



primechildcare
SOFTWARE

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO CHOOSING CHILDCARE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE





When shopping around for daycare management software, there are a dizzying number of factors to consider: price point, capabilities, and customer support to name a few. One of the most important things to note is that software needs can vary considerably from program to program.

Any particular software platform may claim to offer the most features, but that doesn't mean it's the right choice for every childcare center. At Prime Childcare Software, we understand the nuanced needs of individual childcare centers unlike any other. We'd like to guide you through the thicket of confusing tech jargon and simplify your software purchasing experience as much as possible.

Our goal is to provide daycare directors with unbiased advice on how to choose their childcare management software.

Buyer's guides tend to be promotional content disguised as a resource, more concerned with promoting a certain product than providing clear information for buyers. Instead, we've built a thorough comparison chart that will allow you to evaluate the software tools on your shortlist and the features they provide. We hope that this enables you to make a well-informed buying decision.





What should childcare management software do?

Childcare management software helps you efficiently manage many aspects of running a daycare. What was once scattered across forms, files, sign-in sheets and paper checks can be smoothly transitioned into a cloud-based administrative platform. Many programs accommodate a wide range of features, including:

- Child & staff data management
- Progress and incident management
- Registration and enrollment
- Billing, Invoicing and Payment Processing
- Accounting
- Parent engagement
- Reporting
- Scheduling & Attendance/HR management
- Meal management
- System functions (backups, authentication)
- Customer software support
- Implementation assistance



When comparing software platform requirements, we'll provide a more detailed overview of each function and how it could potentially be used in your childcare program.

Bear in mind that you may not need all of these functions.

It is up to you to evaluate the scope of each software and determine what would ultimately be the best fit for your daycare.

Before we dive into the various features of top software platforms, we wanted to outline a few other key considerations and questions you should pose when evaluating softwares:



Price point

What is your budget for a childcare management software? You don't want to sign a contract with a software provider only to find yourself in a bind if your revenue doesn't accommodate the subscription fees. Alternatively, you don't want to purchase software with limited functionality when you could afford one with better features.



Ease of use

Consider the preferences of your staff and how they may take to a new software system. You don't want your software to be difficult to use. Almost all software providers offer demos, allowing you to explore the user interface prior to purchase. Be sure to ask for one and don't be afraid to involve staff members.



Customization & Flexibility

From franchises to home daycares, every program has different needs with regard to scalability, accounting and management - to name a few. Whether you have a large or small operation, you don't want rigid software that can't be adapted to the needs of your daycare center.





A Side-By-Side Comparison of Childcare Management Software



Directions

We've completed a breakdown of the must-have features for childcare management software, allowing you to decide which software is the closest fit for your childcare program.

Using the scoring tables below, evaluate your two primary software options. If the software has a given feature that you consider a must-have, give it **3 points**. If it offers a feature that you consider nice to have, but not a necessity, assign **1 point** to the software. If it offers a feature you consider not needed at all, assign **zero points**.

To find out what features each software provides, visit their website, request a demo or download a brochure.



Calculate the final score of each software to see how they stack up against each other.



Data Management



CHILD INFORMATION

This is an imperative feature; the data you keep on each child must be comprehensive and meticulously updated. From allergy and medical information to photos of people approved for pickups, the safety of the children you manage depends on having readily available information. We've outlined the core components of child information that should be stored by your software. We would go so far as to call comprehensive child data a non-negotiable feature.

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Child Information Features | | |
| Emergency Contacts | | |
| Immunization & Vaccination Tracking | | |
| Allergy Tracking | | |
| Medication Tracking | | |
| Pictures of Children/Parents | | |
| Multiple Addresses | | |
| Multiple Guardians | | |
| Other Relationships | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

STAFF INFORMATION

Retaining data on your staff is equally important as the data kept on children. Both internal operations and regulatory compliance depend on well-maintained staff records. From certifications to immunization records, you want software that lends itself to thorough staff record-keeping.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Do parents or regulatory bodies ever request this information?
- 2 How do you conduct employee performance reviews and is it necessary to have your software accommodate this?
- 3 Would your employees prefer a web-based scheduling system, or do you have a different preferred system for scheduling?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Clock-In/Clock-Out | | |
| Continuing Education, Training Certifications | | |
| Work Scheduling | | |
| Performance Reviews | | |
| Employment and Benefit Data | | |
| Staff-to-Child Ratio | | |
| Pictures of Children/Parents | | |
| Immunization and Vaccination Tracking | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Incident Management

Every daycare manager knows that a single day can overflow with activity, good and bad. Accidents are common, in which case you need to make an incident report.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 What are the requirements for your state with regard to incident reporting and management?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pt. Not Needed = 0 pts. | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Incident Tracking | | |
| Parent Notification/ eSignatures | | |
| Incident Classifications | | |
| Escalations & Approvals | | |
| Insurance Documentation | | |
| Reporting/File Management | | |
| Disaster & Emergency Plans | | |
| Photo/Video Documentation | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |



Classroom & Curriculum Management

Questions to Consider:

- 1 How do you currently track student achievements and milestones? Can a digital system automate the awards and recognition you give to students?
- 2 How are you currently structuring lesson plans; would a cloud-based software make your life easier or complicate your pre-existing system?

