



Introduction to Child Care Aware® of America's Child Care Licensing Database: Initial Findings



Each year, across the country, advocates, state licensing staff, and policymakers eagerly awaited the release of the Child Care Aware® of America reports, *We Can Do Better* (published in odd years, on licensing centers and preschools) and *Leaving Children to Chance* (published in even years, on licensing family home-based child care). States used our reports to make their cases for effective standards and rules for child care, and effective monitoring of those rules.

The ultimate success of these reports came when many of the best practices on which they focused—such as, comprehensive background checks, inspections and monitoring, and stronger training requirements for education and professional development—were included in the reauthorization of the federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in 2014. Now that all states are federally required to have stronger licensing rules and monitoring, the focus of our reports can shift.

Following reauthorization, our staff reviewed the process we'd been using to rank licensing standards and monitoring. We talked to stakeholders across the country and heard that states working hard to implement the federal new child care law wanted input on quality health and safety regulations in child care. Furthermore, they were less interested in state-by-state rankings now; rather, they sought tools to help them meet best practices as defined by CCDBG, create plans for short- and longer-term changes, and document their progress. Thus, the first generation of our Child Care Licensing Database was conceived. This report provides the reader with overview of the Child Care Licensing Database, the reasons for its development, the methodology used in assessing state progress, and the initial findings from our analysis.

Background

For states to effectively meet the child care needs of families, they must focus on both program standards (child care licensing rules) and oversight policies for monitoring compliance with those rules. Weak standards in licensing rules may endanger children. Infrequent or otherwise lax monitoring undercuts even the strongest of standards. From our reports on child care licensing, Child Care Aware® of America established expectations for and documented states' standards and oversight for child care licensing. The most recent editions, [We Can Do Better: 2013](#) and [Leaving Children to Chance: 2012](#), respectively assessed and ranked states' child care licensing standards for center-based child care, and for small family home-based child care. For nearly a decade, each report discovered that child care licensing standards were of poor quality across the country and in every setting, with most states failing to assure fundamental health and safety needs of children in care.

Methodology

Data collection. The CCAoA Child Care Licensing Database is populated with data collected directly from state licensing manuals. Users are able to access a comprehensive overview, as well as a snapshot, of each state's child care regulatory alignment with [Caring for Our Children Basics \(CFOC Basics\)](#). CFOC Basics is the result of work from both federal and non-federal experts and is founded on [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition \(CFOC3\)](#), which was created by the American Academy of Pediatrics; American Public Health Association; and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education with funding from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. While CFOC3 is commonly considered to be the gold standard for child care licensing practices, CFOC Basics represents the minimum health and safety standards laid out in CFOC3. Both reports represent the best evidence, expertise, and experience in the country on quality health and safety practices and policies that should be followed in today's early care and education settings. CFOC Basics is a useful resource for states as they work to improve health and safety standards in both licensing and quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) to improve the quality of care for children in all types of child care settings.

Data Analysis. The research team, comprised of research and policy staff at Child Care Aware® of America, and Quality Consulting and Research Group and University of Miami research assistants led by Dr. Veronica A. Fernandez (University of Miami faculty), conducted a thorough review of each state's licensing standards to determine whether the states' regulations exceed, meet, or did not meet the standards delineated in CFOC Basics. The reviews were conducted separately for child care centers and homes. We developed and followed a standard protocol to provide an explanation for each determination with the supervisory team. If the state regulations exceeded or met the CFOC Basic standard, we referenced the state manual, page number, and section that fulfilled the standard. If the state manual did not meet the CFOC standard, we specified whether it was because the state manual:

1. did not mention content of the standard,
2. mentioned the content of the standard, but did not meet the criteria, or
3. only partially met the criteria.

For specifications 2 and 3, we quoted the section in manual, along with the respective page number and section.

Given the complexity of the review process, we established a process to ensure adequate interrater reliability, using three randomly chosen states. Consistency across the determinations (i.e., exceeds, meets, does not meet) was compared, resulting in an overall initial agreement of 65 percent, which was considered inadequate. The

items with less than 80 percent agreement were flagged and discussed thoroughly to refine the database items and determination protocol. A large team of research assistants (RAs) were then trained to review the state licensing manuals and follow the protocols developed by the supervisory team. The RAs first practiced data entry for one of the three pilot state manuals together. Each standard was discussed and each RA thoroughly reviewed the state manual to make a tentative determination. The RAs then repeated this process for the two remaining pilot state manuals. The determinations were reviewed and only the RAs who achieved an overall reliability of 80 percent or greater remained on the data entry team.

