Child Care Aware® of America

Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project

2020 Report

Executive Summary

For 14 years, Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) has reviewed and reported on child care licensing regulations in every state and the District of Columbia. On alternate years between 2006 and 2013, we published two reports – We Can Do Better (about child care centers) and Leaving Children to Chance (about family child care homes).

When the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act was reauthorized in 2014, it contained new, mandatory program (child care licensing) and oversight (compliance) requirements. In response, CCAoA developed and in 2017 launched the Child Care Licensing Database. The database allowed states and advocates to assess how state licensing standards aligned with Caring for Our Children Basics, a compendium of the minimum health and safety standards experts believe should be in place where children are cared for outside of their homes. The Child Care Licensing Database included standards alignment data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Following the Child Care Licensing Database launch in 2017, CCAoA received feedback from states and advocates about the standards. Many noted that the dichotomous nature of the standards rating didn't offer an opportunity to show gradual improvement over time. We partnered with stakeholders to develop a new process for assessing state child care licensing standards.

The 2020 Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project marks an important step forward to help states not only gauge how well they align with federal requirements, but also guide them as they strive to increase the quality of their child care system. Project assets include:

1. Child care licensing benchmarks for basic and advanced quality standards.

2. A benchmarking tool for states, which they can use to self-assess their alignment with both basic and quality standards.

3. A scoring rubric, C-A-R-E, agreed upon by stakeholders. CCAoA will use the rubric to score each state's submission and classify the state along a continuum. A 'C' corresponds to minimal alignment and 'E' corresponds to perfect alignment.

4. A state report. Once the scoring for a state is finished, CCAoA will prepare a snapshot document summarizing the state's alignment on each individual benchmark and its overall alignment with all benchmarks.

5. Currently, CCAoA has data for five pilot states and has plans to gradually expand the project to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. CCAoA intends for stakeholders and advocates to use these Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project assets as a compass to guide everyone to higher-quality, affordable child care environments for all children.

Introduction

All children and families deserve access to high-quality early childhood care and education options. The first five years of life are a time of tremendous brain development.[1,2,3] There is a growing collection of evidence pointing to the impact of stable, enriched early childhood experiences on a host of outcomes, including child development, school readiness, mental health and economic stability in adulthood.[4] Conversely, adverse early childhood experiences negatively impact a young child's development and those impacts persist into adulthood.[5,6]

Evidence is also emerging that demonstrates poor outcomes for children who are subject to sub-standard care, and that the existing opportunity gaps for children of color and children from families with low incomes are made worse when low-quality care is used.[7] On the other hand, quality child care can be a stabilizer for children in vulnerable families and can reduce the chances for development gaps.[7] With an estimated 12.8 million children under the age of 6 in non-parental care each week[8], we need to prioritize child care as a critical infrastructure necessity in the U.S. An increase in the supply of affordable, high-quality child care available to all families will contribute to the long-term success of our nation's children, and ultimately of our nation.

Child Care Aware® of America[a] (CCAoA) works closely with a network of over 400 child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies across the nation. CCR&Rs are unique in that they work with both parents and child care providers. They offer local and state-based consumer education services to parents looking for child care. Through their efforts, and CCAoA's complementary work on a national level, we have learned that parents view a child care license as a "gold seal" from the state — that licensed child care programs have met a state-approved standard of quality. Most parents and families seeking child care are not aware that licensing standards vary widely in stringency from state to state. Moreover, in past assessments of the health of child care licensing systems in the U.S., most states received a failing grade.[8,9]

For years, advocates from across the country strongly conveyed to policymakers the importance of a quality child care system. These efforts were rewarded in 2014, when Congress reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act. The reauthorization included substantial additions and updates to the federal regulations related to child care. One change is that all states are now required by federal law to have stronger licensing rules and monitoring.

High-quality early learning environments fuel the success of children and have positive social, economic and health impacts that last into adulthood.[7] To meet the child care needs of families effectively, state systems must be child-centered, with the health and safety of all children at the forefront. This can, in part, be accomplished though strong licensing regulations.

In this report, we describe how CCAoA, in partnership with a diverse group of national stakeholders, developed a preliminary child care licensing database in 2017. We then share how we subsequently developed a new set of child care licensing standard benchmarks, a benchmark scoring rubric and a shareable state benchmark snapshot resource, collectively referred to as the 2020 Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project. All components of the 2020 Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project are consistent with 2014 CCDBG Act reauthorization requirements and best practice recommendations for quality advancement beyond basic standards.

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a   Child Care Aware® of America is a national membership-based nonprofit organization working to advance the affordability, accessibility and availability of child care in every community across the nation. CCAoA's vision is that every family in the United States has access to a high-quality, affordable child care system that supports children's growth, development and educational advancement and creates positive economic impact for families and communities.

CCAoA's Work in Child Care Licensing

For nearly 15 years, CCAoA has worked to improve child care licensing standards. Between 2006 and 2013, CCAoA reviewed each state's child care licensing regulations and reported the findings in two reports published on alternate years. "Leaving Children to Chance"[10] addressed licensing standards for family child care homes and "We Can Do Better"[9] addressed standards for center-based child care programs.

The reports ranked states and highlighted the poor alignment of state regulations with evidence-based best practice standards. "Leaving Children to Chance" and "We Can Do Better" were particularly useful for advocates and policy makers because they showed how state licensing standards align with one another and with federal requirements and offered insight into opportunities for quality improvement.

Standards were just part of the story the reports told. They also documented states' oversight of child care licensing, because infrequent or otherwise lax monitoring can undercut even the strongest of standards. "Leaving Children to Chance" and "We Can Do Better" provided the data necessary to support the need for a bolstered set of program (child care licensing) and oversight (compliance monitoring) requirements.

Stakeholders across the nation used data from the reports to advocate for stricter standards and to push for the reauthorization of the CCDBG Act, which occurred in November of 2014. The 2014 CCDBG Act was groundbreaking in that it contained comprehensive updates to federal regulations related to child care. The Administration for Children and Families clarified these new federal regulations in an addendum to the 2014 CCDBG Act – the 2016 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule. Many of the changes to the regulatory language reflected the best practices highlighted in CCAoA's "Leaving Children to Chance" and "We Can Do Better" reports – including comprehensive background checks, inspections and monitoring and stronger training requirements for providers related to education and professional development.[a]

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a   For a more comprehensive history of child care and federal supports for child care in the United States, see CCAoA's overview that is available at childcareaware.org

Post-CCDBG Act Reauthorization and the Child Care Licensing Database

Following the 2014 reauthorization of the CCDBG Act, CCAoA researchers set out to develop an interactive child care licensing assessment tool and reports. The goal was to build on our past work and identify areas where state regulations for center-based and family child care programs across the country aligned with current evidence-based standards for health and safety. In 2017, Child Care Aware® of America launched the Child Care Licensing Database to assess states' progress towards advancing the quality of their child care systems. The quality standards we used to measure progress represented the minimum health and safety standards experts believe should be in place where children are cared for outside of their homes. The standards are outlined in Caring for Our Children Basics[11], one of the child care industry's most respected resources.

"Caring for Our Children" (CFOC) and "Caring for Our Children Basics" (CFOC Basics)[11, 12] are resources created by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. CFOC came first. It's a collection of evidence-based, minimum standards that experts believe should be in place in all early care and education settings. CFOC Basics was developed to reduce conflicts and redundancies found in program standards linked to multiple funding streams.