Progress tracking is critical to keep children encouraged and parents informed.

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pt. Not Needed = 0 pts. | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Mobile app for teachers | | |
| Transitions Management/Tracking | | |
| Daily Activity Sheets | | |
| Parent Messaging Capabilities | | |
| Calendars | | |
| Milestones and Achievements | | |
| Preloaded State Standards for Achievements | | |
| Lesson Planning | | |
| Assessment | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |



Registration & Enrollment

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Will your online enrollment forms be branded to your business or the software vendor's?
- 2 Is registration a visible part of your website and does it conform to state requirements, e.g. immunizations, allergies, etc?
- 3 Is the registration/enrollment process connected to the rest of the system for scheduling, invoicing, payment options, etc?
- 4 Does the enrollment system cover flexible scheduling, e.g. 'drop in' customers?

Due to high demand, many parents place their children on waitlists before they're granted admission to the center. However, if you don't have a high volume of new admissions, this feature may not be necessary to your daycare. Online enrollment has become the norm for many centers. A handful of software companies offer enrollment forms that you can customize around your needs while allowing you to import application dates into the system.

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Waitlist Management | | |
| Customizable Forms | | |
| Import Application Data Into System | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Billing, Invoicing and Payment Processing

Depending on the location of your center, parents may have a strong preference for online or in-person payment. Areas with high population density tend to see parents who walk their children to daycare and often have more time to pay on-site. Suburban communities are usually dropping their children off during their commutes or children are picked up by school bus so they prefer the convenience of online payments. In addition to considerations for parents, weigh your own preferences as well.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Does the system work with pre-payments and/or subsidy payments and accrue them to the right account?
- 2 Can the system accommodate many variables such as sibling discounts, early drop-off/late pickup fees, meal fees, event or extracurricular activities?
- 3 Can the parents readily see their balances due on the check in screen, without having to bother admin staff?
- 4 Does it handle 'loyalty' programs and support promotions and 'coupons'?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Online Payment | | |
| Work Scheduling | | |
| Autopay | | |
| On Site Payment | | |
| Mobile Payment | | |
| Email Invoicing | | |
| Third-party Payer | | |
| Flexible Billing Options | | |
| Identify Overdue Receivables | | |
| Batch Invoice Generation | | |
| Drop-In Care Billing Model | | |
| Advance payments/ Account Balances | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Accounting

Your center may or not have a dedicated accounting person or department. This will dictate the complexity of the accounting features you should look for in your software. It's plain to see why it would be valuable to have a history of charges, payments and invoicing housed in your software, but if you are happy with an external accounting tool, then you may not require a software with extensive features in this area.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 If you already have an accounting tool like QuickBooks, do you find items falling through the cracks?
- 2 Would be useful if your accounting software integrated with the same software that processes admissions/payment/payroll etc?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Year-end Parent Tax Statements | | |
| Transactional Audit Trail | | |
| History of Charges, Payments, Invoicing, Etc | | |
| File Exports | | |
| Employee Payroll Management With Year-End W2s | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Parent Engagement

Two-way communication between parents and childcare providers can be tremendously beneficial to both parent and child. Knowing what their child is working on in school allows parents the opportunity to participate, offer help and confidence boosts to the child when needed, and give feedback on curriculum. If you don't currently have a parent portal or mobile app, it could be a useful asset as you shop around for softwares.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Can parents log into a self-service area to check for everything listed, including calendar events, notices and inclement weather/closing predictions?
- 2 Does the vendor offer a mobile app for parent engagement? Is it BRANDED to your business?
- 3 Push notifications & text messages are a much faster, easier and effective way to get parents immediate attention, but can they also help you market and differentiate your business?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Online Portal | | |
| Mass Emails | | |
| SMS/Texting (both individual and en masse) | | |
| Calendar | | |
| Photo/Video Sharing | | |
| Your Center's Own Mobile App | | |
| Push Notifications via mobile app | | |
| Parent Portal/App with individual logins | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Reporting

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Most software systems will have a list of pre-built, standard reports, but can you filter or customize them?
- 2 Are they sufficient for your specific business?
- 3 Do they conform to state requirements?
- 4 Do they contain your logo or the software program's logo?
- 5 Are you able to export data to create your own reports?