For each of the remaining states, the data entry was completed in pairs by reliable RAs. Together the RAs thoroughly reviewed the state manuals and came to an agreement on a determination for each CFOC Basics standard. The supervisory team was available daily to answer questions and provide clarification for the RAs; the team also met weekly to discuss refine the process and protocol. For each state, the supervisory team randomly selected 15 standards (about 10 percent) and verified the accuracy of the data entry, for both child care centers and homes.

Overview of State Ratings by CFOC Basics Topics

CFOC Basics is organized into eight main topics, each covering multiple standards which, collectively, lay out minimum health and safety protections for child care settings. Topic categories for the standards include:

- Staffing
- Program Activities for Healthy Development
- Health Promotion and Protection
- Nutrition and Food Service
- Facilities, Supplies, Equipment and Environmental Health
- Play Area/Playgrounds and Transportation
- Infectious Disease
- Policies

In this database, we document the alignment of each state's child care licensing regulations' with each CFOC Basics standard. As noted, alignment is shown in detail and presented in brief snapshots and print-friendly 2-page briefs available for each state. Each print-friendly brief provides a list of all standards, by topic. A checkmark, "✓", indicates that the state "Meets" CFOC Basics guidelines, and "X" indicates that it "Does not Meet" the standard. We have included percentages to reflect the number of standards met by each state's regulations, one for family child care and one for center-based programs. Briefs for all states can be found in the Appendix of this report as well as in the database. For more information on accessing state reports and print-friendly briefs, see "Using the Tool" in the section below. A

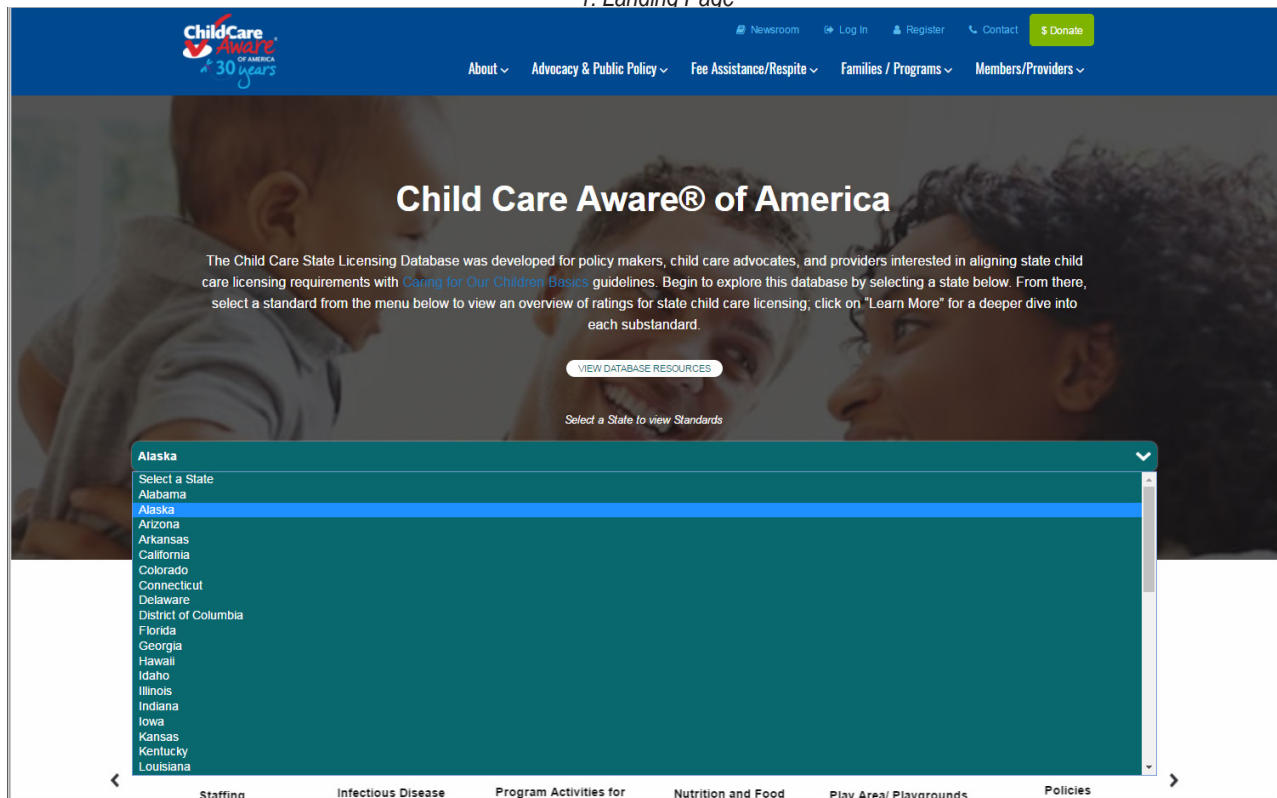
summary table for all states will be included in this report as well as in the Resources section of this database