We organized the 2017 Child Care Licensing Database by the eight main topics outlined in CFOC Basics. Each topic covered multiple standards. The topic categories for the standards were: 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 and Policies.

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**

Through the 2017 Child Care Licensing Database, users accessed a comprehensive overview, as well as a snapshot, of each state's child care regulatory alignment with CFOC Basics. For each standard, users learned more about how a state could better align its regulations with CFOC Basics guidelines by exploring gaps identified in the database. For each standard, CFOC Basics language was included for easy reference. We also provided a grade for a state's center-based and family child care regulations, as well as recommendations for revising state regulations. The report and recommendations in the database served as guidelines for improving state licensing regulations with the end goal of helping to keep children safer while in early childhood care and education settings.

CCAoA's first-generation version of the licensing database, in 2017, offered a starting point for states and advocates to determine best practice alignment. Feedback from stakeholders on the first Child Care Licensing Database pointed to the need for an additional set of benchmarks that would allow states to assess alignment with basic health and safety program and oversight requirements included in the 2016 CCDF Final Rule. In response, CCAoA developed the 2020 Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project.

The Relevance of Caring for Our Children Basics

Caring for Our Children Basics is a collection of minimum standards that experts believe should be in place in all early care and education settings. It 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, now in its 4th edition (CFOC).

CFOC 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 CFOC 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 CFOC. Both resources present 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 and improvement systems (QRIS) to improve the quality of care for children in all types of child care settings. CFOC Basics recommendations move the bar of quality beyond what is required in federal requirements for states that are laid out in the 2016 Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule.

Reflections from the Field

Following the Child Care Licensing Database release in 2017, key stakeholders relayed their excitement for the perspective it offered on the state of child care licensing in their state. However, many noted that since standards were rated as either "meets" or "does not meet," states could not receive partial credit. The scoring also did not allow them to benchmark their progress over time toward meeting standards. Stakeholders preferred a scoring rubric that described how far along on a continuum they were to meet each standard. They also wanted guidance on how they should make and prioritize changes to licensing manuals.

As our team continued to share and report findings from the 2017 Child Care Licensing Database, we began to plan the next iteration of our child care licensing work. CCAoA wanted to develop a set of new child care licensing and oversight benchmarks to provide state partners with a clear snapshot of their strengths as they worked to align state standards with 1) CCDF Final Rule minimum requirements and 2) recommendations for advancing quality. CCAoA also aimed to offer simple-to-read companion state snapshot summaries from which stakeholders could identify areas that are ripe for improvement. CCAoA subsequently embarked on the Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project.

Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project

In November 2017, CCAoA extended an invitation to stakeholders from across the spectrum of early care and education to participate in the development of a licensing benchmark rubric. The rubric is intended to be used by states as a roadmap to advocate for change in state licensing standards to provide quality child care environments for young children. CCAoA offered stakeholders several options for how they could be involved. They could participate as a:

1. Child Care Licensing Database Benchmark Workgroup member (Workgroup)
2. Advisory/Review Panel member (Review Panel)
3. Pilot State/Tribe (Pilots)

Benchmark Development

THE BENCHMARK WORKGROUP

CCAoA convened a Workgroup to develop new benchmarks for the Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project that built upon the 2017 Child Care Licensing Database. The Workgroup included 27 individuals representing 20 organizations/entities. There was a cross-section of stakeholder representatives including state and national child care administrators, state licensing personnel, CCR&R leaders, national early care and education organizations, parents and other early childhood and licensing experts.

The Workgroup met seven times between December 2017 and September 2018. Workgroup members developed seven Oversight Standards and seven Program Standards. Based on prior stakeholder feedback on the need for basic benchmarks and benchmarks for advancing quality beyond the basics, the workgroup also worked collaboratively with the CCAoA team to create two levels of benchmarks for both Program and Oversight. Level 1 = CCDBG Act Alignment and Level 2 = Movement Towards Quality Improvement. Additional details surrounding the benchmark development process are contained in Appendix B.

ADVISORY/REVIEW PANEL

CCAoA added a Review Panel opportunity to allow additional stakeholders to participate in the benchmark development process. These stakeholders were individuals who were unable to commit to the rigorous schedule set for the 2020 U.S. Child Care Licensing Benchmark Workgroup but expressed an interest in reviewing the work of the Workgroup and providing additional feedback as CCAoA developed the Benchmarking Tool.

In September 2018, an additional eight advisory organizations and their representatives, along with original Workgroup members, formed the Advisory/Review Panel. Between October 2018 and May 2019 the Advisory/Review Panel provided valuable feedback on the proposed benchmarks that resulted in:
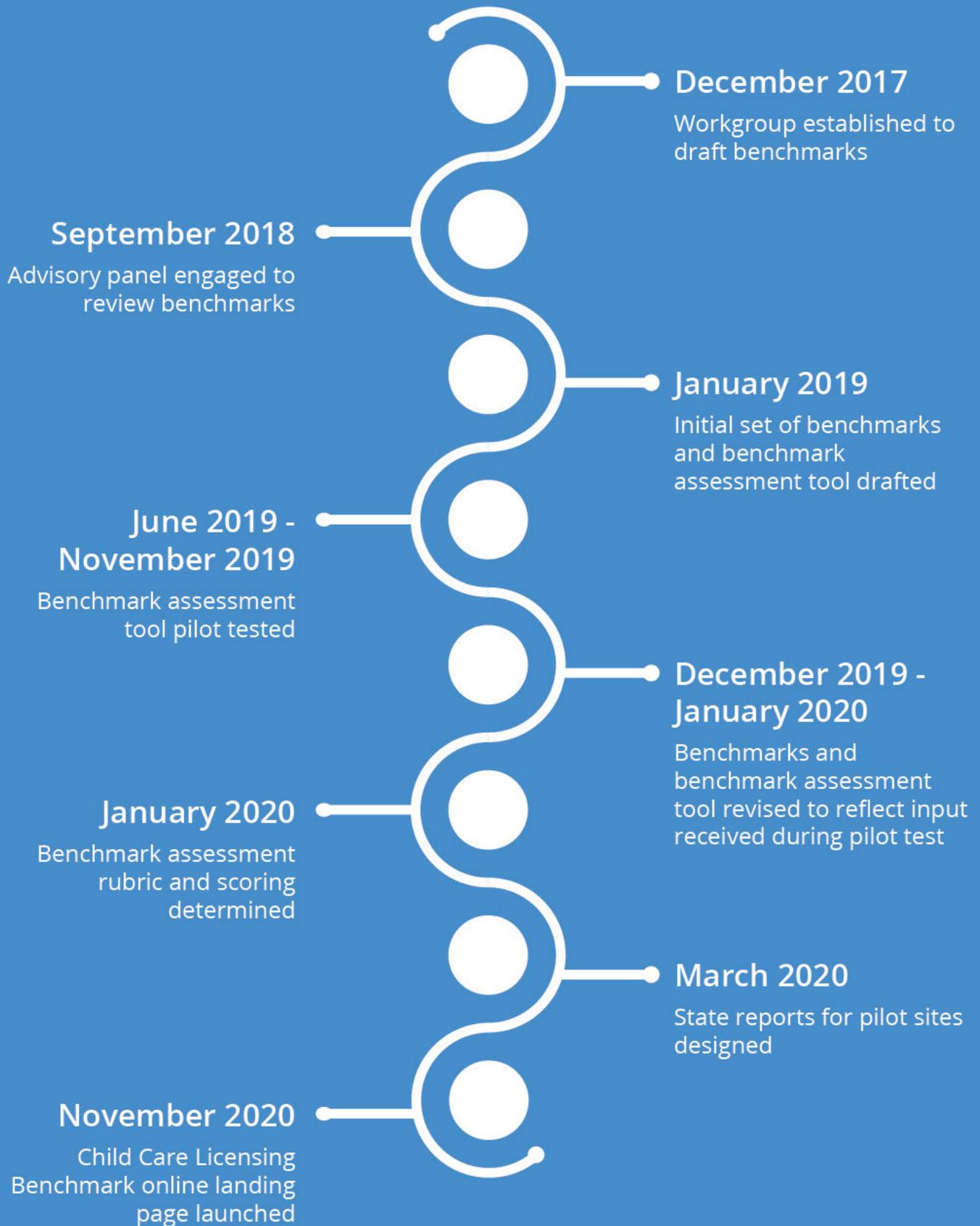
- Modified benchmarks to create a set of seven Program and seven Oversight Benchmarks with two levels for each benchmark.
- Feedback used to refine the benchmarks and develop the Benchmarking Survey Tool.
- Finalization of the Program Benchmarking Survey Tool and the Oversight Benchmarking Survey Tool.

