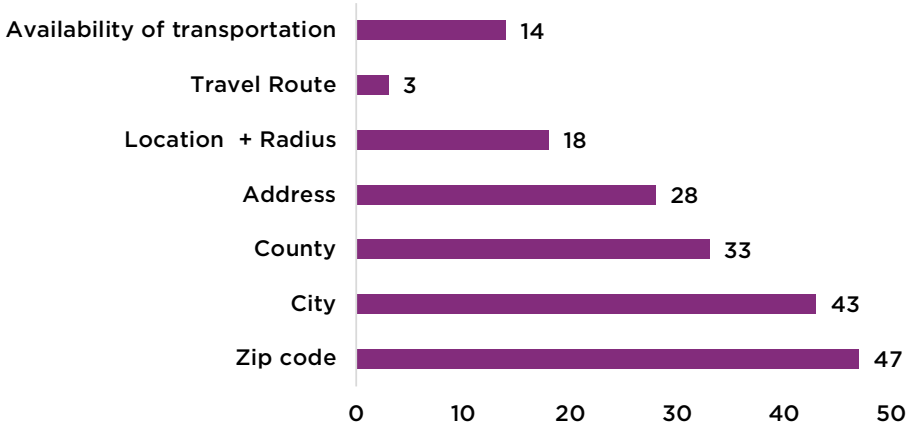
In addition to English and Spanish, just over half of states (28) have consumer education websites available in multiple languages and 17 states have QRIS websites in multiple languages. While 23 States did not offer their consumer education website in a language other than English and Spanish, 10 States had consumer education websites that were available in 1 to 30 different languages and 18 States had consumer education websites available in over 100 languages. Similarly, 13 states had QRIS websites available in over 100 languages.[c]

### Program Location

We explored the extent to which families can access information about child care programs that are close to their home or work location or along a specific public transportation route. Many states have child care search engines that allow parents to search by location—either by ZIP code (47), city (43), county (33), an address (28), a location radius (18), a travel route (3), or whether transportation is available (14) (See Figure 11).

[c] We did not examine whether child care search engines were available in multiple languages.

**Figure 11.** Number of states that have a child care search engine that allows a search by geographic location features

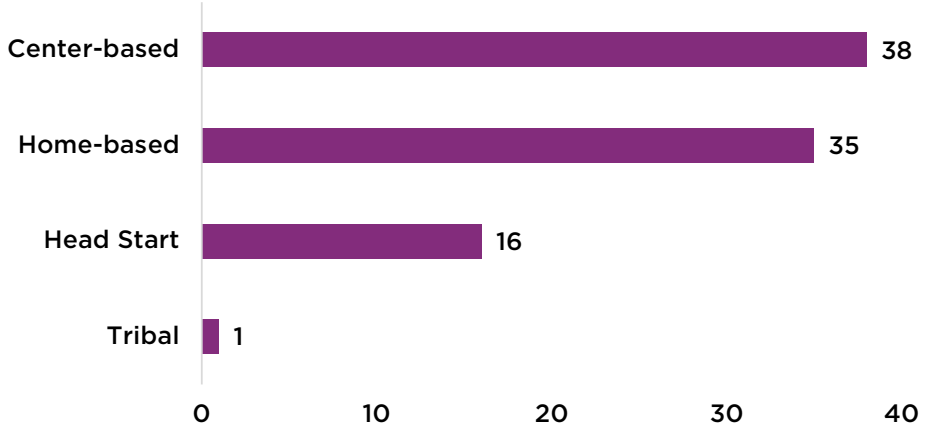



Source: Child Trends' analysis of state child care search engines in 2020.

### Program type

We also explored the extent to which families can find the type of care they prefer through the child care search website. Most states allow families to search for center-based programs (38) and home-based programs (35). However, fewer states had search filters to locate a Head Start program (16); and while not all states have Tribal child care programs, [d] only one state (AZ) offered the option to search for a Tribal child care program.

**Figure 12.** Number of states with a child care search engine that allows search by type of care




Source: Child Trends' analysis of state child care search engines in 2020

[d] https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/tribal_grantee_contact_list_march_2021.pdf

## State Highlight:

**Arizona** allows families to search for Tribal child care programs. In the advanced search options, families may select the regional Tribal child care partnerships they are interested in.

https://azchildcareprovidersearch.azdes.gov/#

### Hours of operation

In nearly half of the states' search engines (22) parents can search by the programs' hours of operation, and the majority of states (35) provide individual providers' hours of operation in search results. Additionally, in 16 states families can find out if individual providers offer specific, non-standard hours of care, such as care on the weekend.

