Child Care Management System (CCMS) Software
Data Sharing Through Iowa Child Care Connect (C3)

OVERVIEW

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Agency) launched Iowa Child Care Connect (C3) through Iowa State University (ISU). C3 is an Operational Data Store (ODS) that provides a secure, centralized data exchange of specific data in and out of multiple public and private sources. ISU hosts and maintains C3. The Agency implemented C3 as a strategy to:

- Increase the capacity to conduct business with Child Care Programs in a digital environment to streamline and improve business operations and practices;

- Build resources and tools using modern technology to help parents find child care and support Child Care Programs in filling open child care slots quicker;

- Increase child care consumer education;

- Provide near real-time data on child care vacancies, supply, and demand for child care at both the local and state levels to inform decision-making; and

- Improve data integrity and automate data updates between public and private data systems that maintain the same data.

Child Care Management System (CCMS) software is designed to automate child care programs' day-to-day operations allowing staff to spend more time engaged with children and improve the monitoring and management of their programs' administrative operations proactively. Interested CCMS software vendors and multi-state corporate child care businesses that manage and maintain their own CCMS software (Interested Parties) may enter into a data sharing agreement to connect and share child care data with C3.

CCMS software vendors are strongly encouraged to read the requirements in their entirety before submitting a request to enter into a data sharing agreement. Responses to Section E, below, are requested to ensure all requirements are understood. Submit a request for data sharing by following the instructions provided in this document. Submit all questions related to this document via email to sharedservicesproject@hhs.iowa.gov. The Agency shall provide, in writing, responses to questions via email.

In state fiscal year 2025, the Agency will begin executing Data Sharing Agreements.

The Agency reserves the right to revise the contents, timeline, requirements of the Data Sharing Agreement at any time.

A. BACKGROUND

In response to recommendations in the 2021 [Governor's Child Care Task Force Report](#), the Agency initiated a multi-phase Shared Services Project to:

- Increase the use of technology in child care programs to reduce time spent on administrative tasks and increase child care business sustainability;
- Develop an easy-to-use tool to help families find child care openings;
- Improve child care data available to inform decision-making at both the local and state levels; and
- Implement a method to securely exchange child care data between public and private data systems.

As part of the strategy to securely exchange child care data between public and private data systems, the Agency initially implemented a short-term solution to share time and attendance data for children on the Child Care Assistance (CCA) Program. The solution involved the development of a direct Application Programming Interface (API) from either of the two state-contracted Child Care Management System (CCMS) software vendors, brightwheel and Playground, to the Agency's child care subsidy data system, KinderTrack (KT). The integration streamlines and improves business operations for Child Care Programs by eliminating duplicative work of manually entering time and attendance data in KT for each child, each day who is approved for the CCA Program. Both CCMS vendors successfully built, tested, and implemented the API to KT within four (4) months of the API build kick-off meeting.

The development of interoperability between multiple public and private data systems was the Agency's long-term solution. Through the Agency's contract with Iowa State University (ISU) and their subcontractor, Resultant, ISU built a secure, centralized Operational Data Store (ODS) called Iowa Child Care Connect (C3). By the end of 2023, several public and private data systems were sharing data with C3 including, Child Care Resource & Referral's data system, National Data System (NDS); the Agency's KT data system, the Agency's Childcare Regulatory Information System (CRIS); brightwheel; Playground; and Iowa birth record data. In late spring 2024, system developers from the Agency, I2D2 Team, Resultant, brightwheel, and Playground successfully completed a cutover process to end the direct API with KT and send time and attendance data for children on child care subsidy to KT via C3.

On August 22, 2024, the State of Iowa launched C3 to the public. Based on the data integration from multiple sources, C3 powers two new online tools, Child Care Search and Child Care Data Dashboards.

The architecture of C3 is built with an integration protocol that is nimble to accommodate adding new data sources or adapting data sources as they change. CCMS vendors and multi-state corporate child care businesses that operate in Iowa and have their own CCMS software and an executed Data Sharing Agreement can build a connection, at their own expense, to the API that connects with C3. This allows Child Care Programs in Iowa using CCMS software from non-state-contracted vendors/entities to send time and

attendance data for children approved for CCA, as well as other data as identified in the Data Sharing Agreement to C3.