Throughout the benchmarking process, the Workgroup and Advisory/Review Panel relied heavily on the following resources to guide their work:

> We Can Do Better, Leaving Children to Chance, CCDBG Act and ACF Final Rule, CFOC Basics, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards, National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Standards, and National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) Reports as well as other resources (see complete list of resources in Appendix C).

See Appendix D for a list of Workgroup and Advisory Panel member participants. For additional details about the Advisory/Review panel efforts, see Appendix B.

Benchmark Development Process

December 2017
Workgroup established to draft benchmarks

September 2018
Advisory panel engaged to review benchmarks

January 2019
Initial set of benchmarks and benchmark assessment tool drafted

June 2019 - November 2019
Benchmark assessment tool pilot tested

December 2019 - January 2020
Benchmarks and benchmark assessment tool revised to reflect input received during pilot test

January 2020
Benchmark assessment rubric and scoring determined

March 2020
State reports for pilot sites designed

November 2020
Child Care Licensing Benchmark online landing page launched

BENCHMARKS

There are seven benchmark categories for both Oversight and Program. In addition, Program Benchmarks include specific criteria for child care centers and family child care where appropriate.

- **Oversight Benchmarks –** Oversight benchmarks reflect state policies, procedures and practices and the administration of child care licensing regulations.
- **Program Benchmarks –** Program benchmarks reflect child care licensing regulations that specifically apply to the programs that directly provide direct care to children (i.e., child care centers and family child care programs).

BENCHMARK CATEGORIES

Oversight Benchmarks	Program Benchmarks
1. Licensing Requirements	1. Background Checks
2. Inspection Reports	2. Provider Qualifications
3. Monitoring	3. Professional Development
4. Program/Staff Ratio	4. Health and Safety
5. Licensing Staff Qualifications	5. Learning Activities
6. Background Check	6. Group Size and Ratios
7. Professional Development Implementation	7. Family Engagement/Access

You may view the language used for each Benchmark category in Appendix E.

BENCHMARK LEVELS

Each benchmark has two levels of criteria:

- **Level 1:** Focuses on how a state's licensing regulations align with the language of CCDBG Act requirements as applied to child care licensing standards.
- **Level 2:** Focuses on how a state's licensing regulations reflect movement towards quality improvement.

EXAMPLE: INSPECTION REPORTS

Level 1: Lead Agencies shall post results of full monitoring and inspection reports in a timely manner, either in plain language or with a plain language summary, for parents and child care providers to understand, and shall establish a process for correcting inaccuracies in the reports.

Level 2: Results of monitoring and inspection reports are made available to families at no cost if there is no access to the internet.

Level 1 and Level 2 are scored separately, with scores for each subcomponent adding up to the final score. Because

the scores are done separately, there may be cases where level 1 scores are less than level 2. For example, a state might not have 100% alignment with the elements in CCDBG Act (Level 1) but met several components in Level 2, where their standards are moving toward quality and are unrelated to the CCDBG Act.

PILOT TEST OF REVISED BENCHMARKS AND PROCESS

After 15 months of intense work, CCAoA began the 3rd phase of the benchmarking process — the piloting of the Benchmarking Tool. CCAoA recruited and selected states to participate in the pilot based on interest, size and geography. CCAoA selected five states to work with between June 2019 and November 2019: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

States created a team of experts to respond to the benchmarking tool to include representatives from:

- The state agency that oversees child care licensing.
- The state departments of health and education.
- Child care resource and referral agencies.

Pilot states were asked to:

- Participate in an introductory webinar about the process, check-in calls and a focus group.
- Determine whether benchmarks for center-based and family child care programs met the elements in the benchmarks by responding to guiding questions with a yes or no.
- Provide citations from state licensing manual(s) or other state documents for each of the elements of the 14 benchmarks.
- Agree to the CCAoA verification process to confirm citations.
- Agree to receive a final scorecard for the state's program and oversight licensing regulations and practices.

See Appendix B for details about the steps the five participating states took to pilot the benchmark survey process.

BENCHMARK PILOT AND IMPORTANT FEEDBACK

The pilot states provided feedback about the benchmarking tool, and CCAoA took action to address each area of feedback. Pilot states also had the opportunity to review the tool after CCAoA revised it based on their input.

Feedback	CCAoA Action
What is the purpose of the tool?	Created the one-pager and FAQ describing purpose
Who should collaborate to complete the tool?	Clarified the directions
The intent of the questions was unclear.	Streamlined and simplified language
Cautioned against weighting the individual components of a benchmark.	Equally valued the components of each benchmark
The formatting was confusing and redundant.	Revised format (e.g., added skip logic)

The Benchmark Tool

The Benchmark Tool was developed by breaking down each component of the benchmarks into a question to which states could respond either yes or no. Below we list some Benchmark Tool questions that pertain to inspection reports. If states respond yes to a question, they must provide documentation to prove they meet that component of the benchmark. Documentation may include licensing regulation manuals, state statutes and policies, state plans, official memos, etc.

BENCHMARK TOOL QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE INSPECTION REPORT BENCHMARK

Level 1:

1. Does the state require results of full monitoring and inspection reports?

2. Does the state require the monitoring and inspection reports to be posted in a timely manner?

3. Does the state require reports to be in plain language or with a plain language summary?

4. Does the state have an established process for correcting inaccuracies in the reports?

5. Does the state require that monitoring and inspections reports include:

    • Date of inspection?

    • Corrective action taken by the state and child care provider?

    • Any health and safety violations (including any fatalities and serious injuries occurring at the provider)?

    • The aggregate number of deaths and serious injuries (for each provider category and licensing status) and instances of substantiated child abuse?

    • Referrals to local child care resource and referral organizations?

    • A minimum of 3 years?

    • By electronic means?

6. Does the state website include a description:

    • Of processes for licensing and monitoring child care providers?

    • Of processes for conducting criminal background checks?

    • Of the offenses that prevent individuals from being child care providers?

Level 2:

1. Do state licensing regulations require reports to be available:

    • To families at no cost if they have no access to the internet?

    • With easily accessible provider-specific information?