## Summary

Generally, states' consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites have features that are important to parents when finding care. Over half of states provide their consumer education website in Spanish and/or multiple languages. States' child care search engines are especially important in meeting parents' needs when searching for care. Most states' child care search engines allow parents to search by several different types of locations and in many states, families can search for center-based and home-based child care programs. However, the ability to search for Head Start/Early Head Start programs was far less common and only one state website had features that helped families search for Tribal programs. Moreover, less than half of states' child care search engines included a program's hours of operation as a function that families could search by, which suggests a need for more states to add this critical feature to their search filters.

In total, we examined the availability of 15 searchable features related to the meets parents' needs dimension, on states' child care search engines (see Table 4 for the number of states that offered each searchable feature related to meets parents' needs on their state's child care search website). Eight states (AZ, FL, GA, KY, MA, MI, MN, and WI) allow parents to search for care for 10 or more of the 15 aspects of care listed. Of these states, Arizona included the most searchable features, with 12 of the 15 features we examined. While states are only required to have their child care programs searchable by ZIP code, this scan of child care search engines suggests that states have room to expand the number of search features available to meet parents' needs.

Given the role that child care search engines play in helping to meet parents' needs, states should also ensure that their other websites (i.e. consumer education and QRIS websites) link to their child care search website. We found that 31 states link their consumer education website to the child care search engine (listed on childcare.gov) and 9 states integrate these two websites; additionally, 9 states integrate their QRIS and child care search engines (see Figure 2).[e]

[e] Our website scan did not include looking at whether QRIS websites linked to child care search engines.

**Table 6.** Number of states with information about child care that meets their needs*

| Website | Access Indicators | Total Number of States |
|---|---|---|
| **Child Care Search Website: Providers are searchable by** | ZIP code | 47 |
| | City | 43 |
| | County | 33 |
| | Home Address | 28 |
| | Location+ radius | 18 |
| | Route to and from work/ school | 3 |
| | Transportation | 14 |
| | Type of Care: Center-based | 38 |
| | Type of Care: Home-based (including Group Homes) | 35 |
| | Type of Care: Group Home | 11 |
| | Type of Care: Head Start | 16 |
| | Type of Care: Tribal | 1 |
| | Star/QRIS Ratings | 27 |
| | Child Age | 29 |
| | Hours of Operation | 22 |

*5 states do not have a QRIS.
* We Could not access the child care search website in one state.

## Aggregate Analyses Across Access Dimensions

In addition to examining how states facilitated access by each dimension, we also compared state profiles across all four access dimensions. For this aggregate analyses, we developed thirteen indicators to assess how states' websites facilitate access to child care information across the four access dimensions (See Table 5) and across their websites. The thirteen indicators were created based on overlapping measures used in the website scans for each, individual access dimension. For instance, the indicator "information about QRIS is available on at least one site" for the aggregate analyses was based on the measures "explanation of QRIS" and "does the website explain why parents should care about QRIS" from the consumer education, QRIS, and child care search website scans in the *supports child development* review. A state was marked as having "information about QRIS" if the state had an explanation of QRIS and/or if they provided information about why parents should care about QRIS ratings on at least one of their websites—consumer education, QRIS, and/or child care search. Based on these analyses, several patterns emerged.

**Table 7.** Number of states with each access indicator on at least one website (i.e., consumer education (CE), quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), and child care search websites)

| Website | Access Indicators | Total Number of States |
|---|---|---|
| **Reasonable Effort** | 3 Integrated Websites | **6** |
| **Affordability** | Information about applying for a subsidy or a subsidy application link is available on at least one website | **49** |
| | Information about publicly-funded ECE programs (e.g. Head Start, public pre-kindergarten) is available on at least one site | **9** |
| | Provider's price is available in search results | **9** |
| | Whether a provider accepts a subsidy is available in search results | **28** |
| **Supports Child Development** | Information about QRIS (i.e., what it is and why it should matter to parents) is available on at least one site | **43** |
| | Providers' QRIS ratings are available on at least one site | **33** |
| | Information about licensing is available on at least one site | **25** |
| | Licensing status is available in search results | **39** |
| | Licensing violations are available in search results | **29** |
| **Meets Parents' Needs** | Website (CE and/or QRIS site) is fully available in Spanish | **33** |
| | Website (CE and/or QRIS) is fully available in 100+ other Languages | **21** |
| | Child care search has comprehensive search filters (i.e., has at least half of the 15 indicators) | **27** |
| | **Total number of states that had 10 or more of these access indicators** | **8** |

Related to *reasonable effort*, few states (6) have integrated all three of their websites—consumer education, QRIS, and child care search. Beyond including information about child care subsidies (which all but two states included in at least one of their websites), states were less focused on information related to *affordability*. Only nine states included information about publicly funded, no-cost programs like Head Start and public pre-kindergarten on at least one website. Additionally, only nine states included price information for individual providers in search results or allowed parents to search by a particular weekly price. Over half of the states also included subsidy receipt as a search filter.