B. DEFINITIONS

"Agency" means the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services.

"Application Programming Interface (API)" means a type of software interface which two or more separate computer data systems exchange information.

"API Specification" means a document or standard that describes how to build or use an API connection or interface.

"CCMS Data Dashboard" means a visual child care management system software informational management tool used to track metrics, key data points, and trends that align to the Iron Triangle of Early Care and Education Finance metrics in the formula.

"Childcare Regulatory Information System (CRIS)" means a data system used by the Agency to manage child care program and regulation data.

"Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)" means a federally-funded meal program through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administrated by the Iowa Department of Education. The program provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children enrolled for care at participating Child Care Programs.

"Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)" means a federal law that authorizes the Child Care and Development Fund program which is administered by states and outlines how states can use federal funds to provide financial assistance to low-income families to increase access to healthy, safe, high quality child care. In Iowa, the Agency is identified as the 'Lead Agency.'

"Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)" means a federal and state partnership program authorized under the CCDBG and administered by states, territories, and tribes with funding and support from the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Child Care. States use CCDF to provide financial assistance to low-income families to access child care so parents/caregivers can work, attend a job training or educational program, search for a job, or a combination of these activities; build the skills and qualifications of the early education and child care workforce; support child care programs to achieve higher standards; and provide consumer education to help parents select child care that meets their families' needs.

"Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan" means a written agreement between the state's Lead Agency and the federal government that describes how the state will administer CCDF programs in compliance with federal regulations and other instructions and guidelines issued by the federal Administration for Children and Families' Office of Child Care.

"Child Care Assistance (CCA)" means the child care subsidy program administered by the Agency (Iowa Administrative Code chapter 441-170).

"Child Care Assistance Paid Homes (CCA Paid Homes)" means a Child Care Home child care program that is not registered and has a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with the Agency to get paid for caring for children on the CCA Program. The Agency has limited regulatory authority for Child Care Homes. (Iowa Administrative Code chapter 441-120).

"Child Care Center" means a facility licensed by the Agency to provide child care for seven or more children. The term 'Child Care Center' applies to both a child care center or a preschool. (Iowa Administrative Code chapter 441-109).

"Child Care Collaborative of Iowa (CCCI)" means the program operated by Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. that provides services to Child Care Centers and Child Development Homes to improve financial practices and optimize resources that benefit their business and children and families served in the child care program. Services include business coaching aligned with state-contracted Child Care Management System software and technology grants. In the future, CCCI services may be available to Child Care Centers and Child Development Homes using non-state contracted Child Care Management System software.

"Child Care Management System (CCMS)" means software specifically designed to help early care and education program administrators automate their day-to-day operations and monitor/manage their program proactively. CCMS software supports a range of tasks including enrollment, waitlist management, daily attendance, fee collection, staff records, and family communication.

"Child Care Programs" means Child Care Homes with a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement, Child Development Homes, and Child Care Centers.

"Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Agencies" means community-based agencies staffed by early care and education professionals that work to build the supply of quality child care options in communities, connect families to quality child care services, and provide on-site consultation and assistance to child care programs.

"Child Care Data Dashboards" means a web-based tool powered by data from Iowa Child Care Connect that provides valuable insights into the availability and need for child care services in a geographic area. The dashboards play a crucial role in informing policy decisions, identifying geographic areas with an undersupply or oversupply of child care, and ensuring that families have access to quality child care services.

"Child Development Homes (CDH)" means a person or program registered by the Agency under Iowa Code section 237A.3A to provide child care to seven or more children at any one time. (Iowa Administrative Code chapter 441-110).

"Child Care Search" means a web-based tool powered by data from Iowa Child Care Connect that helps parents/caregivers find and compare available child care options either along a route with a starting point, optional stops along the route, and an ending

point or a radius search based on an address. The tool includes child care consumer education.