The Benchmark Tool represents a shift from the era of the" We Can Do Better" and" Leaving Children to Chance" reports. Overall, the tool builds upon the old reports by covering substantially more standards. This is especially true of the Oversight category, which went from four benchmark categories to seven benchmark categories. Some of the changes are due to the 2014 CCDBG Act Reauthorization and the fact that this tool is, in part, designed to measure effectiveness at implementing the requirements of the reauthorized statute.

Rubric and Scoring

Based on input from the Workgroup, Advisory/Review Panel and Pilot States, CCAoA concluded that all the benchmarks are equally important in determining compliance and quality standards (e.g., background checks are not more or less important than health and safety policies). Additionally, they suggested CCAoA weigh every component of the benchmarks equally for the purpose of scoring. Therefore, CCAoA counted each of the 'yes' data points (responses to the simplified questions) as one point towards a state's total score.

TOTAL BENCHMARK

The Benchmark Tool contains 290 total benchmark data points that are made up of both Oversight Benchmarks and Program Benchmarks.

Total Benchmark Data Points	Oversight	Program
290	77	213

OVERSIGHT BENCHMARKS

There are 77 possible Oversight data points — 49 are Level 1 and 28 are Level 2. No state has separate administrative oversight practices for child care centers and family child care. Thus, the Oversight Benchmarks do not contain separate criteria for child care centers and family child care programs.

Oversight	Level 1	Level 2
77	49	28

PROGRAM BENCHMARKS

There are 213 possible Program data points — 117 for child care centers and 96 for family child care homes (FCC). Of the 213 Program data points, 119 are Level 1 and 94 are Level 2. The table below shows how the points are distributed.

Program Data Points	Centers	FCC
213	117	96
Level 1 Data Points		
119	60	59
Level 2 Data Points		
94	57	37

SCORING

The scoring rubric has four categories:

STRIVING FOR QUALITY

C Coming Along
0%-33%

A Advancing
34%-66%

R Really Close
67%-99%

E Exciting Accomplishment
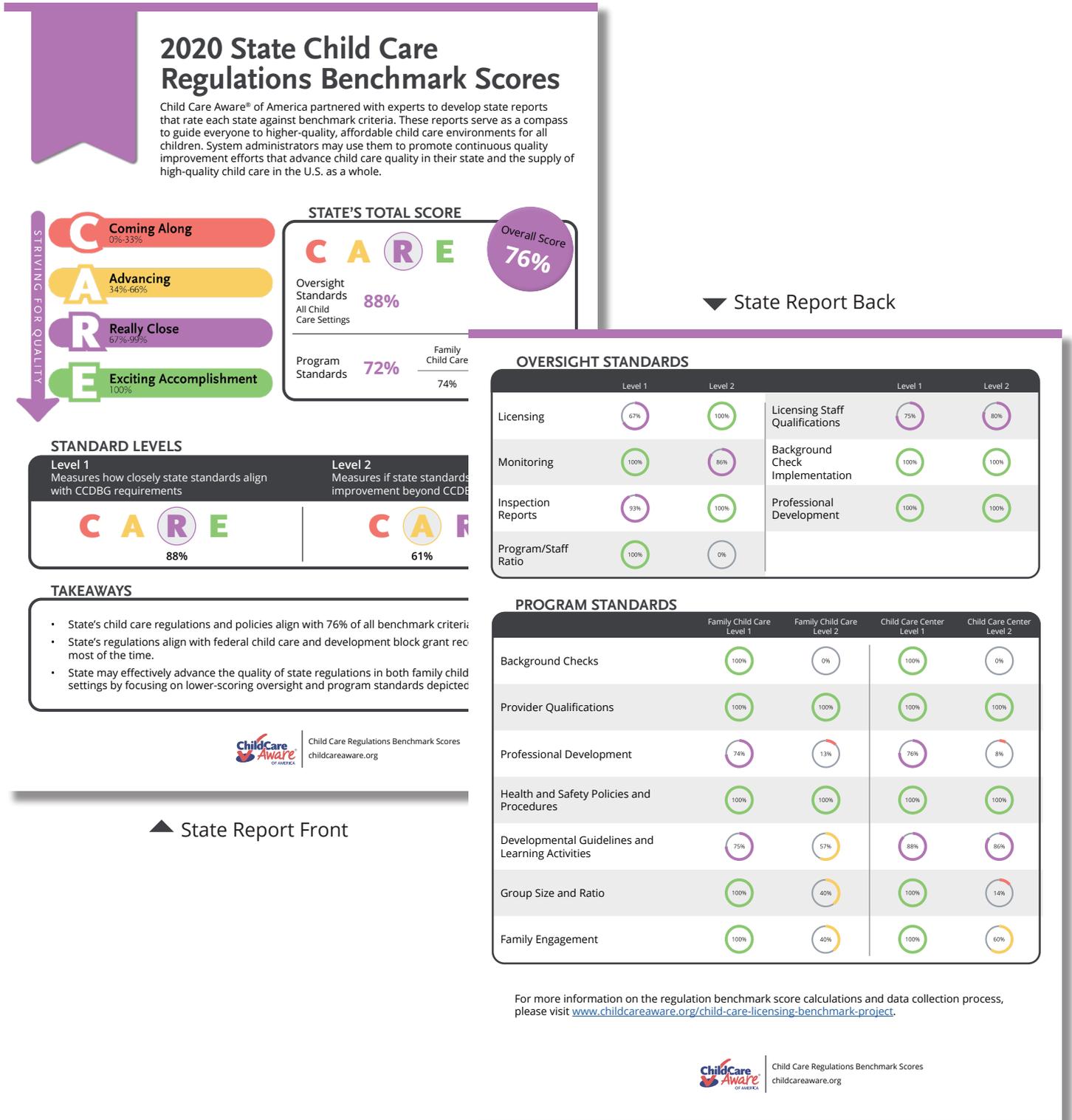100%

Scores for each state include:

- An overall score for the state based on all data points.
- A separate score for both Oversight and Program Benchmarks, broken down by Level 1 and Level 2.
- Separate scores for child care centers and family child care homes (applicable to Program Benchmarks only).

Scores represent the percent of benchmark questions answered with a 'yes'.

The final 2020 Child Care Benchmark Tool is intended to be used by state leaders as a self-assessment of their child care licensing system and, when used repeatedly over time, to measure child care licensing system improvements and progress.

STATE REPORTS

State Reports summarize each state's alignment with the benchmarks. These state snapshots are a valuable tool for advocates and other stakeholders to share with policymakers. The State Reports also make it easier for state administrators to conduct comparisons with other states that share similarities such as geographic region, size, population density, early childhood state plan and system aspirations or political will to facilitate ideas for advancement. Existing State Reports may be found at www.childcareaware.org/child-care-licensing-benchmark-project. See a sample State Report below:

2020 State Child Care Regulations Benchmark Scores

Child Care Aware® of America partnered with experts to develop state reports that rate each state against benchmark criteria. These reports serve as a compass to guide everyone to higher-quality, affordable child care environments for all children. System administrators may use them to promote continuous quality improvement efforts that advance child care quality in their state and the supply of high-quality child care in the U.S. as a whole.