For the *supports child development* dimension, the majority of states provided information on at least one of their websites about the importance of QRIS, QRIS ratings for individual providers, the importance of licensing, and licensing status/licensing violations for individual providers. Overall, information about the quality of care was common across states.

For the *meets parents' needs* dimension, the majority of states (33) offered one or more of their consumer education websites fully in Spanish. Nearly half (21) offered one or more of their websites in 100 or more languages other than English and Spanish through a website translation service (e.g., Google translate). Additionally, over half (27) of states have comprehensive search filters (i.e. has at least 8 of the 15 indicators identified for the dimension such as search by different location filters, type of care, child's age, and hours of operation) included in their child care search engine. This suggests that many states are offering information about child care that helps meet parents' needs, although most of the information addressing this dimension is only located on the child care search engine.

Across the four access dimensions, some states included more of the access indicators than others. Eight states (CO, FL, GA, MI, MN, RI, TX, WA) had 10 or more of the 13 indicators included in at least one of their consumer education websites. Three of these states (CO, GA, MN) are states that have integrated all three of their websites (i.e. consumer education, QRIS, and child care search), which suggests that they comprehensively addressed access to child care information in one location for parents. The other five states (three of which integrate two of their child care information websites) were able to provide comprehensive information across their sites. Collectively, these findings indicate that most states have progress to make in providing features on their websites that facilitate family access to ECE.

### State Highlight:

**Georgia**'s integrated website (i.e. it's consumer education, QRIS, and child care search website features are combined) comprehensively includes website features that facilitates parents' access to child care information that is easy to find, addresses affordability, informs child development, and helps meet parents' needs.

https://families.decal.ga.gov/

## User-Experience Scan

**Purpose:** To understand the experiences of parents who search for child care information online, the Child Trends research team conducted a user experience scan. Whereas the review of consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites focused on the types of information and search features that parents can access on the websites once they find them, the user experience scan examined the results parents would encounter as they started a typical online search for child care.

**Sample**: To assess a diverse set of community-based search experiences, researchers randomly selected 10 cities/ towns, one in each of the 10 ACF regions. Using a website for random generators, researchers identified a state within each of the 10 regions, and within each state identified a city/ town.

Table 4 provides a list of the cities/towns that were included in the user experience scan and select measures of their demographic characteristics. Across the 10 cities/town rates of poverty ranged from a low of 4.5% to a high of 22.3%, median household income ranged from a low of $27,345 to a high of $80,000, and the percentage of households with broadband internet access ranged from a low of 67.6% to a high of 90.1%.

**Table 8.** Demographic characteristics of 10 cities/towns included in the user experience scan

| ACF Region | State | City/Town | County | City Population | County Population[A] | % in Poverty | Median Household Income | % of Households with a broadband internet subscription |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region 1 | New Hampshire | Hinsdale | Cheshire | 1,524 | | 19.20% | $42,278 | 86.50% |
| Region 2 | New York | Acra | Greene | 529 | 47,188 | 13.30% | $53,617 | 71.60% |
| Region 3 | West Virginia | Elkview | Kanawha | 1,222 | | 18.10% | $27,345 | 71.70% |
| Region 4 | South Carolina | Pinopolis | Berkeley | 948 | 205,130 | 12.20% | $69,398 | 82.80% |
| Region 5 | Indiana | Battle Ground | Tippecanoe | 1,963 | | 4.50% | $80,000 | 90.80% |
| Region 6 | Louisiana | Terrytown | Jefferson Parish | 23,319 | 428,350 | 13.90% | $56,069 | 84.90% |
| Region 7 | Iowa | Creston | Union | 7,788 | | 17.50% | $43,432 | 75.80% |
| Region 8 | Montana | Noxon | Sanders | 218 | 11,689 | 19.50% | $36,984 | 67.60% |
| Region 9 | California | Tehachapi | Kern | 12,432 | | 22.30% | $46,823 | 67.60% |
| Region 10 | Alaska | Kodiak | Kodiak Island | 5,968 | | 9.50% | $71,554 | 80.00% |