Reporting is a vital part of any business management system. It is a true test of how well the software system manages and integrates all parent, student, financial and operational data, to supply the reports you need, when you need them.

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Self-serve Reporting Options | | |
| Pre-Built Reports | | |
| API for Connecting to a Data Visualization Tool Like Tableau | | |
| Exportable PDF Reports | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Scheduling and Attendance

It is useful to have software that offers a full suite of tools for managing your calendar and child attendance. Automated check-in can simplify your morning routine as you get children through the door. With regard to calendar management, it can vary in style between softwares, so be sure to explore the calendar when you request a demo.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Does the system support check-in stations/kiosks?
- 2 Is the check-in system portable/mobile for things like transportation to and from the center or on field trips?
- 3 Does the system support drop-in functionality?
- 4 Can the system do batch check-in for groups?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Check-In / Check-Out Tracking | | |
| Live Headcounts | | |
| Calendar Management | | |
| Automated Checkin | | |
| Track Before and After School Care | | |
| Track Planned Vacations and Absences | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Meal Plan Management

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Do you have another method of meal planning and could it be improved with a digital alternative?
- 2 Do parents often ask for a record of meals served and are you able to provide it to them?
- 3 How do you currently calculate monthly meal reimbursement? Would an automated tool be useful to you, or does it not apply?

Menu planning and recording can be vital when children have dietary restrictions. A digitally accessible meal plan can be cross-referenced with your allergy data on each child, allowing you to create full-proof menus that don't stir up parent concerns.

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Monthly & Weekly Menus | | |
| CACFP Claims Processing | | |
| History of Meals Served and Claims Made | | |
| Monthly Reimbursement | | |
| Calculation | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

System Functions

The ability to backup and restore all of your information is a foundational element of a high-performing software. Almost all softwares offer backups, in addition to authentication and role-based security to protect file access - but some do not. Be sure to factor this into your buying decision, as it is so crucial. When working with children and keeping their personal information in the cloud, you want to have airtight security measures to put parents' minds at ease.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Would you like to be able to control who has door access and keep a record of who went and in and out of the center and at what time?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Authentication | | |
| Role-based Security | | |
| Backup/Restore | | |
| Door Access Management | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |



Software Support and Services

Available softwares are fairly standardized in the support and services they offer, though not all providers are SaaS/web-based systems (meaning they can be accessed online). If you are considering a web-based software system, be sure to check.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 Do you believe parent engagement would benefit if they had access to a mobile app (branded to your daycare) where they could refer to all of the client-facing information the software offers?
- 2 Do you want to be able to log into your system outside your center?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| PCI-certified Service Provider | | |
| SaaS/Web-based | | |
| On-Prem | | |
| iOS Apple Mobile App | | |
| Android Mobile App | | |
| Fire (Amazon) App | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |

Implementation

Getting started with your new childcare software can often be the most difficult part. Touch base with each software provider on what support they can offer as you migrate your data to the new system, build out custom forms and train your staff. You'll also want to ensure they offer IT support throughout your subscription term.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 How tech-savvy is your staff and will they likely require intensive training?
- 2 Do you have multiple systems from which you need to migrate data as you transition to your comprehensive childcare software?
- 3 Will you need to build forms with custom fields and screens? Are you equipped to configure them on your own?

| Need to Have = 3 pts Nice to Have = 1 pts Not Needed = 0 pts | Software Option 1 | Software Option 2 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Data Conversion | | |
| Configure System Fields and Screens | | |
| Configure from Regional to Class | | |
| Accounting Setup in | | |
| Implementation | | |
| In-Person Training | | |
| Online Training | | |
| Ongoing Support | | |
| TOTAL SCORE | | |



We sincerely hope this guide was of use as you continue in your childcare software buying journey. Should you have any other questions about how the different software features can be implemented at your daycare, you are encouraged to reach out to our support team at 1-888-311-1351 or info@pccsoft.com.

Prime Childcare Software is proud to be the most objectively comprehensive childcare management software on the market. However, we are committed to matching daycares with the software that best fits their needs, whether that means working with us or not.

Pricing Considerations

We recommend that you take the time to get thoroughly acquainted with your short-list of software prior to purchasing. You want to make sure that you know exactly what is included and what is not before you make a commitment. Different programs employ different fee structures. Some charge per user, some per module, and others by number of students. Inquire about pricing tiers to determine which software is the best fit for your childcare program.

If you are interested in seeing how Prime's comprehensive capabilities can revolutionize the operational efficiency of your daycare, please request a demo at PCCSOFT.COM.

