

OBJECTIVE

The Hunt Institute developed the National Child Care Finder Scale to provide states with an actionable framework for improving child care finder platforms. The framework evaluates the capability of the platform itself and not how it is used by individual users or providers. This distinction ensures fair scoring and allows the analysis to highlight whether state finders create the conditions for families to access accurate, timely, and usable information. A thorough review of verified state child care finders and interviews with a diverse sample of 40 parents with children aged 0-5 years grounded the development of the framework.

The framework was applied to state child care finder sites from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The resulting 51 state profiles include category scores as well as total scores and are featured on the [National Child Care Finder Scale](#) website. The pages that follow include the summative and category scores for your state. The [report](#) provides an in-depth discussion of the framework, methods and findings of the study.

The Analytic Framework

The scale is composed of four categories mapping the stages of parents' search for child care.

Category	Research Question
Design and Integration	To what extent can all parents, including those with disabilities or limited technology access, use the finder and connect to other childhood programs from the platform?
User Experience	To what extent does the platform assure users of its authenticity, provide clear directions for conducting a child care search, and provide user support?
Search Filters	To what extent can families customize their search through applying filters?
Provider Profiles	To what extent are provider profiles current, factual, and comprehensive?

The Scale

A four-level scale assesses the overall strength of state platforms.

Scale Levels	Definition
1 – 5 Minimal	The finder is limited or partially functional. Families can only access limited information through the platform.
6 – 10 Adequate	The finder meets a baseline level of usability. Families can access basic information through the platform.
11 – 15 Enhanced	The finder provides an array of features. Families can access nuanced information through the platform.
16 – 20 Exemplary	The platform demonstrates innovation, serving as a model for other states. Families can find comprehensive, trustworthy and current information on the platform.

STATE PROFILE: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

16.5/20

»» EXEMPLARY



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CHILD CARE FINDER

Design & Integration

To what extent does the site allow all parents, including those with disabilities or limited tech access, to use the platform and connect to related platforms?

MET / PARTIAL /
NOT MET

Responsive design across devices (laptop and mobile)

MET

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA](#)

NOT MET

No login required to use finder

MET

Integration with state systems (Licensing, QRIS, Subsidy, Audits)

MET

Capability for provider updates

MET

CATEGORY SCORE

4

“The state finder did not come up when I searched for child care. I didn’t even know that there was a state finder.”

— Parent



STATE PROFILE: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

User Experience

To what extent does the platform assure users of its authenticity (official nature), provide clear directions for conducting a child care search, and provide user support?

MET / PARTIAL /
NOT MET

Discoverable via common Google queries

MET

Official state identity is clear

MET

Clear call-to-action on landing page (e.g., prominent “Find Child Care”)

MET

Filters are visible and clearly labeled

MET

Support options exist (FAQ, chat, and/or hotline)

MET

CATEGORY SCORE

5



“I’m not sure the state site is the top choice in a simple Google search. It’s very important that the site is easily searchable.”

— Parent

STATE PROFILE: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Search Filters

To what extent can families customize their search through applying filters?

MENU OF FILTERS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Location (address or ZIP with radius and/or city/town) 2. Age (infant, toddler, preschool, school-age) 3. Provider type 4. Subsidy acceptance 5. Quality Rating 6. Hours of operation 7. Current availability | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Inclusive practices 9. Language/s of instruction 10. Educational approach 11. Allergy-free 12. Vaccination requirements 13. Meals/snacks 14. Transportation availability 15. Map-based search view |
|--|--|

RUBRIC	MET / PARTIAL / NOT MET
Includes Options 1-2 = 1 point	MET
Includes Options 1-4 = 2 points	MET
Includes Options 1-5 = 3 points	MET
Includes Options 1-5 and 3 other options = 4 points	MET
Includes Options 1-5 and 4 or more options = 5 points	MET
Credit of .5 points for preferred options despite absence of one or more essential filters	N/A
CATEGORY SCORE	5

“Location, cost, is it in a safe neighborhood are the filters I need. It was hard for me because I walked and took the bus with the baby and stroller and everything, so distance was critical.”

— Parent



STATE PROFILE: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Provider Profiles

To what extent are provider profiles current, factual, and comprehensive?

MENU OF PROVIDER DETAILS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Name, address, phone and email | 12. Waitlist by age group |
| 2. License | 13. Curriculum/philosophy/environment* |
| 3. Ages served | 14. Staff-to-child ratio* |
| 4. Quality ratings and/or accreditation | 15. Teacher credentials* |
| 5. Website | 16. Food availability |
| 6. Pricing information by age group | 17. Special/medical needs |
| 7. Safety/inspection history | 18. Transportation |
| 8. Subsidy acceptance | 19. Link to application |
| 9. Languages supported | 20. Tour scheduling |
| 10. Timestamp for last update | 21. Favorites/alerts |
| 11. Number of slots by age group* | 22. Photos |

RUBRIC	MET / PARTIAL / NOT MET
Includes Options 1-2 = 1 point	MET
Includes options 1-4 = 2 points	MET
Includes options 1-10 = 3 points	PARTIAL
Includes options 1-10 and 5 other options = 4 points	NOT MET
Includes 1-10 and 6 or more options including at least two * options = 5 points	NOT MET
Credit of .5 points for preferred options despite absence of one or more essential filters	N/A
CATEGORY SCORE	2.5



“Once I get a shortlist and click on a provider profile, I’d like to see a website that I can explore and find more information.”

— Parent

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STATE AGENCY LEADERS

- **Enhance visibility of state child care finders**
States could consider enhancing the visibility of state finders through clear identification of the official state finder, ensuring search engine optimization, and improving outreach and strategic placement of the site on related government websites.
 - **Ensure that options for filters in child care finder are aligned with parents' needs**
States could explore aligning filter options with parent needs including, but not limited to, real-time availability, schedule flexibility, financial support, and inclusion filters.
 - **Strengthen templates for provider profiles**
States could prioritize details on provider profile templates such as integrated messaging and scheduling tools, real-time information on tuition, enrollment, and waitlist status, evidence of safety and quality, and curriculum philosophy, sample schedules and other elements determining program culture.
 - **Enhance options for providers to update profiles**
States could consider improving access for providers to frequently update their profile on the system. Building in vetting mechanisms will ensure such updates are evidence-based and accurate.
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POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEGISLATORS

- **Embed the improvement of child care finders in larger child care initiatives**
As part of broader initiatives to improve child care access, policymakers could consider prioritizing improvement of finders to enhance their visibility, accuracy, and user-friendliness.
- **Foster synergies between state and regional agencies that offer child care finders**
To streamline information for parents as well as reduce costs and administrative burdens on providers and systems, policymakers could consider supporting a streamlined system of child care finders connected to a unified provider database.
- **Bridge gaps between child care consumer education and other family-facing programs**
Policymakers could consider strengthening partnerships between family-facing agencies to highlight state child care finders from multiple points of entry.