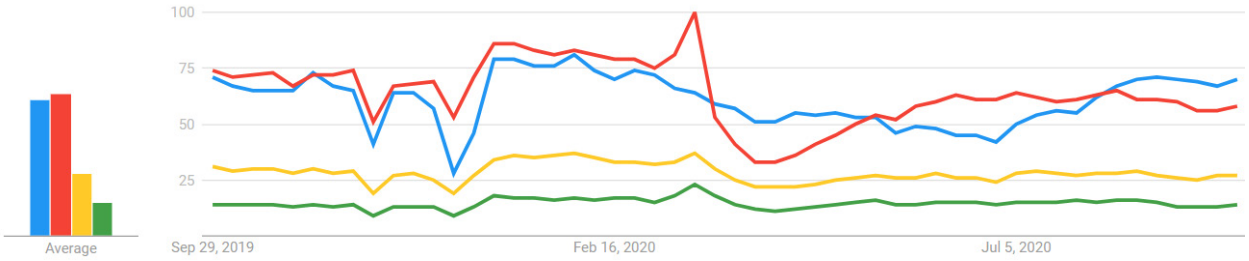
[A] Demographic data of the county/parish are provided when the American Community Survey did not have demographic data for the city/town

**Methods:** To re-create the experience of parents' online child care search, researchers used a Google platform and searched three terms: 1) preschool near me [city/town, state]; 2) daycare near me [city/town, state]; and 3) child care near me [city/town, state]. For each search, researchers cleared their browser history so that previous searching history would not bias the search results.

Researchers selected the terms preschool, daycare, and child care based on a report of consumer education in Minnesota showing that these were the three most commonly searched terms when looking for care for young children. As shown in Figure 14, a review of Google Trends provides a breakdown of the relative popularity of these search terms across the nation. The terms "preschool" and "daycare" have

similarly high rates of search, compared to the terms “child care” or “childcare.” This scan uses the term “child care” as it has a higher rate of search compared to “childcare.”

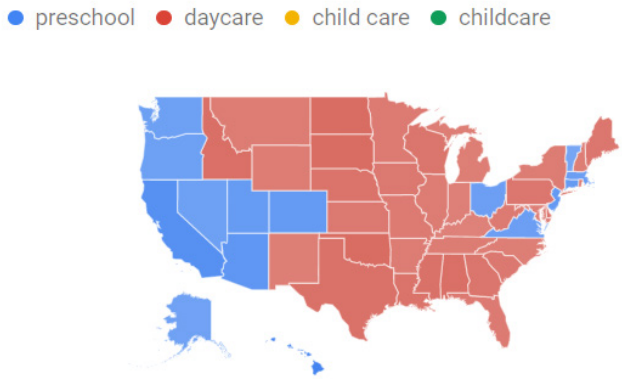
**Figure 14.** Google Trends analysis of the relative popularity of search terms, “preschool,” “daycare,” “child care,” and “childcare” from September 2019 to September 2020*




*Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term.

Figure 15 shows the relative popularity of the search terms across the states. “Daycare” is the most popular search term in the highest number of states, followed by the term, “preschool.” Neither the term “child care” nor “childcare” was the most popular term searched in any state. In the map, darker shades indicate where a term has a higher probability of being searched.

**Figure 15.** Google Trends analysis of the relative popularity of search terms, “preschool,” “daycare,” “child care,” and “childcare” from September 2019 to September 2020




**Measures**: A 2006 study found that 73 percent of search engine users do not look beyond the first page of results.[20] Therefore, what appears among the first page of search results can have significant influence in channeling the attention of parents searching for child care. This user experience scan captured information about:

1. The types of websites that appeared in the first page of results for each search.
2. The extent to which states’ consumer education websites appeared in the first page of results for each search.

**Findings:** The user experience scan found that of the 10 local searches conducted, using 3 distinct search terms, the websites examined in this report (including consumer education, QRIS, and child care search engine) only appeared in the first page of results for 5 of the 30 searches (17%).

In the majority of local child care searches, ads by privately funded child care search websites appeared most frequently. While these resources may provide some helpful information, they have limitations:

- Private child care search websites are limited in the number and types of ECE providers that are included on their site. In addition, the providers who are included on their site either pay to be included and/or pay so that they are among the first set of providers who appear. There are concerns for potential bias in private search engines due to the manner in which child care centers get included or boosted on the platform to the top results. None of the top three private sites provide a more comprehensive listing of child care providers when compared to the state sites. Care.com had the lowest number of providers, with the vast majority of those providers being babysitters and nannies.
- Private child care search websites are limited in the information that they provide about the quality of a provider. None of the private websites provided direct information about QRIS ratings, except in the instance of childcarecenter.us where the QRIS rating was built into the state license, given that licensing information was already readily available on the site.
- Carelulu.com was the most common search result, always appearing as the first or second result regardless of location. This website had the most user-friendly search engine, with a comprehensive search tool, and provided the most information about each site. Carelulu.com has a specific template for each site to promote more consistent information across sites (a feature that is lacking in the private search engines as well as state websites). Notably, they fall short when it comes to licensing information. While childcarecenter.us provides the most comprehensive licensing information, it is also a less user-friendly site.
- None of the private search engines provided information about Head Start centers.

