

# Child Care Provider Frequently Asked Questions

Iowa is building a comprehensive data system called an Operational Data Store (ODS) that integrates relevant information from multiple sources to assist stakeholders in determining real-time child care supply and demand within their community. The purpose of this document is to answer frequently asked questions about the ODS and what providers are being asked to do to ensure high quality data.

## What is an Operational Data Store (ODS)?

An ODS is a secure, centralized data exchange that moves specific data in and out of multiple sources to provide comprehensive information that will capture real-time information about child care, streamline data entry for child care providers, and help drive decision-making. In Iowa, the ODS will integrate relevant information from multiple sources including KinderTrack (KT), Child Care Management System vendors, the Childcare Regulatory Information System (CRIS), and NDS 2.0/CCR&R's data system to assist stakeholders in determining real-time child care supply and demand within their community.

## Who in Iowa is involved in building and supporting the ODS?

Iowa State University (ISU) and Resultant, as a contracted partner, are building the ODS. The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and CCR&R are providing guidance and feedback throughout the process. ISU will maintain the ODS.

## Why does an ODS matter?

Iowa needs real-time information about the availability of child care by child age categories to support families and empower data driven decision-making. By developing an ODS that integrates real-time child care availability data from providers across Iowa, families will have enhanced search options to find child care; providers will fill open child care slots quicker, which will help support their businesses' sustainability; and state administrators will be able to assess the supply and demand of child care by child age categories and make decisions and take next steps.

## When will the ODS be built?

The design and build of the ODS is already underway and anticipated to roll out in 2024.

## What do you mean by desired capacity and vacancies?

Desired capacity is the number of children you can care for in your child care program at one time based on your current staffing resources and physical space available. Desired capacity may be less than your licensed/registered or non-registered capacity, but it cannot be more than your licensed/registered or non-registered capacity. Vacancies are the number of slots you have open in your child care program based on your desired capacity.

## How often will I receive questions about my desired capacity and vacancies?

We will ask you questions about your child care program's desired capacity and vacancies once per month. After you answer the questions the first time, your answers will pre-populate in the next month's questions. If you use Playground or brightwheel and update this information in your software, eventually you will not receive an email with a link to the questions.

You will continue to receive the Program Information Form (PIF) from CCR&R on a quarterly basis. Information that you've already provided in response to the desired capacity and vacancy questions on the data collection form will be updated in the PIF. Use the [PIF](#) to update other information about your child care program. More information about the importance of updating your profile and a video on how to log into NDS can be found [here](#).

## Why am I being asked about what I charge for child care?

We are collecting this information so we can understand the prices charged in Iowa by child care programs. This information is used by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services to inform policymakers and is a key source of information for setting child care assistance reimbursement rates. We encourage you to provide this information because the more providers that fill this out, the more accurate the information is.

## How often will I be asked about what I charge for child care?

You will be asked what you charge for child care once per year. You are currently asked once a year about the rates you charge.

## How will I answer the questions?

You will receive an email with a link to the questions, which you can answer on your cell phone, tablet, or computer. If you need help answering the questions, contact your CCR&R child care consultant (<https://iowaccrr.org/staff/>).

## How will I answer the questions if I don't have access to a computer or a tablet?

If you get email on your Smartphone, you can click on the link to the questions in the email. The questions will display in a mobile-friendly way for you to answer on your Smartphone. If you want to answer the questions on a computer and do not have one, most libraries have publicly available computers that you can use to complete the questions.

## How will I answer the questions if I don't have a Smartphone or a computer or a tablet?

Contact your CCR&R (<https://iowaccrr.org/staff/>) and ask for help in completing the questions. The child care consultant will enter your responses to the questions into a form and submit it on your behalf.

## How will I answer the questions if I can't read English?

The questions will be sent to you using technology that automatically recognizes language settings on your internet browser. The questions will automatically convert to the language that is recognized in your browser. For example, if your browser language settings are set to Spanish, the questions will automatically be converted to Spanish.

## How long will it take me to answer the questions?

It should not take you longer than five minutes to answer the questions.

## What do I do if I realize I made an error after I answered the questions?

The form can be reset and you can answer the questions again. Please let us know you need to make changes to your answers by [using this form](#).

## Do I have to answer the questions?

No, answering the questions is not required. However, answering the questions will contribute to the quality of Iowa's child care system because families will be able to find child care that meets their needs; you will be able to fill open child care slots quicker, which will help support your businesses' sustainability; and state administrators will be able to assess the supply and demand of child care by child age categories.

## What is a Provider ID? Where do I find it?

A Provider ID is the number assigned to a licensed or registered child care provider by HHS. It is sometimes called a KinderTrack (KT) ID or license number. The Provider ID is at the top of the KT provider portal's home screen, and it is in the upper right corner of any Notice of Decision from HHS. If you are a Child Development Home, it is on your registration certificate.

## How do I complete the data collection form if I have multiple locations?

You will need to complete one data collection form for each of your locations. To do this, you will enter each location's Provider ID at the start of the data collection form.

## Will CCR&R still ask me to update my information on the Program Information Form (PIF)?

Yes, you will still receive the Program Information Form (PIF) from CCR&R on a quarterly basis to ensure your comprehensive program profile, which includes information beyond desired capacity and vacancies, is up to date. Information that you've already provided in response to the desired capacity and vacancy questions on the data collection form will be updated in the PIF. The PIF is always available to you if you have other updates to make about your child care program for things that change less frequently than desired capacity and vacancies. Click [here](#) to access the PIF. More information about the importance of updating your profile and a video on how to log into NDS can be found [here](#).

