



# Opportunities Exchange

## CCMS: Frequently Asked Questions

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### WHAT IS A CHILD CARE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE (CCMS)?

Child Care Management Software is specifically designed to help child care providers automate their day-to-day operations so that staff have more time to spend with children and are able to monitor and manage their program proactively. CCMS tools will help streamline enrollment and manage your waitlist, track and report daily attendance, generate invoices and collect payment electronically, monitor and manage classroom ratios, manage staff records including professional development certifications and payroll, and communicate with families easily and consistently.

CCMS can be linked to accounting software like QuickBooks to give you accurate and timely financial reports that you can use to make sound business decisions, critically needed during a time of unstable enrollment.

In response to COVID pandemic procedures, most CCMS systems now have no-contact sign-in, health check-ins, and communication tools designed to help you manage unique circumstances that require more intensive health and safety protocols.

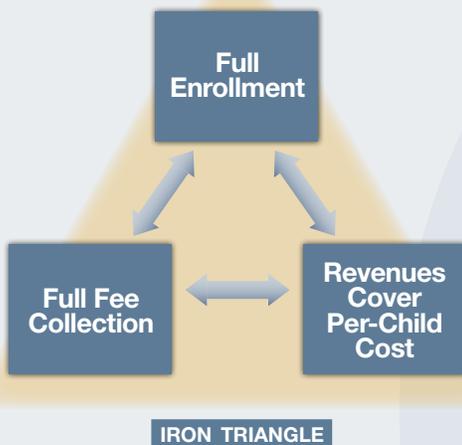
### IS CCMS JUST FOR CENTER-BASED CHILD CARE?

No. Most CCMS can be used for both centers and homes, although family child care providers typically prefer technology tools designed specifically to meet the needs of home-based child care providers. Examples include KidKare (formerly Minute Menu) and Wonderschool. Some of the companies that build center-based care, such as Brightwheel and Procure, have a simple version of the software that can be accessed via a cell phone.

### WHY DO I NEED A CCMS? I'VE BEEN MANAGING MY CHILD CARE BUSINESS WITHOUT ONE FOR MANY YEARS AND I'M DOING JUST FINE.

While you may have been in the business for many years without technology, your life could be easier, and your revenue greater, if you harnessed the power of technology. There are many reasons to implement a CCMS, including the following:

- **Save Time** CCMS can not only help automate myriad paper transactions that take up so much of your time every day, but also automatically create lists and reminders for important tasks like managing wait lists, managing employee professional development records, and scheduling tours.
- **Improve Cash Flow and Revenue** CCMS helps you manage the [Iron Triangle of ECE Finance](#) (full enrollment, full fee collection, accurate pricing) easily, and links these data to electronic billing as well as reports you can use, in real-time, to stay on track. Nearly every child care center or home that implements CCMS finds that their revenues increase as they are more easily able to tap and track every dollar owed, parents have an immediate, convenient way to pay, and systems are in place to proactively manage this task.
- **Help Manage Staff** CCMS makes it easier to stay on top of scheduling classrooms, maintaining ratios and payroll documentation. Electronic alerts let you know when training or health requirements need updating; and staff sign in/out systems eliminate paper-based employee time sheets and make payroll almost effortless.
- **Improve Family Communication** CCMS makes sure families receive important alerts every day, when they electronically check their child in and out. Current COVID pandemic procedures that ask parents to certify their child's health and relevant contacts are now built into most systems at check-in. CCMS's electronic



billing makes many difficult conversations unnecessary. Most CCMS systems also include tools that make it easy to send a text, email or photo/video to an individual family, an entire classroom or all the families in your program.

### WHAT DOES A CCMS COST?

The cost of CCMS varies widely based on the size of your center- or home-based business, the services you wish to automate, and the number of children you serve. Virtually all software is sold as a subscription in which you pay monthly (or annually). This model allows for seamless updates, access to customer support, and secure storage of your data in “the cloud”. Monthly subscriptions typically range between \$25-\$200 per month. There are also fees associated with collecting money electronically, and these can vary widely. So always ask questions and consider all expenses; sometimes the subscription price seems low but debit/credit/ACH fees are more costly. Details matter. It is important to remember however, that using technology to automate work is always less expensive than paying a person to do that task, and in almost every case implementing CCMS will increase prompt and thorough collections and make it easier to stay fully enrolled at all times, so software fees are ultimately a saving and not a cost.

In some states or cities you might be able to secure a CCMS license for free or very low cost. Examples include: North Carolina Smart Start), Nebraska (Early Education Consortium), Virginia (Early Childhood Foundation), Georgia (Quality Care for Children), Arizona (Southwest Human Development), Texas (Children at Risk), Colorado (Early Learning Ventures) and more. Reach out to your local CCR&R, Child Care Provider Association, CDFI or business development organization to find out what is available in your area.

### ALL THIS MAKES SENSE....AND IF I WEREN'T SO OVERWHELMED WITH COVID REQUIREMENTS I WOULD WORK ON THIS ... BUT I JUST CAN'T SEE DOING IT NOW.

Launching a new CCMS in the middle of a pandemic might not feel like the right thing to do—but consider this: Now, more than ever, you need to track every dollar and save every hour. If you received the federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan for COVID relief, you will have to prove that you complied with the requirements to convert the loan to a grant. That means record-keeping. A lot of record-keeping that you might be doing manually. If you want to apply for additional COVID recovery dollars you will need to craft budgets and complete paperwork. Again—more record-keeping. CCMS can help with all these tasks. In fact, experience from states that have implemented business training linked to automation indicates that child care business owners who use CCMS are much more likely to receive PPP and other COVID recovery grants than those who rely on paper record-keeping.

### HOW WILL I FIND THE TIME TO ACTUALLY LAUNCH A CCMS? I CAN'T GET MY HEAD ABOVE WATER NOW!

Yes, it will take some extra time to on-board and launch a CCMS. And time is a huge challenge for all of us. But there are some helpful ways to get over this hurdle.

- **First**, do not hesitate to ask for help. Most Shared Service Alliances, and some CCR&Rs, T/TA organizations, and provider associations are launching support groups and targeted coaching for child care businesses that are new to automation. If you already have a business coach, ask them to make CCMS training and on-boarding part of your program improvement plan. That way you can build the work into your regular professional development hours.
- **Second**, know that most CCMS companies offer training and technical assistance as part of the purchase package. Be sure to ask about this.
- **Third**, as you begin to implement CCMS, you will ask each family to complete child records and to update the information when needed. This strategy serves two purposes: it makes the task of populating your system much lighter; and it ensures that families are connected to the system so they can use it to manage their account and receive information about their child. Once the system is loaded and launched, electronic data entry will become the norm and tasks that formerly took days will take hours (or less!). 