While each state may have federally funded and/or state managed child care search engines, the majority of search results that come up when a parent looking for prospective care searches "[city, state] daycare/child care/preschool near me" are privately owned search engines. In order to more adequately capture the parent experience, we ran the three most commonly occurring private child care search engines through the same protocol used for state-run child care search engines. The three most common child care search engines from our results were carelulu.com as the top result, followed by care.com and childcarecenter.us.

- The content provided across the websites varies due to the intended focus of the website; care.com in particular has a heavy focus on babysitters and nannies and provides less information on child care businesses.
- While carelulu.com and childcarecenter.us have a more direct focus on child care businesses, childcarecenter.us is the only site that provides in-depth information regarding licensing and licensing inspection reports. All three private websites note that they are not responsible for accuracy of licensing information, making it important to have direct links to licensing information for each site.
- There are concerns for potential bias in private search engines due to the way in which child care centers get included or boosted on the platform to the top results. None of the three sites provide a more comprehensive listing of child care providers when compared to the state sites. Care.com had the lowest number of providers, with the majority of those providers being babysitters and nannies.

Overall, private child care search engines can be a good tool for helping parents locate care in states where the state developed child care search engine is not as user-friendly or complete in the information it provides. However, private child care search engines provide information on only a subset of providers, and the sites have high potential for bias in both the order and availability of information shown based on the financial contributions of participating programs.

# Discussion of Findings

Reviewing CCDF State plans and state consumer education websites using the family-centered definition of access revealed strengths and areas for improvement.

- **States' consumer education websites can be difficult to find and navigate.** As noted throughout this report, only a handful of states had integrated all three of their consumer education, QRIS, and child care search engine features into a single website. Additionally, few (5) states reported in their CCDF plans that they are currently working on search optimization for the consumer education site, and the user experience scan found that only 17 percent of the user searches included state-developed consumer education websites. This suggests that states have the opportunity to further address this dimension of access and improve the ease with which parents can locate and navigate the consumer education websites.

- **While states provided information about child care assistance on their consumer education websites, the sites offered limited information to help families find affordable child care options and about other financial family supports.** Our analyses found that the states largely focused on providing information on their consumer education websites about child care assistance. States were much less likely to provide information about publicly available options such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and state pre-kindergarten programs. States were also less likely to include programs such as Head Start or state pre-kindergarten as search filters in their search engines. While states are not required to include information about these free or low-cost publicly available options in their consumer education website or child care search, this is an area for future improvements. Only about half of all consumer education websites provide information about other financial supports including LIHEAP, WIC, SNAP, and TANF, suggesting that states might also expand the availability of this information for families. And lastly, only a few states provided price information for individual providers. Given how important price is to a family's child care decision, states should also expand the availability provider's prices in their child care search results.

- **States commonly offered information related to child care quality on consumer education websites, but few states provided child care search options that help meet children's unique needs.** States more commonly provided information related to features of quality ratings compared to details about licensing. Additionally, only some states offer child care search engines with features that *help meet children's unique needs*, such as allowing parents to search for providers that care for children with a disability or being able to search for providers by the language abilities of staff or the language of class instruction. Offering information about the importance of licensing and expanding the search engine features to help more fully meet children's unique needs could help states improve parents' access to information that supports their child's development.

- **States' consumer education, QRIS, and child care search websites generally have many features that help meet parents' needs**. This includes offering consumer education websites in Spanish and/or multiple languages and allowing parents to search by several location options and program types. However, the ability to search for Head Start/Early Head Start programs was less common and only one state allowed families to search for Tribal programs. Moreover, less than half of states' child care search engines included a program's hours of operation as a function that families could search by. Given that employment hours and schedules can often be a barrier to finding care, more states should consider adding a search filter for hours of operation or non-standard hour care. While states are only required to have their child care programs searchable by ZIP code, this scan of child care search engines suggests that states could further meet parents' needs by expanding the number of search features available in the search engine.

- **Only a few states addressed all four dimensions of access through their consumer education websites.** When examining whether states had the 13 indicators of access across dimensions in at least one of their consumer education websites (i.e., consumer education, QRIS, and/or child care search websites), only a few states (8) were able to comprehensively address indicators of access across the four dimensions (i.e., had 10 or more of the 13 indicators) through the three websites.

## Next Steps for States

**Learn from the consumer education strategies of other states.** This report provides a landscape of the information and features provided on states' consumer education, QRIS and child care search websites using the access definition as a framework. State administrators can use information about what is available on other websites to inform the continued development of their own websites.