## What types of information are being collected initially, besides openings (e.g., experience with children with special needs, hours of operation, provider's experience)?

CCR&R will continue to maintain a child care program profile for each licensed, registered, and 'non-registered and accept CCA' provider in Iowa. The program profile includes additional information about the child care program such as experience

with children with special needs, hours of operation, languages spoken, and presence of pets. A Program Information Form (PIF) will continue to be sent quarterly to you to update information about your child care program. Click [here](#) to access the PIF. The desired capacity and vacancy information that will be collected monthly will be updated in your program's profile.

### What happens if I don't have child vacancies, but I still want parents to call me so I can create a waiting list?

Families can still contact you to request to be put on your waiting list. Many parents use [CCR&R's Online Child Care Parent Referral System](#) when searching for child care. You can update your program information using the CCR&R Program Information Form (PIF). When you update your program information, some of this information is also updated in the Online Child Care Parent Referral System. The Parent Referral System is one way you can market your child care program to parents and identify if your program has a waiting list option.

### How will you gather good quality data for all types of child care (e.g., providers with care available during multiple shifts/24 hour care)? Will those providers be able to list those vacancies accurately?

Child care providers know their business best. Rather than adding rules to the question form for less prevalent types of child care offerings (which could result in providers receiving an error message), child care providers can answer the questions in the way that fits their unique offering of child care openings (e.g., multiple shifts, 24 hour care).

### Where will my child care program's desired capacity and vacancy information be displayed?

Based on the answers you provide to the questions, we will update desired capacity and vacancy information in your program's profile in the CCR&R data system called NDS. When parents use the CCR&R's Online Child Care Parent Referral System to find child care, the desired capacity and vacancy information displays in your program's profile. Parents can also use CCR&R's Parent Referral Services to obtain a list of child care providers in their area. The screen shot in the next column shows an example of what a parent sees when completing a search through CCR&R's Online Child Care Parent Referral System for licensed centers in Des Moines, IA.

Updating information about your program information using the CCR&R Program Information Form (PIF) is one way you can market your child care program to parents. In your program profile, you can direct parents to contact you to learn more about openings or to be added to your waiting list.

The screenshot shows a search results page for the Capitol Park Early Learning Center. At the top, there are navigation options: 'Sort by', 'View', 'Select Results', and 'Share'. Below this, it says 'Filtering by: Centers'. The page indicates 'Page 1/4, 1 - 25 of 98 results.' and has a pagination control showing '1 2 3 4 >>'. The main content area features a heart icon, the center name 'Capitol Park Early Learning Center', and the provider 'Whitney Fink'. There is a small photo of the center building. To the right of the photo, the following information is listed: 'Capitol Park Early Learning Center', 'Whitney Fink', '800 E 12th St, Des Moines IA 50316', 'View Map', 'children90@mediacombb.net', '(515) 263-0568', and 'www.capitolparkelc.org/'. Further right, it lists 'Type: Centers', 'Offers: Licensed Center/Preschool', 'Capacity: 100', 'Total Openings: 17', 'Ages Served: 1 Month - 5 Years', and 'Monday - Friday 7:00am - 5:30am'. At the bottom right, it says 'Last Updated: 5/15/2023' and 'Child Care Licensing Report'. A 'More Info' button is located at the bottom right of the card.

### Will the ODS include the number of staff/providers needed to fill all the possible child slots?

This information will not be collected when we first roll out the ODS but will be considered for future ODS development.

### What happens if my child care program doesn't have child vacancies, but it is because of a lack of staff?

To start, we are collecting data that already has a data field in NDS (i.e., the questions are already being asked in NDS) and we are collecting information that changes quickly (desired capacity and vacancies) in a more streamlined way. Understanding where there are no vacancies is helpful information. However, we recognize that understanding where there is a lack of vacancies because of a lack of staff is even more helpful information. This question will be considered for future ODS development.

### I currently use Playground or brightwheel. Why am I being asked questions about desired capacity and vacancies?

Even with all the data sources in Iowa, there are gaps in data and some of the data is outdated. The ODS isn't able to provide helpful information about child care supply and demand when there are data gaps and outdated data. One way to fill the data gaps and ensuring the data is up to date is to regularly ask you and other providers—including licensed,





registered, and 'non-registered and accept CCA' providers— questions about your desired capacity and vacancies at your child care program. If you use Playground or brightwheel and update this information in your software, eventually you will not receive an email with a link to the questions.

Do you want to save time on administrative tasks? Click [here](#) to learn more about the Child Care Collaborative of Iowa and the two child care management systems, brightwheel and Playground, that the state is funding the monthly subscription fee through June 30, 2025.

**Who can I talk to for more information?**

Tami Foley  
Iowa Department of Health & Human Services  
[tfoley@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:tfoley@dhs.state.ia.us)

Heather Rouse  
Iowa State University  
[hlrouse@iastate.edu](mailto:hlrouse@iastate.edu)

Amy Smigielski  
Resultant  
[asmigielski@resultant.com](mailto:asmigielski@resultant.com)

Your CCR&R Child Care Consultant  
<https://iowaccrr.org/staff/>

You can also submit questions [using this form](#).