"Data Sharing Agreement" means an agreement that sets the purpose of data sharing and includes what happens to the data at each stage, sets standards, identifies appropriate use of the data, and helps all parties involved in sharing be clear about their roles and responsibilities.

"Data Sharing Agreement Manager" means the Agency person or persons accountable to the Data Sharing Agreement Owner, acting under the direction and guidance of the Data Sharing Agreement Owner for a specific Data Sharing Agreement.

"Data Sharing Agreement Owner" means the Agency administrative official who has the authority to make decisions related to the Data Sharing Agreement on behalf of the Agency.

"Financial Management Consultants (FMC)" or **"Financial Management Coaches (FMC)"** means staff from the Child Care Collaborative of Iowa that work with child care administrators (Child Care Centers and Child Development Homes) to support full implementation of CCMS software and identify and implement strategies to strengthen fiscal sustainability based on the Iron Triangle of Early Care and Education Finance metrics.

"I2D2" means Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision-Making. [I2D2](#)

"I2D2 Team" means staff that maintain the Data Sharing Agreement with the Agency to implement Iowa Child Care Connect. Their work includes, but is not limited to, sharing data with Iowa Child Care Connect, via secure Application Programming Interfaces; maintaining security protocols for the system; and testing and maintaining new user access.

"Iowa Child Care Connect (C3)" means an operational data store (ODS) that provides a secure, centralized data exchange of specific data in and out of multiple sources. Iowa State University hosts and maintains C3. C3 connects data from a child care provider's CCMS software to other data systems, such as, but not limited to, KinderTrack and CCR&R's National Data System. Iowa Child Care Connect also has two public-facing online tools, the Child Care Search and Child Care Data Dashboards.

"Iowa Quality for Kids ([IQ4K](#))" means Iowa's voluntary child care quality rating and improvement system program for Child Development Homes, Child Care Centers, and child care programs operated by school districts. IQ4K is administered by the Agency.

"Iowa's Early Childhood and School Age Professional Workforce Registry ([I-PoWeR](#))" means a data system that allows individual early childhood and school-aged professionals to enter and upload their qualifications and credentials into a centralized, paperless system. Early childhood and school-aged professionals can access their records regardless of their workplace and provides a convenient way to track and manage professional development throughout their careers. I-PoWeR is maintained by the Agency.

"Iowa State University (ISU)" means the university that hosts and maintains Iowa Child Care Connect, I2D2, and the I2D2 Team.

"Iron Triangle of Early Care and Education Finance" means a formula for financial policy in early care and education programs. The factors in the formula are full enrollment, full fee collection, and revenues cover per-child costs as defined by Opportunities Exchange. For more information, OppEx_2021_IronTriangle.pdf (squarespace.com).

"KinderTrack (KT)" means an automated data system used and maintained by the Agency for CCA Program authorizations, billing, and payments.

"National Data System (NDS)" means the data system built and maintained by WorkLife Systems that Iowa CCR&R Agencies use to track and store child care data.

"Online IQ4K Application Site" means the online application data system eligible Child Care Programs use to upload and maintain their applicable supportive documentations to meet criteria and apply for an IQ4K level.

"Operational Data Store (ODS)" means Iowa's secure, centralized child care data system that integrates relevant information from multiple sources to provide comprehensive data that will drive decision-making. This data system is called Iowa Child Care Connect.

"Regulatory Staff" means staff from the Agency responsible for ensuring compliance with child care regulations for Child Care Centers, Child Development Homes, and CCA Paid Homes.

"Resultant" means the subcontractor that served as the lead architect and developer in creating Iowa Child Care Connect.

"Transactional Data" means information that is captured from events or activities that occur at a given time.

C. PROCESS

1. Interested Parties to a data sharing agreement agree to the following:

1.1 Ability to meet all security requirements;
1.2 Ability to provide all required components and functionality;
1.3 Training and technical assistance available for Child Care Programs;
1.4 Ability to adapt to future requirements; and
1.5 Answer the entire questionnaire section, as applicable, to assess their own ability to comply with the data sharing and security requirements.
1.6 Building and maintaining the Application Programming Interface with Iowa Child Care Connect is at the Vendor's expense.