**Consider options to improve search engine optimization.** The user experience scan provides evidence that when searching for care online, parents may not easily find the state-developed consumer education websites. Evidence from the user experience scan suggests a need for states to consider (more) search engine optimization (SEO). SEO refers to on-page and off-page design strategies to improve the ranking of a website in search engine results. Given that most search engine users do not look beyond the first page of results, what appears among the first page of search results can have significant influence in channeling the attention of parents searching for child care.[21]

The user experience scan found that of the 10 local searches conducted, using 3 distinct search terms, state-developed consumer education websites only appeared in the first page of results for 5 of the 30 searches. In the vast majority of local child care searches, advertisements by privately funded child care search websites appeared most frequently.

Additionally, only 5 states reported in their CCDF state plans that they were utilizing search engine optimization for their consumer education website, further suggesting that this is an area that states might want to explore.

**Integrate or link websites.** States might consider combining websites, when possible, to provide one place for parents to go to find child care information. However, if full integration is not possible, states can identify options for more clear and user-friendly links between websites. Linking of websites will allow parents more seamless access to the full range of consumer education supports. For example, while state consumer education and QRIS websites often contained similar information, the QRIS sites provided more information related to understanding, interpreting, and identifying child care quality ratings.

**Conduct research on the reach and effectiveness of various consumer education strategies.** This descriptive landscape provides information about states' consumer education plans and how states share information and features on their websites. Additional analyses on the reach or efficacy of various strategies could help to better understand which strategies have the greatest reach and which topics of information have the greatest influence families' child care decisions.

# Study Limitations

**Limitations of the Scan of CCDF Plans**

- The CCDF plans are states' intentions for consumer education and do not necessarily reflect the strategies implemented by states. A variety of contexts may cause states to update or otherwise not follow through on their consumer education plans as intended. Interviews with state CCDF administrators and partnering community organization leaders will be critical for learning about the work that states are doing to engage families outside of consumer education websites and child care search engine websites.

**Limitations of the Scan of Websites**

- States can readily change the information that they share online and update the functionality of their websites, which means that our findings are reflective of the status of consumer education online efforts during a specific period of time.
- An assessment of website content and function can be imprecise and subject to some degree of inter-researcher variability. States may provide certain pieces of information in links, PDF, or

re-routes to other websites. While researchers performed thorough reviews of websites, and 26 percent of websites were double coded, it is possible that certain aspects of content and function could be missed.

- The research activities did not assess consumer education efforts beyond websites. Future research should address the effectiveness of other methods to engage parents and provide useful information.

# Appendix A: Map to Three Consumer Education Websites from Childcare.gov

On the main childcare.gov webpage, visitors are able to select a state or territory of interest. Once a state is selected, a visitor is then able to select either "Find Child Care Now in [State]" or "Get Child Care Resources for [State]" (See Image 1).

The "Get Child Care Resources" tab directs visitors to a page of resources. This snapshot examines three websites linked on this page: 1) Consumer Education website; 2) Quality Rating and Information System (QRIS) website; and 3) Child Care Search Website. Image 2 provides an example from the state of Alabama the types of resources available to parents.