STRIVING FOR QUALITY

C Coming Along
0%-33%

A Advancing
34%-66%

R Really Close
67%-99%

E Exciting Accomplishment
100%

STATE'S TOTAL SCORE

C A R E

Overall Score
76%

Oversight Standards
All Child Care Settings — **88%**

Program Standards — **72%**

Family Child Care — **74%**

▼ State Report Back

STANDARD LEVELS

Level 1	Level 2
Measures how closely state standards align with CCDBG requirements	Measures if state standards improvement beyond CCDB
C A R E **88%**	C A R **61%**

TAKEAWAYS

- State's child care regulations and policies align with 76% of all benchmark criteria
- State's regulations align with federal child care and development block grant rec most of the time.
- State may effectively advance the quality of state regulations in both family child settings by focusing on lower-scoring oversight and program standards depicted

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▲ State Report Front

OVERSIGHT STANDARDS

	Level 1	Level 2		Level 1	Level 2
Licensing	67%	100%	Licensing Staff Qualifications	75%	80%
Monitoring	100%	86%	Background Check Implementation	100%	100%
Inspection Reports	93%	100%	Professional Development	100%	100%
Program/Staff Ratio	100%	0%			

PROGRAM STANDARDS

	Family Child Care Level 1	Family Child Care Level 2	Child Care Center Level 1	Child Care Center Level 2
Background Checks	100%	0%	100%	0%
Provider Qualifications	100%	100%	100%	100%
Professional Development	74%	13%	76%	8%
Health and Safety Policies and Procedures	100%	100%	100%	100%
Developmental Guidelines and Learning Activities	75%	57%	88%	86%
Group Size and Ratio	100%	40%	100%	14%
Family Engagement	100%	40%	100%	60%

For more information on the regulation benchmark score calculations and data collection process, please visit www.childcareaware.org/child-care-licensing-benchmark-project.

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Child Care Regulations Benchmark Scores
childcareaware.org

NEXT STEPS

At present, CCAoA has data from the five pilot states. We will continue to partner with additional states, between five and ten states at a time, to collect and verify their data. CCAoA will provide technical assistance throughout the state self-assessment process until all 50 states and the District of Columbia are complete. States that do not participate in the self-assessment process will be coded and scored by CCAoA staff. CCAoA also will develop a state report for each state. Once data are collected and analyzed for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, CCAoA will release a comprehensive ranking of all states.

Conclusion

The Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project translates current federal regulatory requirements (primarily CCDF) into minimally acceptable benchmarks (Level 1 benchmarks). In recognition of states' desires to advance beyond minimally accepted standards, stakeholders recommended adding a second benchmark tier that goes beyond CCDF requirements and includes additional health and safety standards recommended by a multidisciplinary panel of early childhood care and education experts. Thus, programs that have met Level 2 benchmarks may be considered as moving toward quality.

The Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project is a promising start to promoting continued quality improvements in early childhood settings. Partners involved in developing the assets contained in the Project include families, state and federal administrators, state licensing personnel, CCR&R leaders, national organizations serving children and families and early childhood and licensing experts. The diverse expertise represented on the benchmark Workgroup and Review Panel has been invaluable in shaping the work. The collaborative nature of the development process will help ensure the ongoing value and function of the benchmarking tool and rubric.

State advocates may want to consider a similar collaborative approach – transparency and inclusion of a wide array of stakeholders — as they work to advance the quality of child care in their state or locality. By including input and direction from stakeholders who mirror their own catchment area, the process of quality advancement will reflect community values; honor the communities, families and children served by the system; and result in more authentic, measurable and sustainable change. The Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project is a critical asset to ongoing measurement of advancements.

CCAoA intends to routinely publish child care program and oversight benchmarks and measure each state's alignment with the benchmarks. Over time, the Benchmarking Tool will lead to gradual advancements in child care quality for all children. When coupled with state licensing system leaders who are attentive to ongoing quality improvements and aligned with foundational and aspirational program and oversight standards, licensing benchmarks can improve services received by children and families, helping them to thrive.[8] All children and families deserve access to high-quality early childhood care and education options — especially during the early years when unprecedented brain growth occurs.[1, 2, 3]

Drastic variances in child care quality across the nation hurts children, who deserve safe and healthy places to develop when their parents are at work or school. As the early childhood care and education landscape continues to mature, it is critical to continually assess the efficacy of child care licensing and promote continued quality improvement. Both are necessary if we are to remediate the lack of high-quality, affordable and accessible child care in the U.S. Dismantling health and safety protections would be the wrong way to reduce the challenges providers face or increase the supply of child care. Rather, investments that support provider implementation of strong standards will serve children best.[13] Meaningful and continual child care quality improvement that raises the quality of all programs equitably is possible with additional investments in our nation's early childhood care and education system.

As data are gathered from more states, the new Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project will provide state early childhood system leaders and policymakers with specificity on how to make all child care settings as safe, healthy, and nurturing as possible. CCAoA hopes this tool will allow everyone to envision a future when public and private supports for early childhood care and education are prioritized, thus enabling a pervasive culture of continuous quality improvement in all child care settings and equitable access for all families in need of child care. Just like the previously published "Leaving Children to Chance" and "We Can Do Better" reports, the new Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project tools (benchmarks, rubric and state reports) may be used by advocates to catalyze state and national policy advancements. CCAoA urges you to view the reports from the five pilot states and stay tuned for future updates by visiting the Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project landing page located at www.childcareaware. org/child-care-licensing-benchmark-project.

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List of Appendices

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Appendix A:
Child Care Licensing Database Process

In 2017, Child Care Aware® of America launched the Child Care Licensing Database to assess progress towards advancing quality per best practice recommendations outlined in one of the child care industry's most respected resources, Caring for Our Children Basics (CFOC Basics). From February 2016 to May 2017, our research team compared licensing manual language to recommended minimum health and safety standards laid out in CFOC Basics. The team conducted a thorough review of each state's licensing standards to determine whether the states' regulations met or did not meet the standards delineated in CFOC Basics. CCAoA conducted separate reviews for child care centers and large family child care homes.

> The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA) tracks trends in child care licensing regulations and publishes updates every three years. The latest update shares trends from 2014-2017 in licensing requirements and policies for child care centers, family child care homes and group child care homes. The NCECQA report complement CCAoA's 2017 Child Care Licensing Database and Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project in that it offers a view of gradual changes in the licensing landscape. CCAoA's Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project illustrates how state regulations align with CCDBG requirements and evidence-based advanced quality markers. CCAoA's benchmarking tool, scoring rubric and state report assets are a compass to help guide child care quality improvements over time.

Our 2017 Child Care Licensing Database research team included CCAoA research and policy staff, a consultant with extensive Child Care Resource and Referral field experience and a University of Miami (UM) research team led by Drs. Veronica Fernandez and Johayra Bouza.

Researchers developed and followed a standard protocol to provide an explanation for each determination with the supervisory team. If state regulations met or exceeded the CFOC Basics standard, researchers referenced the state manual, page number and section that fulfilled the standard. If the state manual did not meet the CFOC Basics standard, the team specified whether it was because the state manual (1) did not mention the 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 the manual, along with the respective page number and section. CCAoA and UM established a process to ensure adequate interrater reliability, using three randomly chosen states. Our team compared consistency across the determinations, resulting in an overall initial agreement of 65%, which was considered inadequate. We flagged items with less than 80% agreement for discussion, leading to a more refined set of database items and determination protocol. A team of data entry research assistants (RAs) received training 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. They discussed each standard with supervisors and thoroughly reviewed the state manual to make a tentative determination. The RAs then repeated this process for the two remaining pilot state manuals. The CCAoA Research Team reviewed the determinations and only the RAs who achieved an overall reliability of 80% or greater remained on the data entry team.