2. Submission

Submit responses to the questionnaire and requested documentation in Section E in a digital format via email to sharedservicesproject@hhs.iowa.gov.

3. Product Demonstration

The Agency strongly encourages a demonstration to allow the Agency the ability to ask questions about the features and functionality of CCMS software, past experience with creating an Application Programming Interface, and ensure compatibility with data sharing and security terms. The Agency, I2D2 Team members, and other representatives identified by the Agency, as appropriate, may participate in the product demonstration.

4. Timeline

The Agency will accept requests for data sharing agreements on an ongoing basis. The Agency will schedule demonstrations within 60 business days of receipt of a request for a data sharing agreement.

D. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this section is for the Agency to outline specified requirements of the Child Care Management System (CCMS) software that want to enter into a Data Sharing Agreement with the Agency to share child care data through Iowa Child Care Connect.

1.2 In state fiscal year 2025, the Agency will begin executing Data Sharing Agreements.

1.3 The following table summarizes the information and functionality of a CCMS that is required, as well as functionality that is optional. Over the next three to five years, the Agency will continue to explore opportunities to add existing technology platforms/systems and establishing new platforms/systems to C3. The desired result is for Child Development Homes and Child Care Centers to transmit and receive data via approved CCMS vendors/entities connected to C3 to:
- Minimize duplication of data entry and siloed data systems, and
- Increase efficiencies at the state and Child Care Program levels to meet requirements of state and federal laws, including but not limited to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

2. Table of Required and Optional Components and Functionality

Required Components and Functionality	
Platform	• Android, latest two (2) versions supported • i-Phone Operating System (IOS), latest two (2) versions supported • Spanish and English platform capabilities for both child care programs and families

Required Components and Functionality	
	• Mobile First Technology (applications for smartphones/tablets) • Browsers supported: Chrome, Safari, Edge, and Firefox
Data Sharing	• Develop and maintain, at the expense of the Vendor, a connection with the secure API with Iowa Child Care Connect. The Agency and I2D2 Team will provide the Vendor with the API technical specifications and required data elements after the Vendor and Agency mutually agree to enter into a data sharing agreement. • Execute data sharing agreement with the Agency. Sample data sharing agreement here. The Agency will add terms, conditions, and data fields specific to this agreement when there is a party interested in executing a data sharing agreement. • Child Care Program acknowledgement/acceptance of terms and conditions of the agreement that data is shared with the Agency • CCMS parent app user acknowledgement/acceptance of terms and conditions of the agreement that data is shared with the Agency
Security Features in Software	• Fraud detection must include a minimum of two features (e.g., picture/face recognition, PIN #, QR code, GPS, digital fingerprint, biometric, or electronic signature) that is unique to the person using the CCMS • Shall be capable of reliable verification and shall be linked to a record in a manner so that if the record is changed the electronic signature is invalidated.
Data and Software Security	• Confidential information must be hosted, stored, and accessed in the continental United States only • Security audit log including access, logging in/out, changes, privilege escalation, etc. • Encrypted data at rest and in transit per Agency requirements
Records Retention	Child Care Programs must be able to access and maintain records for billing and child sign in/sign out records for a minimum of five (5) years.
Training and Technical Assistance for Child Care Program	• Onboarding and training support • Ongoing customer support • Support at a minimum must include: phone support, on-line chat support, training resources included recorded videos and reference guides