**Image 1:** Opening webpage for childcare.gov website

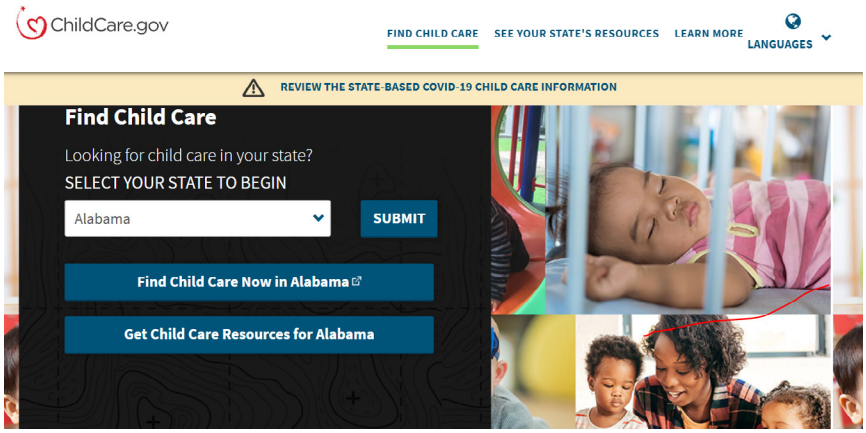
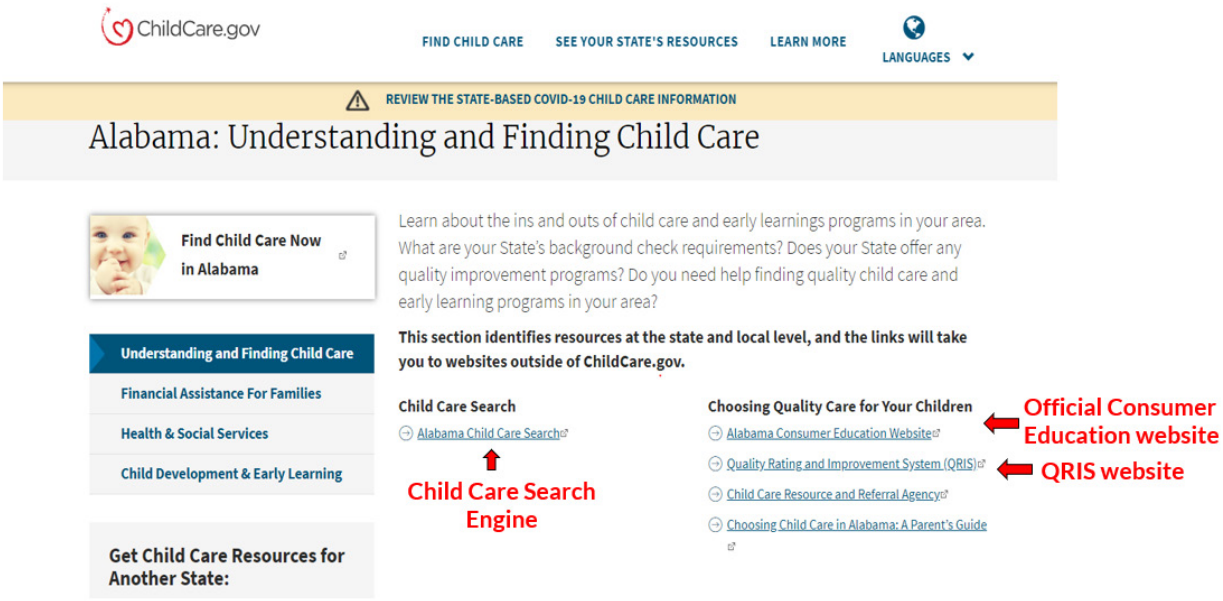