Please note we will update new state information quarterly. **If you would like to share feedback or have new information for us, please contact us at research@usa.childcareaware.org.**

Using the Tool

The landing page for the database presents users with a dropdown menu of all states plus the District of Columbia, from which users may navigate to one of eight topic areas, such as Staffing or Program Activities. For each topic, there is a brief overview of how the state is doing, followed by a list of specific standards, indicating whether the state “Meets” or “Does not Meet” each one. In addition, the state’s status with each standard is indicated separately for center-based programs and for family child care homes.

1. Landing Page



2. Topics and Standards State Snapshot

TOPICS / STANDARDS
Browse the topics below to view details by standards.

[PRINT DATA FOR ALL STANDARDS OF STATE](#)

Staffing Infectious Disease Program Activities for Healthy Development Nutrition and Food Service Play Area/ Playgrounds and Transportation Policies

Standard Title	Center Status	Home Status	Action
Ratios For Centers And Family Child Care Homes	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	LEARN MORE
Background Screening	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	LEARN MORE
Pre-Service Training/Orientation	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	LEARN MORE
First Aid And CPR Training For Staff	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	LEARN MORE
Continuing Education For Directors, Caregivers/Teachers In Centers, And Family Child Care Homes	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	LEARN MORE
Child Abuse And Neglect Education	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	LEARN MORE

For each standard, learn more about how a state could better align its regulations with *CFOC Basics* guidelines by clicking on “Learn More”. For each standard, *CFOC Basics* language is included for easy reference. We have provided a grade for center-based and family child care regulations, as well as recommendations for revising, amending, or adding to state regulations. The reporting and recommendations included in this database serve as guidelines for improving state licensing regulations; clear, comprehensive regulations help to keep children safer.

First Aid and CPR Training For Staff

All staff members involved in providing direct care to children should have up-to-date documentation of satisfactory completion of training in pediatric first aid and current certification in pediatric CPR. Records of successful completion of training in pediatric first aid and CPR should be maintained in the personnel files of the facility.

[PRINT FIRST AID AND CPR TRAINING FOR STAFF](#)

Center

Grade: Does not Meet

According to the Alaska state DHSS manual, 7 AAC 57 Child Care Facilities Licensing, a child care facility shall have on duty at all times at least one caregiver with valid certification for first aid and age-appropriate cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) (pg 25, section:7 AAC 57.350).

[Alaska state DHSS manual, 7 AAC 57 Child Care Facilities Licensing](#)

Home

Grade: Does not Meet

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[Alaska state DHSS manual, 7 AAC 57 Child Care Facilities Licensing](#)

We have developed 2-page, print-friendly "score sheets" noting a state's alignment with *CFOC Basics*, standard-by-standard. Each standard summary is also print-friendly.

Vision for the Future

Child Care Aware® of America is enthusiastic about this first-generation version of our digital Child Care Licensing Database. We look forward to continuing to develop and expand this significant new tool, and have engaged a group of experts to help us. In 2018, in addition to updating the state level information on licensing and its relationship to *CFOC Basics*, we will introduce an evidence-based rubric and ranking scorecard for each state. We will also be developing data visualization tools for states to use, to chart their progress toward alignment with best practices. Finally, CCAoA is exploring the possibility of advocacy-focused technical assistance and training for child care advocates, and creation of tools for communication, and policy-specific fact sheets.

This brief was completed by staff at Child Care Aware® of America: Dr. Dionne Dobbins, Michelle McCreedy, and Jess Tercha, who wrote this brief; Carol Scott who edited the brief; Dr. Veronica Fernandez who led data collection and analysis; and Chrisi West, Mia Coward, and Adina Young who supported with design and social media outreach.