Required Components and Functionality	
Data Fields	Provider/Program Information • State-Assigned Provider ID • Business Name • Owner Name • Point of Contact Name • Business Address – Street/City/Zip Code (Zip + 4) • Business Phone Number • Business Email Address • Business Website URL • Type of Program (center or home-based program) • Hours of Operation and Closure Days • Licensed Capacity (total children) • Desired/Staff Capacity (total children) • Number of Children Enrolled • Number of Children on Waitlist • Active CCA Agreement Program/Classroom Information • Program/Classroom ID • Program/Classroom name • Licensed Capacity (total children) • Desired/Staff Capacity (total children) • Number of Children Enrolled • Number of Children on Waitlist • Age Range Child Information • Child 's Name and DOB • Parent/Legal Guardian's Name • Relationship to Child, i.e., parent, kinship/relative, foster parent • Address of Child and Parent/Guardian • Children Linked for All Members of the Household • Emergency Contacts • Child Health Data, i.e., food allergies, special health needs (diabetic, asthma, etc.), immunizations, etc. • Child ID • Child Schedule • Classroom Assignment • CCA Eligible • CCA State-Assigned Child ID • CCA State-Assigned Case Number • CCA State-Assigned Parent ID • CCA Active • CCA Start Date

Required Components and Functionality	
	• CCA End Date
	Staff Information
	• Staff Name
	• Staff ID
	• Staff State-Assigned Workforce Registry ID
	• Role/Position
	• Hire Date
	• Employment End Date
	• Staff Background Check Tracking
	• Staff Education, Training/Credentials and Tracking/ Professional Development
	• Staff Time Tracking
	• Payroll Integration
	• Health Documents and Renewal Dates
	• Emergency Contact
	• Assignment to Classroom
	• If a staff signs a child in or out, there should be a staff indicator on the recorded time
Reporting	Ability to generate reports at the child and aggregate level on various data points, such as attendance (sign in/sign out), child enrollment/capacity, staffing levels, etc.
CCMS Functionality	Enrollment and Attendance
	• Electronic time and attendance tracking
	• Secure facility sign in/out protocols
	• Ability to add multiple contact for a single child
	• Ability for parents/guardians to update child record
	• Document management for compliance (licensing, IQ4K, etc.)
	• Staff-child ratio management
	• If a staff person signs a child in or out there should be a staff indicator on the recorded time
	Billing/Invoicing
	• Electronic/automated invoicing and payment
	• Payments integrated with child/family accounts
	• Reporting dashboard (aging debit, enrollment, etc.)
	• Billing and payment allocation, allowing each child to have multiple sources of funding, including Child Care Assistance, parent tuition, etc. In addition, ability to track co-pay and other charges assigned to the parent/guardian.
	• Ability to track offline payments
	• Payment flexibility: attendance based, daily, weekly, bi-weekly, etc.

Required Components and Functionality	
	• Payment reminders • Late payment fees • Integration with accounting software/programs Parent Communication • Parent portal for account status, payment, records management, etc. • Parent communication tools • Multiple languages
Optional Components and Functionality	

CCMS	Scheduling
	
	• Capability to track children's schedules to assist with enrollment and ratios
	
	Educational Tracking
	
	• Lesson plan management
	• Child assessment/tracking developmental progress
	• Service referrals
	• Individual Education Plans
	• Program specific performance standards, such as Head Start/Early Head Start
	
	Accounting and Taxes
	
	• Home-based child care programs
	  ○ Tracking time and expenses
	    ▪ Calculating time/space percentage
	    ▪ Tracking all time spent on business-related activities
	    ▪ Categorizing expenses aligned with Schedule C
	    ▪ Categorizing expenses as direct/indirect
	  ○ Receipt management
	  ○ Mileage reporting
	• Child Care Centers
	  ○ Accounting software embedded in CCMS
	  ○ Revenue and expense tracking aligned with chart of accounts
	
	Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
	
	• Menu planning
	• Meal counts (integrated with attendance) and designated (free/reduced/paid)
	• Generates reports for billing/claims (includes date/time stamp of when report generated)
	• Supports CACFP sponsor data management and reporting

Required Components and Functionality	
Security	• Formal security program • Security training for staff • Maintain security training records

E. QUESTIONNAIRE AND DOCUMENTATION

Complete all information and provide a detailed narrative response to each question below.