**Image 2:** Webpage found under the tab "Get Child Care Resources for [State]"



# Appendix B. Full List of Website Measures

**Table B1.** Full list of original website measures and decisions for including measures in the report

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **What online resources do states provide to support web-based consumer education?** | | | | | |
| Does the state have an official consumer education website? | Yes | Reasonable effort | Yes | Yes | |
| Does the state have a separate QRIS website? | Yes | Reasonable effort | | Yes | |
| Is there a child care search tool on the consumer education website? | Yes | Reasonable effort | | Yes | |
| Is the child care search website included on the consumer education website the same as on childcare.gov? | Yes | Reasonable effort | | Yes | |
| Total count of CE and QRIS websites found. | | | | No | Wasn't a helpful piece of data; we looked at integration of websites instead |
| **Can parents who speak languages other than English fully access the consumer education website?** | | | | | |
| Is website available in Spanish language? | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| In how many languages (other than English and Spanish) is the website available? | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Is the full website available in other languages or only parts? | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Can parents access and navigate the website using a mobile device? | No | | | No | |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is the mobile loading speed? | No | | | No | |
| What is the desktop loading speed? | No | | | No | |
| Is the website mobile friendly? | No | | | No | |
| What elements make the website not mobile friendly? | No | | | No | |
| Does the website provide a hotline phone number for parents to call? | Yes | Meets parents' needs | Yes | Yes | |
| **QRIS: Can parents learn QRIS ratings of providers? / Can parents learn what QRIS ratings mean?** | | | | | |
| Does the website include an explanation of QRIS ratings or link to a QRIS website? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Does the website explain why parents should care about QRIS or use QRIS ratings to inform search? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| How does the website describe the importance of QRIS? | | | | No | Repetitive to other QRIS information measures above |
| Does the website provide QRIS ratings? | Yes | Supports child development | Yes | Yes | |
| **Licensing: Can parents learn about the licensing status of providers/ Can parents learn what licensing means?** | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Does the CE website include an explanation of licensing or how to interpret licensing? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How does the website describe the importance of licensing? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Does the website contain a link that directs parents to a website on how to interpret licensing? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| **Can parents learn about free or reduced cost child care?** | | | | | |
| Does the website provide information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Does the website provided a link to information on how to apply for a child care subsidy? | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Does the website provide information about identifying free child care? | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Can parents learn about other supports available to them? | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| **Can parents learn about financial assistance programs to support themselves and their children?** | | | | | |
| TANF | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| CCDF | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Early Head Start/ Head Start | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| SNAP | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| WIC | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Job Programs | No | | | No | |
| Other | No | | | No | |
| **COVID-19** | No | | | No | |
| Does the website mention COVID-19? | No | | | No | |
| Does the website mention if some or all of provider are closed? | No | | | No | |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Does website list specific providers who are open? | No | | | No | |
| What additional COVID-19 information does website contain? | No | | | No | |
| Does the website provide information about plans for providers to re-open? | No | | | No | |
| **Child Care Search website measures** | | | | | |
| **Overview of Child Care Search Resources** | | | | | |
| Is this child care search engine listed on the childcare.gov website? | Yes | Reasonable effort | | Yes | |
| Does the child care search engine website link back to the official consumer education website? | Yes | Reasonable effort | | Yes | |
| What website hosts the child care search engine? | Yes | Reasonable effort | | Yes | |
| Is there a child care information hotline provided on the website? | Yes | Reasonable effort | Yes | Yes | |
| How many providers can parents review on the website? | | | | No | We didn't include measures under this question in final analyses since we didn't have the proportion of providers available on the website |
| What is the total number of providers listed on the website? | | | | No | |
| # of center-based providers | | | | No | |
| # of home-based providers | | | | No | |
| # of EHS /HS providers | | | | No | |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Does the website provide information for providers across the state or only regionally/local? | | | | No | |
| **Can parents learn about free or reduced cost child care?** | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Does the website provide information on how to apply for child care subsidy? | Yes | Affordability | Yes | Yes | |
| Does the website provide a LINK to information on hour to apply for child care subsidy? | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Does the website provide information about identifying FREE child care? | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| **QRIS: Can parents learn QRIS ratings of providers? / Can parents learn what QRIS ratings mean?** | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Are there QRIS ratings of providers on child care search website? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Does the website include an explanation of QRIS ratings or a link to the QRIS website? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| **Licensing: Can parents learn about the licensing status of providers? / Can parents learn what licensing means?** | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Licensing status | Yes | Supports child development | Yes | Yes | |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Licensing violations | Yes | Supports child development | Yes | Yes | |
| Licensing status of workforce members | | | | No | |
| Does the website include a link to outside website that providers licensing information about facility? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Does the website provide information about the importance of licensing? | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Does the website link to another CE page about licensing? | | | | No | |
| Does the website provide ANY information about licensing? | | | | No | Repetitive with above items |
| **By what features can parents search for providers?** | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Location (ZIP code, city, county, home address, location and radius, route to and from work) | Yes | Meets parents' needs | Yes | Yes | |
| Transportation | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Type of care (center, group home, EHS/ HS, Tribal) | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Star/ QRIS Ratings | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Child Age | Yes | Meets parents' needs or Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Hours of Operation | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Other | | | | No | Not clearly defined |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Can parents find information on provider characteristics that are important for them for identifying "high quality" care?** | | | | | |
| Provider type | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Accept subsidy | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Child disability status | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Trauma-informed care | | | | No | No state provided this information |
| Child age | Yes | Meets parents' needs or Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Type of schedule/ Shift | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Price | Yes | Affordability | | Yes | |
| Availability (Open seats) | Yes | Meets parents' needs or Reasonable effort | | No | |
| Enrollment capacity | Yes | Meets parents' needs or Reasonable effort | | No | |
| Date that information on availability was last updated | Yes | Meets parents' needs or Reasonable effort | | No | |
| Other details on availability | Yes | Meets parents' needs or Reasonable effort | | No | |
| Quality/ QRIS ratings | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Language ability of staff | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Language of instruction | Yes | Supports child development | | Yes | |
| Race/ethnicity of staff | Yes | Supports child development | | No | No state provided this information |

| Consumer Education (CE) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) website measures | Does the measure align with the Access definition | Which Access dimension does it most align with? | Does the measure align with reauthorization requirements? | Included in the report? | Other reason for not including in report |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information about community | | | | No | Measure was unclear and therefore had a lot of missing data |
| Staff background checks | | | | No | No state provided this information |
| Transportation | Yes | Meets parents' needs | | Yes | |
| Meals provided to children | No | | | | |
| Phone number | No | | | | |
| Other | No | | | | |
| Provider statements | No | | Yes | | |
| **COVID-19** | No | | | No | |
| Does the website make ANY mention of COVID-19? | No | | | No | |
| Does the website mention some/all of providers are closed? | No | | | No | |
| Does website list specific providers who are open? | No | | | No | |
| What additional COVID specific information does website contain? | No | | | No | |
| Does the website include plans for re-opening? | No | | | No | |
| Does the website provide information about child care for essential workers? | No | | | No | |

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