



Resultant

Iowa Health
and Human Services

State of Iowa Solves Workforce Dilemma through a Child Care Solution

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly exacerbated child care shortage problems that continue today in most states. [Early childhood care and education](#) (ECE) is critical to child development; lack of available quality care impacts family livelihoods, community growth and stability, and business expansion—thereby affecting state economies.

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds created the Child Care Task Force after her Economic Recovery Advisory Board examined strategies to help Iowa's economy not only bounce back from the pandemic but grow. The advisory board identified affordable quality child care as a major barrier to the state's workforce recovery and wanted to improve the ease with which both parents and care providers interface with the government agencies providing assistance.



When we remove obstacles to high-quality, affordable child care, our families can nurture their kids while retaining maximum freedom to enter and remain in the work force.

— IOWA GOVERNOR KIM REYNOLDS



THE PROBLEM

The State of Iowa's Governor's Child Care Task Force reports that:

- The state loses \$935 million annually in tax revenue, employee absences, and turnover due to the child care crisis.
- 23% of Iowans (and 35% of rural Iowans) live in areas with a shortage of licensed child care providers.

The median monthly cost of full-time child care for one child is \$1031, which is more than housing for the average state resident. The extra tracking, reporting, and bookkeeping required for reimbursement discourage providers from serving families who receive subsidies.

THE SOLUTIONS

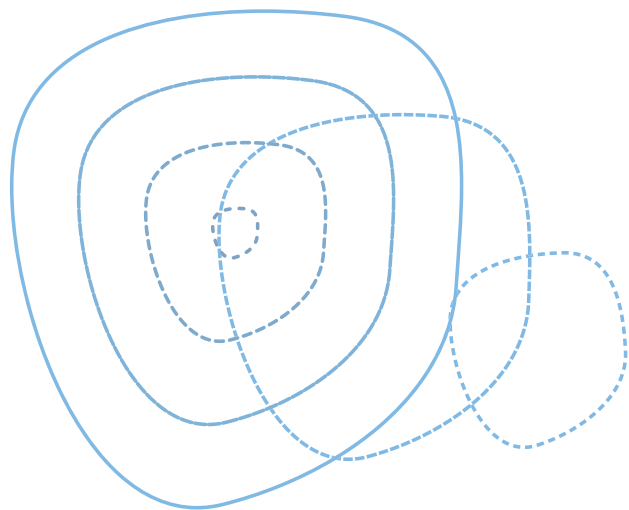
Our team collaborated with Iowa to build an operational data store with an application programming interface (API) that connects provider Child Care Management Systems (CCMSs) on one side and [state systems](#) on the other.

The data store holds and exchanges child care data from multiple sources, including providers and government agencies.

The greatest challenge to the project was that the state wanted an all-inclusive solution, functional regardless of which platform providers use. Resultant quickly recognized that not all child care providers would use a CCMS and created easy alternative pathways for those providers to use a cell phone to respond with their child care vacancies and desired capacity.

Resultant's API and operational data store provide automated interfacing capabilities between any CCMS and all relevant state systems, such as the Iowa child care assistance portal, through which the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) tracks time and attendance and pays providers serving subsidized families.

With this foundation, the teams built and can continue building data visualizations that identify gaps in services, available enrollments, and opportunities for business expansion where services are strong.



OUTCOMES

Early outcomes from the project include:

- ✓ The state can identify the number of vacant child care slots in comparison to real-time child care demand for a clear picture of supply and demand within the child care system.
- ✓ The state can identify geographical areas where child care supply is misaligned with potential economic need.
- ✓ Providers can use one automated system for all families.
- ✓ CCMSs automatically push accurate child care subsidy data to state systems.
- ✓ The state receives more timely, accurate attendance data.
- ✓ Data visualizations help decision-makers see where what types of child care services are needed.

Data visualization can also identify areas where there is plenty of available child care while community stakeholders can identify potential solutions to address where there are not available child care slots.

These technological advancements help parents who want to work find child care. Families can search for child care by entering the age of the child and the address near where they want care. The program will map locations of available enrollments.

Connection between early learning providers and state systems saves significant time, making it far easier for providers to serve families receiving subsidies. Removing those obstacles increases available child care spots across the state.



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