



# Opportunities Exchange

## IDENTIFY TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

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Alliances that seek to improve the financial position of providers will need to offer business leadership that reduces the cost of operations, increases revenue, and allows increased investment in teacher compensation and other quality measures. This can only be achieved by operating efficiently and effectively through the use of business automation and data-sharing tools, the most important of which is a Child Care Management Software (CCMS).

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

CCMS 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 a 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.

Some CCMS systems include accounting functionality; others can be linked to accounting software like QuickBooks to provide accurate and timely financial reports to inform sound business decisions. In response to COVID-19 pandemic procedures, most CCMS systems now have no-contact sign-in, health check-ins, and communication tools designed to manage unique circumstances that require more intensive health and safety protocols.

Since the majority of ECE programs do not use (or do not fully use) CCMS, there is a tremendous opportunity for SSAs to achieve significant results in short order. The use of automation reduces provider time spent collecting and reporting data, increases the accuracy of data collected and reported, and ensures the availability of timely, accurate, and useful data for informed business decisions.

There are several affordable off-the-shelf Child Care Management Software products that can meet provider and Hub technology needs. As you work to identify and vet potential Child Care Management Software, we recommend checking out [this tool](#) on the OppEx website, which will help you identify which CCMS features are most important to your Alliance. Armed with this information you can then begin comparing products and participating in demonstrations. We also suggest visiting the website <https://www.capterra.com/child-care-software/> which maintains a list of off-the-shelf CCMS, includes user ratings and reviews, a summary of features, and the ability to compare up to four products at the same time.

As you work to select a CCMS, invite vendors to demonstrate their product to the design team and show specific features that will help implement the strategies outlined in your Theory of Change. Be careful to select a product that can truly help achieve your outcomes vs. selecting one with the strongest marketing pitch. Additionally, consider including

### Tools to Support You In This Section

- [Child Care Management Software: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Child Care Management Software FAQ](#)
- [Child Care Management Software Selection Tool](#)
- [Capterra—shortlist of market leaders in child care software](#)



providers in the vetting process to get their take on whether the software is user-friendly. Finally, prepare for a demo by drafting “show me” questions for the reports, functions and features that are most important for your Alliance. You can also ask for access to a “sandbox” account to test features and functionality on your own.

### HOW CCMC CAN DRIVE CHANGE

CCMS are powerful tools that alliance Hubs can use to drive change at the individual program level and at the systems level.

#### Program Level Change—Empowering Providers to Understand Their Business

Without a CCMS most child care providers struggle to manage their businesses efficiently and effectively. Providers often use myriad systems, and may in fact use a different system and platform (or in some cases notebook!) for each functional task. Attendance is kept in one place, invoices prepared on paper via a different system, payments are taken manually, wait lists are kept in a binder, and revenue and expenses may be tracked in Quickbooks by some providers ... but many do not even track monthly profit and loss at all.

Helping providers get connected with and understand how to fully use a CCMS not only makes it possible to complete all of these tasks, and maintain records and data, in one platform but also simplifies daily, weekly, and monthly administrative tasks. CCMS platforms are able to automate attendance tracking, billing, invoicing, and expense/revenue tracking. Additionally, they often provide a centralized platform for communicating with parents, easy-to-build websites, and online tour scheduling. Even if providers participating in multiple public funding programs and/or QRIS systems need to enter data elsewhere, having a complete and accurate picture of the business as a whole is critical for sound management of that business.

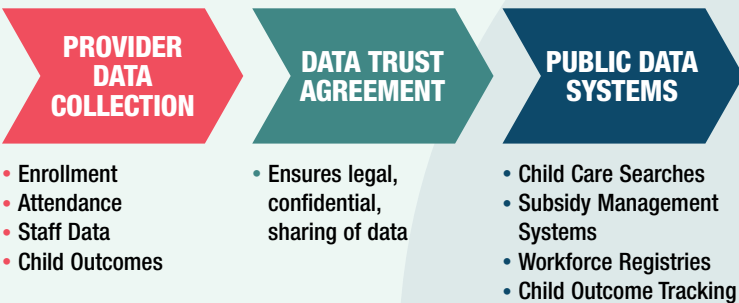
When providers learn to regularly and fully use a CCMS they are able to get a much clearer look at their month-to-month business operations, make data informed decisions about the business, and have the reports they need to see if all classrooms are fully enrolled and all tuition and fees are collected in full and on time—two of the important components of the Iron Triangle. This is vital information for providers, as well as the Alliance leaders and business coaches focused on increasing the financial sustainability of member providers.

#### Systems Level Change—Linking Data to Drive Efficiency

Alliances afford small, independent business owners the power of scale. Helping providers harness the power of technology to save time and increase revenue is a critically important first step. Being able to use data to inform decisions, at the provider and Alliance level, is a significant step toward sustainability. Sharing these data with public systems to drive policy and finance reform has the potential to be transformative.

There is a growing awareness in the early childhood education sector that data collected at the provider level can be legally and appropriately shared with public sector systems, including child care search engines to track “real-time” availability of child care openings; child care subsidy systems to reduce error, save time, and ensure more timely payments to providers; child outcome data to track early learning and inform policy efforts such as Quality Rating and Improvement Systems.

The graphic at left shows how provider-level data can flow into public data systems.



### A WORD ON TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION ...

We frequently hear Alliance leaders express concern that child care providers will not feel comfortable using technology. This may be true in some cases. (Indeed, your Alliance will need a plan for onboarding providers into the CCMS and providing coaching as they begin to use the software.) However, keep in mind that the [average age of child care providers](#) nationwide in 2021 was 36. Many of today’s child care providers are millennials who grew up using technology and can comfortably learn to use a new platform with appropriate tech support. We have found that the greatest barriers to adoption are not



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general discomfort with technology but rather time and hardware. To be successful, providers need: 1) time to stop and learn a new system; and, 2) access to a laptop or tablet that can run the CCMS. As you work out a plan to support provider use of a CCMS you may want to take into consideration the following:

- Which providers are your primary focus? Are they more or less comfortable with technology?
- What technology systems do the providers currently use on a regular basis? Facebook? A particular app?
- What languages do your providers speak? Is your chosen platform and customer service team available in the language in which they are most comfortable speaking, writing, and reading?
- How will you help providers carve out the time to participate in training and practice using the CCMS?
- How will you ensure providers have a good source of coaching/tech support as they roll out the CCMS?
- How will you ensure providers have access to the hardware they need to implement CCMS? While these platforms can typically run on a smartphone, providers may need a laptop or tablet to take full advantage of all features. 