For each of the remaining states, a pair of reliable RAs completed the data entry. 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 and refine the process and protocol. For each state, the supervisory team randomly selected 15 standards (about 10%) and verified the accuracy of the data entry for both child care centers and homes. CCAoA launched the completed database in 2017.

The Workgroup

The Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project Workgroup met seven times between December 2017 and September 2018 via six 90-minute conference calls/webinars and one face-to-face meeting in April 2018. Workgroup members also participated in various feedback activities between scheduled group meetings, allowing CCAoA to utilize the expertise of individual members through input and feedback as information was gathered. Over the 10-month period, the Workgroup worked diligently, produced several useful tools and had discussions resulting in:

- CCDBG Act Matrix (crosswalks of We Can Do Better/Leaving Children to Chance to CCDBG Act).
- CFOC Basics Matrix (crosswalk between We Can Do Better/Leaving Children to Chance and Caring for Our Children Basics).
- A rich discussion about the benchmarks and a direction for a benchmark tool, made possible via a face-to-face meeting of the Workgroup.
- Multiple surveys and feedback assignments to collect data and input from the Workgroup.
- Identification of new benchmark categories and revised descriptions.
- Benchmark refinement via sub-group meetings. *
- Development of resource lists and a description of sources used in developing each benchmark.
- Division of 14 original benchmarks to create: Oversight Benchmarks (seven) and Program Benchmarks (seven).

*The Workgroup conducted four sub-group meetings on specific topics, which resulted in additional revisions to the benchmarks based on the following rationale:

1. Benchmark Leveling: The Workgroup reviewed all the comments, feedback and discussion points that were gathered and began the process of breaking down, researching and refining each benchmark. During this process, it became evident that it would be difficult to measure all the benchmarks at the same level since some benchmarks are based on alignment with the 2014 CCDBG Act, and others are beyond the requirements of the Act. As a result, we created two levels of benchmarks for both Program and Oversight: Level 1 = CCDBG Act Alignment and Level 2 = Movement Towards Quality.

2. Ratio/Group Size Benchmark: Follow-up with Workgroup members to discuss the benchmark language for family child care resulted in the recommendation that CCAoA adopt the National Association of Family Child Care's newly released accreditation standard for Family Child Care ratios and group sizes.

3. Provider Qualifications Benchmark: During the development of this project, there was a lot work being done in the field around provider qualifications, including a nationwide Power to the Profession (P2P) process. CCAoA, guided by the Workgroup, decided not to recommend specific provider qualifications that may or may not be endorsed by P2P. Now that P2P is finalized, we will work with NAEYC, the lead agency for P2P, to update the benchmark to reflect NAEYC's recommendations. In the meantime, the benchmark reflects the specific criteria that are important in defining provider qualifications without specifying education levels and credentials.

4. Professional Development: While the CCDBG Act requires pre-service and annual training, it does not specify the number of hours to be completed. After much research and discussion, CCAoA made the decision to maintain its previous standards of 40 hours of pre-service training and 24 hours of annual training, reflected in our previous licensing reports (Leaving Children to Chance and We Can Do Better).

Advisory/Review Panel

Formation of the Review Panel extended participation to additional stakeholders that were unable to commit to the rigorous schedule set for the Benchmark Workgroup. Advisory/Review panel members expressed an interest in reviewing the work of the Workgroup and providing additional feedback as CCAoA developed the Benchmark Tool. In September 2018, an additional eight advisory organizations and their representatives, along with original Workgroup members, formed the Advisory/Review Panel. Between October 2018 and May 2019, the Advisory/Review Panel provided valuable feedback on the proposed benchmarks that resulted in:

- Modified benchmarks to create a set of seven Program and seven Oversight Benchmarks with two levels for each benchmark.
- Review and finalization of the Oversight Benchmark Survey Tool and the Program Benchmark Survey Tool.

BENCHMARK PILOT PROCESS

The five pilot states and CCAoA's Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project Team took the following steps during the Benchmark Pilot Process:

> **Step 1:** A minimum of one representative from each state participated in the introductory webinar on the Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project held on June 3, 2019.

> **Step 2:** Each state completed a Benchmark Team survey to identify team members for their state and a team contact. Throughout the pilot process, CCAoA remained in close contact with each state representative to assist with completing the process.

> **Step 3:** CCAoA sent a link to the Benchmark Tool Survey: Program Benchmarks to each state contact with a request to complete it within 3–4 weeks.

> **Step 4:** CCAoA conducted a check-in call between the state contact, other members of the state team and members of the CCAoA Benchmark Team 2–3 weeks after the surveys were sent.

Step 5: Upon completion of Program Benchmarks by the pilot states, CCAoA sent the Oversight Benchmark Survey to each pilot state contact, who was asked to complete the survey within 3–4 weeks.

Step 6: CCAoA offered a Survey check-in call opportunity to each state.

Step 7: The CCAoA Benchmark Team reviewed each pilot state's responses to validate the documentation cited.

Step 8: CCAoA provided each pilot state with a detailed set of questions about responses provided in the survey and gave each state the opportunity to answer and ask questions regarding the validation process.

Step 9: CCAoA conducted a virtual focus group on September 9, 2019 to gather feedback, recommendations and comments from the pilot states regarding the survey tool and process.

Step 10: The CCAoA Benchmark Team created a state benchmark profile based on a CCAoA Licensing Benchmark Rubric identifying how the state's licensing standards and practices aligned with Level 1 and Level 2 Benchmarks.

Step 11: CCAoA shared the rubric and scores with each state individually. CCAoA offered each state an opportunity to provide feedback and comments on the rubric and scoring.

Step 12: CCAoA revised the survey and scoring process based on the feedback received throughout the pilot process.

https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-naeyc-program-standards

> The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has set 10 standards for early childhood programs that can help families make the right choice when they are looking for a child care center, preschool or kindergarten. The standards and criteria are also the foundation of the NAEYC Accreditation System for early childhood programs. To earn accreditation, programs must meet all 10 standards.

https://www.nafcc.org/file/631a54df-ba2e-4ddf-a3cf-bfd217fc4b36

> Quality Standards for National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation: Fourth Edition with 2013 Updates

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/cfocb_alignment_tool.pdf

> Caring for Our Children Basics Alignment Tool for Centers and Family Child Care

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/caring-for-our-children-basics-self-assessment-tool.pdf

> Caring for Our Children Self-Assessment Tool

http://earlysuccess.org/home

> The Alliance for Early Success is a catalyst for bringing state, national and funding partners together to improve state policies for children, starting at birth and continuing through age 8.

https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NWLC-report-on-state-implementation-of-CCDBG-reauthorization.pdf

> The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014: Uneven State Implementation of Key Policies

https://drfiene.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/13keyindicatorsofchildcarequalitychildcarequalityindicatorsccqi-cdpes2pc1scale.pdf

> 13 Key Indicators of Child Care Quality Child Care Quality Indicators (CCQI – CDPES2 PC1) Scale

https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/13-indicators-quality-child-care-research-update#:~:text=The%2013%20indica-tors%20are%20the,%2Fplan%2C%20outdoor%20playground%20safety%2C

> 13 Indicators of Quality Child Care: Research Update

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/priorities-report-fy2017

> Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Priorities Report

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/child_care_and_development_block_grant_markup.pdf

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/ccdf_final_rule_fact_sheet.pdf