1. Company Information

- Legal name of company/vendor (include prior company names)
- 'Doing business as' (DBA) name or assumed names or other operating names of the company/vendor (include prior company names)
- Name of individual submitting the request for data sharing and title
- Name, email address, and phone number for point of contact for the company/vendor
- Address, telephone number, fax number, and email address of the company/vendor
- Website for the company/vendor
- List of subcontractors used.
- Is your CCMS software developed in the United States? If not, what country/countries is your CCMS software developed in?
- Do you have any offshore developers? If so, what countries are the developers located in?
- Are your data servers located in the United States? If not, what countries are your data servers/data storage located in?
- Describe your connectivity/bandwidth requirements and supported configurations and solutions.
- Describe security standards and frameworks followed.
- Describe your business continuity plan, including training, testing, and RTO/RPO.

2. Verification of Required CCMS Components and Functionality and Description of CCMS

2.1 <u>CCMS Required Components and Functionality</u>: Provide a checklist of all required components and functionality of the CCMS as outlined in Section D. System Requirements, Subsection 2, Table of Required and Optional Components and Functionality, indicating components and features your CCMS has in place and active and those that are not available.

1.2 <u>API Development</u>: Describe all current APIs and your ability to establish new API connections with other technology platforms.

1.3 <u>Security</u>:

    2.3.1 Authentication with username and password following, at a minimum, the state requirements found at the following web address: [Authentication Security Standard | Iowa Department of Management](#)

    2.3.2 Acknowledge that you will abide by State of Iowa security guidelines in all interactions with State systems. The Agency's will provide security policies in the Data Sharing Agreement. Iowa Enterprise IT Standards may be reviewed at the following link: [Standards | Iowa Department of Management](#)

    2.3.3 Describe your CCMS software's use of encryption.

    2.3.4 Provide a summary of privacy and security incidents in the last 12 months (intrusion, data leakage, malware attacks, etc.).

1.4 <u>Records Retention</u>: Describe how Child Care Programs are able to access and maintain records for a minimum of five (5) years.

1.5 <u>Product Responsiveness</u>: Provide details and describe network availability. Also provide details and describe incident response including how incidents are handled and will be communicated to the Agency. In addition, how can Child Care Programs know that documents are safeguarded against loss in the event that the system "crashes?"

1.6 <u>Provider Administrative Support</u>: Summarize how the CCMS supports Child Care Programs with being organized with paperwork requirements, saving time on administrative tasks, and improving collections through automated billing and fee collection.

1.7 <u>Electronic Time and Attendance Tracking</u>: Describe software functionality, if available, for tracking time and attendance in Child Care Programs that offer 24-hour care; child time spent in different funded programming during the day (i.e., Head Start/Early Head Start and Child Care Assistance Program); and children that have two Child Care Assistance Program case numbers (i.e., a case number for each parent).

1.8 <u>Reporting</u>: Describe a Child Care Program's ability to generate program specific reports.

1.9 <u>Provider Training</u>: Describe the training offered to Child Care Programs, including but not limited to onboarding programs and what supports are available, such as phone support hours of operation, online chat support, and reference/training materials available to programs. In addition, describe the top three issues Child Care Programs are contacting you for resolutions and support.

1.10 <u>Parent Communication</u>: Describe the parent communication functionality currently available in your CCMS software, including but not limited to, text messaging, ability to send digital media, ability to develop a digital child portfolio, and alignment with the program's emergency and disaster preparedness plan.

2.10 <u>Support for Business Coaches</u>: Does your CCMS software have an Enterprise Version, with a linked data dashboard, that makes it possible for a business coach to support Child Care Programs full use of the CCMS software? Describe CCMS software data dashboards available to support business coaching. Describe reference/training materials and supports available to business coaches to learn about the functionality of the CCMS software.

2.11 <u>Accessibility</u>: Describe how individuals with disabilities can access and use your CCMS software?

3. Optional CCMS Components and Functionality and Future Technology Advancements

3.1 <u>CCMS Optional Components and Functionality</u>: Provide a checklist of all optional components and functionality of the CCMS as outlined in Section D. System Requirements, Subsection 2, Table of Required and Optional Components and Functionality.

3.2 <u>Product Enhancements</u>: Describe any current enhancements that are under development on your roadmap. Also describe your process for adding functionality to your CCMS software.