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule Sheet

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/ccdf-reauthorization

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule Resources

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ccdf-reauthorization

Administration for Children and Families Key Policy Resources

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/caring_for_our_children_basics.pdf

Caring for Our Children Basics

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/archive/occ/resource/faqs-about-the-ccdf-2015-nprm

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) FAQ

Resources Specific to Child Care Licensing

http://www.naralicensing.org/child-care-licensing-study

National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) Child Care Licensing Studies

https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/35885

Understanding Licensed Child Care in Minnesota: 2016 Issue Brief

https://www.childandfamilydataarchive.org/cfda/cfda/series/231

Child Care Licensing Survey Series

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/data

Data Explorer and State Profiles

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/guide-support-states-and-territories-use-child-care-licensing-data

A Guide to Support States' and Territories' Use of Child Care Licensing Data - highlights some licensing-related data elements

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/licensing_caseloads.pdf?utm_source=BUILD+Initiative+-+General+List&utm_campaign=35365d24b5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_05_24_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_48a0135618-35365d24b5-109582893

Licensing Caseload Report: National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA Center)

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdf-law

Child Care and Development Block Grant Act: The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 and section 418 of the Social Security Act (42 USC 618), as amended, provide the statutory authority for implementation of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program as designated by the Administration for Children and Families.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-final-rule-faq

Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) of 2014: Frequently Asked Questions. (2015).

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdbg-act-of-2014-plain-language-summary-of-statutory-changes-tribes

Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) of 2014: Plain Language Summary of Statutory Changes. (2014).

Resources Specific to Understanding the New CCDF Health and Safety Standards and Training Requirements

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/new_health_and_safety_regs_webinar_ppt.pdf

Understanding the New CCDF Health and Safety Standards and Training Requirements. Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/licensing

National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations

Child Care Aware® of America
Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project Partners

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Note: Review and feedback from individual members participating in the Child Care Licensing Benchmark Project may not necessarily represent the views of their organization.

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Oversight Benchmarks

BENCHMARK 1: LICENSING

Licensing Level 1: States have licensing regulations that are enforced to ensure compliance at the facility level.

Any licensing exemption(s) must demonstrate how such exemption(s) do not endanger the health, safety or development of children. Must include any exemptions based on:

- Provider category, type or setting.
- Length of day.
- Providers not subject to licensing because the number of children served falls below a Lead Agency-defined threshold.
- Any other licensing requirements.

Licensing Level 2: All facilities hold a valid license administered by state and territory governments that sets a baseline of requirements below which it is illegal for facilities to operate. All facilities must be licensed and state ensures all facilities are held to the same criteria of licensing by facility type (center or FCCH).

All facilities means programs that care for one or more unrelated children.

BENCHMARK 2: MONITORING

Monitoring Level 1: State regulations require at least one pre-licensure inspection for compliance with health, safety and fire standards, and at least one annual unannounced inspection for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health and safety requirements and fire standards. Health and safety requirements include: 1. The prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations and guidance for the provider to provide referrals and support to help families of children receiving services during a grace period to comply with immunizations and other health and safety requirements); 2. Prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices; 3. Administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent; 4. Prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; 5. Building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water and vehicular traffic; 6. Prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma and child maltreatment; 7. Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility) that shall include procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place and lock down, staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities and children with chronic medical conditions; 8. Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biocontaminants; 9. Appropriate precautions in transporting children, if applicable; 10. Pediatric first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; 11. Recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect

Inspectors may inspect for compliance with all three standards (health, safety and fire) at the same time.

Monitoring Level 2: All facilities require at least one additional annual visit by licensing for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health and safety and fire standards. The number of inspections should not include those inspections conducted for the purpose of investigating a complaint.

If needed, additional follow-up visits should be conducted for the program to achieve satisfactory compliance or if the program is closed at any time.

BENCHMARK 3: INSPECTION REPORTS

Inspection Reports Level 1: Lead Agencies shall post results of full monitoring and inspection reports in a timely manner, either in plain language or with a plain language summary, for parents and child care providers to understand, and shall establish a process for correcting inaccuracies in the reports.

Such results shall include: (1) Information on the date of such inspection; (2) Information on corrective action taken by the State and child care provider, where applicable; (3) Any health and safety violations, including any fatalities and serious injuries occurring at the provider, prominently displayed on the report or summary; (4) A minimum of three years of results where available.

Results of monitoring and inspection reports should be made available by electronic means with easily accessible provider-specific information.

Websites shall include description of processes for licensing and monitoring child care providers, conducting criminal background checks and offenses that prevent individuals from being child care providers; aggregate number of deaths and serious injuries (for each provider category and licensing status) and instances of substantiated child abuse that occurred in child care settings each year, for eligible providers; and referrals to local child care resource and referral.

Inspection Reports Level 2: Results of monitoring and inspection reports are made available to families at no cost if there is no access to the internet.

BENCHMARK 4: PROGRAM/STAFF RATIO

Program/Staff Ratio Level 1: State regulations ensure the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities is maintained at a level sufficient to enable the State, Territory or Tribe to conduct effective inspections on a timely basis in accordance with the applicable Federal, State, Territory, Tribal and local law.

Program/Staff Ratio Level 2: Programs to licensing staff ratio does not exceed 50-60:1.

BENCHMARK 5: LICENSING STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Licensing Staff Qualifications Level 1: State regulations ensure individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors are qualified to inspect those child care providers and facilities and have received training in related health and safety requirements appropriate to provider setting and age of children served. Training shall include, but is not limited to, those requirements described in § 98.41 (health and safety), and all aspects of the State, Territory or Tribe's licensure requirements.

Licensing Staff Qualifications Level 2: Licensing staff should have a bachelor's degree and appropriate training to include at least 50 clock hours of competency-based orientation training when hired and 24 annual clock hours

of competency-based continuing education. May include specialized training of licensing inspectors in health and safety in early care and education settings, as well as the consideration of cultural and linguistic diversity of caregivers when addressing competencies and trainings.

BENCHMARK 6: BACKGROUND CHECK IMPLEMENTATION

Background Check Implementation Level 1: States, through coordination of the Lead agency with other State agencies, shall have in effect: Requirements, policies and procedures to require and conduct criminal background checks for child care staff members (including prospective child care staff members) of all licensed, regulated or registered child care providers and all child care providers eligible for services for which assistance is provided under CCDBG. Requirements, policies and procedures in place to respond as expeditiously as possible to other States', Territories' and Tribes' requests for background check results in order to accommodate the 45-day timeframe.

Background Check Implementation Level 2: Background checks are verified by state licensing agency through a statewide background check "clearinghouse" system.

BENCHMARK 7: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Level 1: The Lead Agency must describe in the Plan the State or Territory framework for training, professional development and postsecondary education for caregivers, teachers and directors, including those working in school-age care, that: (1) Is developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care; (2) May engage training and professional development providers, including higher education, in aligning training and education opportunities with the State's framework; (3) Addresses professional standards and competencies, career pathways, advisory structure, articulation and workforce information and financing; (4) Establishes qualifications in accordance with § 98.41(d)(3) designed to enable child care and school-age care providers that provide services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this part to promote the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children and improve the knowledge and skills of caregivers, teachers and directors in working with children and their families; (5) Includes accessible professional development conducted on an ongoing basis, aligned to a progression of professional development (which may include encouraging the pursuit of postsecondary education); (6) Reflects current research and best practices relating to the skills necessary for caregivers, teachers and directors to meet the developmental needs of participating children and engage families, including culturally and linguistically appropriate practices; and (7) Improves the quality, diversity, stability and retention (including financial incentives and compensation improvements) of caregivers, teachers and directors. (8) Establishes requirements for pre-service or orientation (to be completed within three months); and (9) Includes the minimum annual requirement for hours of training and professional development.

Professional Development Level 2: Professional development training system is accessible and fully implemented. Trainer qualification and training content is verified by the state or designee through a statewide tracking system (i.e., professional development registry, etc.).

Program Benchmarks

BENCHMARK 1: BACKGROUND CHECKS

Background Checks Level 1 : A comprehensive background check is required, including: (1) Using fingerprints to check state criminal registry or repository and FBI records, using Next Generation identification; (2) Checking the child abuse registry, (3) Checking the National Crime Information Center's National sex offender registry for all child care providers and any adult, 18 years or older, in a program who may have unsupervised access to young children (Including any individual residing in a family child care home who is age 18 and older). Background checks must be completed within 45 days of hire and include any out-of-state residence for previous five years. New background checks must be completed for any staff separated from employment for 180 consecutive days or more. Individuals are ineligible for employment for child care services if they have been convicted of a barrier/disqualifying crime.

Background Checks Level 2 : A comprehensive background check is required of all employees, including those under 18 years old. In family child care homes, all children over 12 years old residing in the home should have a background check.

BENCHMARK 2: PROVIDER QUALIFICATIONS

Provider Qualifications Level 1: State regulations include provider qualifications for child care and school-age providers.

Provider Qualifications Level 2: State regulations include staff qualifications for the following positions: center director/administrator, lead teacher, assistant teacher and family child care provider/caregiver. All staff qualifications include a high school diploma/equivalency plus one of the following: credentials (if applicable) or experience and skills required for each position. In addition, a timeline by when requirements must be met (i.e., at time of hire, within 30 days, etc.).

Note: Lead teacher refers to caregivers that are directly responsible for children in each classroom.

BENCHMARK 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Level 1: State regulations include requirements for pre-service training for caregivers, teachers and directors, including those working in school-age care that must be completed within three months of employment. Critical health and safety training (pre-service training topics 1-11 below) must be completed before providers are allowed to care for children unsupervised. State regulations include ongoing training requirements for providers that provide a progression of professional development that reflects current research and best practices relating to the skills necessary to meet the developmental needs of children and to engage families, including culturally and linguistically appropriate practices. There is a minimum annual requirement of hours for ongoing training and professional development for eligible caregivers, teachers and directors, appropriate to the setting and age of children served, that maintains and updates health and safety training standards. Annual training should be accessible to providers.

Pre-service and ongoing professional development training address the following topics: (1) The prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations and guidance for the provider to provide referrals and support to help families of children receiving services during a grace period to comply with immunizations and other health and safety requirements); (2) Prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices; (3) Administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent; (4) Prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; (5) Building and physical premises safety, including

identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water and vehicular traffic; (6) Prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma and child maltreatment; (7) Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility) that shall include procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place and lock down, staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities and children with chronic medical conditions; (8) Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biocontaminants; (9) Appropriate precautions in transporting children, if applicable; (10) Pediatric first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; (11) Recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect; and (12) Child development, including the major domains (cognitive, social, emotional, physical development and approaches to learning).

Professional Development Level 2: State regulations require all child care providers to complete 40 hours of pre-service training (within 90 days of employment) and 24 hours of annual training. Annual training includes a minimum of 16 hours of early learning and child development training and 8 hours of health and safety training.

Additional pre-service and annual professional development training topics may include: (13) business practices (for directors and FCCH); (14) Prevention of child maltreatment; (15) Nutrition (including age-appropriate feeding); 16. Access to physical activity; (17) Caring for children with special needs.

BENCHMARK 4: HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Healthy and Safety Level 1: State regulations include requirements for providers to develop policies and procedures that comply with health and safety requirements of the current CCDBG Federal Law. Requirements designed, implemented and enforced to protect the health and safety of children shall include: (1) The prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations and guidance for the provider to provide referrals and support to help families of children receiving services during a grace period to comply with immunizations and other health and safety requirements.); (2) Prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices; (3) Administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent; (4) Prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; (5) Building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water and vehicular traffic; (6) Prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma and child maltreatment; (7) Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility) that shall include procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place and lock down, staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities and children with chronic medical conditions; (8) Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biocontaminants; (9) Appropriate precautions in transporting children, if applicable; (10) Pediatric first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; (11) Recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect

Healthy and Safety Level 2: State regulations include for providers to develop policies and procedures that comply with health and safety requirements consistent with current CCDBG Federal Law as well as the following additional topics: (12) Nutrition (including age-appropriate feeding); (13) Access to physical activity; (14) Caring for children with special needs; (15) Corporal punishment/child guidance; (16) Firearms safety;)17) Use of tobacco, alcohol and controlled substances in child care settings.

BENCHMARK 5: DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Developmental Guidelines and Learning Activities Level 1: State regulations reference state early learning and developmental guidelines. State early learning and developmental guidelines (1) Are developmentally appropriate

for all children from birth to kindergarten entry; (2) Describe what children should know and be able to do; (3) Cover the essential domains of early childhood development (cognition, including language arts and mathematics; social, emotional and physical development; and approaches toward learning); (4) Are used statewide by child care providers and caregivers; (5) Reflect current research and best practices to meet the developmental needs of children and engage families, including culturally and linguistically appropriate practices.

Developmental Guidelines and Learning Activities Level 2: State regulations require all child care providers to have a plan that incorporates state early learning and developmental guidelines and includes activities that address the individual needs of each child and essential domains of early childhood development (approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition and perceptual, motor and physical). Activities should be culturally sensitive. The plan should also identify adequate resources to carry out activities. The provider limits exposure to screen time (i.e., restrictions based on exposure time, age of child, content, exceptions, etc.).

BENCHMARK 6: GROUP SIZE AND RATIO

Group Size and Ratio Level 1: State regulations include (1) Group size limits for specific age populations; (2) The appropriate ratio between the number of children and the number of caregivers, in terms of age of children in child care.

Group Size and Ratio Level 2: State regulations include child ratios and group size requirements that align with national recommendations by age for child care centers and family child care homes listed below:

Child Care Centers		
Age Group	Staff: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
< 12 months	1:4	8
12 - 23 months	1:4	8
24 - 35 months	1:6	12
3-year-olds	1:9	18
4-year-olds	1:10	20
5-year-olds	1:10	20
School age 6+	1:12	24

Family Child Care: A qualified assistant is present when there are more than six children in care, and no more than 12 children are in care at any one time. When there are six or fewer children present, no more than two are under the age of two years. When there are seven or more children present, no more than four are under the age of two years. Note for both standards: Whenever present, the child care provider's own children under the age of six must be included in the count.

BENCHMARK 7: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Engagement Level 1: State regulations establish procedures to ensure that providers of child care services afford parents unlimited access to their children, and to the providers caring for their children, during normal hours of provider operations and whenever the children are in the care of the provider.

Family Engagement Level 2: State regulations require child care providers to have a plan to encourage family engagement opportunities that are linguistically and culturally responsive, communicate regularly with families and share written policies and information about a child's development and progress in the program with families on a regular basis.