

CHILDCARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS COMPARISON GUIDE

<p>There are many childcare management software packages available that sell from \$199 to over \$4,000. These programs range from simple manual databases to fully featured automated systems, and come in both pc and web based varieties. There are many differences between these packages in quality, functionality, usability, stability, and support. These differences separate a useful and professional product from others that are really no better than using paper and pencil (sometimes they are worse.) When comparing software, look for features that would automate as many of your daily tasks as possible. Don't settle for software that would still make you do many things manually, including billing, record keeping, attendance, and payroll.</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage - Complete, professional, and affordable</p>	<p>Childcare Management software is usually divided into systems for family child care and stand alone centers. The software for stand alone centers is then offered in small and large packages, normally with a 60 family cut off for the small package. Functions including extensive batch processing, networking, flexible rates, extensive scheduling, comprehensive reporting, and accounts payable functionality are usually reserved for the larger center software, which is also much more expensive. When comparing software for different sized centers, make sure that functionality to automate your center and save you time is included. Forgoing functionality to save money only makes sense if you are willing to do everything manually.</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage – offered in 4 full featured versions for different size centers</p>
<p>Childcare Management software comes in both pc installed and web based systems. Both of these platforms can offer similar functionality, but there are some key differences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) With web based systems, you are leasing the software; you don't own the software or your data, and there is a monthly fee to use the software, which can always increase. 2) To effectively use web-based software, you need a fast and reliable internet connection. If the internet is down, you can't use your software (including the time clock.) After all, are you open 10 hours a day or 9 hours and 45 minutes? 3) With web based systems, you are charged based on the total number of children in the system, even children who no longer attend (many states require you to keep information for alumni children for several years.) 4) Both systems protect your data and can offer access through an internet connection. Some pc installed systems offer web based backup (as well as backup to a flash drive, hard drive, etc.) and you can use remote login solutions to access your system from any location. <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage - PC based and includes free web based backup</p>	<p>Most of our "professional software" competitors sell their software in modules, reasoning that you shouldn't have to pay for modules you don't need, and that you can start small and purchase additional modules later. Buying software in pieces is expensive, and modules are frequently codependent, so if you need a specific function, you have to buy several modules. In addition, how much time will you spend doing things manually until you can afford to purchase additional modules to automate the functionality you need? (On page 5 of this guide, we price out the needed modules from our "module" competitors for a minimal set of functions that most centers would need. Even though we didn't include many other modules that most centers wind up purchasing, the prices are eye-opening.)</p> <p>Another big issue with module based software is how you use the software. When software is broken into modules, you have to go to that module for specific tasks. This can often mean that you have to go from module to module to perform a task.</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage - No Modules, period!</p>
<p>Childcare Management Software support ranges from all inclusive phone, email, and online support, all the way down to email support that is answered within several days (if you are lucky.) Many users of software that lacks good support struggle to find answers, resort to doing things manually, or in the worst case, simply give up and go back to how they were doing things before they purchased their new software. Even though you may only need support occasionally, having access to that support is very important. Your new software should also offer multiple training options to help you use the software, including training on request, video tutorials, comprehensive documentation (including manuals and guides,) and forum areas that answer common questions.</p> <p>When you do need live support, you should be able to get instruction and advice from knowledgeable support persons. There is nothing worse than having a support person read to you from a manual -> you could have done that yourself.</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage - Inclusive affordable support and knowledgeable people</p>	<p>New version updates help to keep your software current and relevant. Some childcare management software competitors release a new version every few years. Some haven't released a major update in over a decade! Think of how quickly technology changes, and how much less productive you will be if you get new versions every few years.</p> <p>Another issue with updates is cost. Reasonable annual support costs are one thing, but charging over \$500 for major new versions is something else. One of our "professional" competitors recently released a new version and is asking their users to upgrade to that new version at 50% off the retail price of their software. This is after these users spent thousands of dollars on their software, then paid their annual support, and are now being made to repurchase the software if they want the new version. Another "professional" competitor charges a separate support price for each module that you purchase. They don't make you repurchase the new versions, but their annual support charge is so costly, the end result is the same.</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage - All updates are included in the low annual support charge</p>
<p>Most childcare management software packages don't have a return policy and all sales are final. Our competitors reason that since they offer a trial, you have sufficient opportunity to try their software to make sure it will work for you. The biggest problem with this reasoning is that centers looking for software are usually comparing a handful of packages; and simply don't have the time to enter a lot of data into each one to try it. Most often, centers enter a handful of children into the software and decide which package they want based on very limited interaction with the software. This is why we get calls from centers looking for different software after using their existing software for a short time. (After spending thousands of dollars.)</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage- 100% 60 Day Money Back Guarantee</p>	<p>At most larger centers, childcare management software is used from multiple computers. Having 2 people enter data is much faster than 1 person, and having the director, owner, accounting person, and other staff be able to be in the system at the same time increases productivity. In addition, having a copy of the system at home for reference is very convenient.</p> <p>Most of our competitors make you purchase additional seat licenses to use the system from multiple computers. We think that you should have the ability to use our software on as many computers as you want to manage your center.</p> <p>Advantage: Childcare Sage- Unlimited seat licenses to manage the same center.</p>

CHILDCARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS COMPARISON CHART

Our functionality speaks for itself. Please review our extensive feature and comparison chart below:

Feature M(number) means module	Childcare Sage™	Childcare Manager™	ProCare™	EZ-Care2™
version	v14.11	v7	v10	v6
Child Information				
Store child information including medical history, remarks, immunizations, and photos	●	●	M1	M2
Store parent and pickup person information including address, phone numbers, email, and photos	●	●	M1	M2
Store center information including class, enroll dates, and bus run information	●	●	M1	M2
Store different schedules by class and days	●	●	M1	M2
Store different schedules by date ranges (used for waitlists, and to reserve future slots in classes)	●			
Setup additional, searchable user defined fields (dates, numbers, text, checkboxes)	●			M7
Child Progress / Incidents				
Track child progress, milestones, and achievements through daily log	●			
Track child incidents through event log	●			
Staff Information				
Store staff information including certifications, and photos	●	●	M4	M3
Store job information including class, employment dates, and work schedule	●	●	M4	M3
Store future work schedules by date ranges (used for future child/staff ratio planning)	●			
Setup additional user defined fields (dates, numbers, text, checkboxes)	●			M7
Timeclock				
Let parents sign their children in/out	●	M1	M3	M16
Let staff sign themselves in/out	●	M1	M3	M16
Display general messages	●	M1	M3	M16
Leave messages for specific parents and staff	●	M1	M3	M16
Let parents leave messages to staff	●			M16
Sign in siblings together instead of 1 at a time	●	M1	M3	M16
Batch sign in/out groups of children (bus drop off, etc)	●			M16
Midnight cycle function to automatically sign children and staff out at 11:59pm and back in at 12:00am	●			
Ability to have stand-alone, non-networked timeclock	●		M3	M16
Ability to have multiple timeclock computers	●		(+\$195)	
Fingerprint Scanning capability (package with scanner)	(+\$345)		M3 + \$95	~\$700
Door Access Control	●		(+\$95)	M14
Screen layouts are optimized for touch screen monitors and windows 8/10 tablets	●			
Child Attendance				
Graphically track child attendance	●	●	M3	M5
Print attendance reports that show child counts, children arriving and leaving, and capacity	●	●	M3	M5
Batch Timesheet entry with ability to copy timesheets from prior days (centers that transcribe sign-in sheets)	●			M5
Child Billing				
Automatically calculate and charge accounts	●	●	M2	M4
Store payments from parents	●	●	M2	M4
Allow batch payment posting	●	●	M2	M4

Ability to setup and edit central/global list of rates	●	●	M2	M4
Ability to assign rates to rooms and automatically copy rates into accounts	●	●	M2	M4
Works with fixed cost/tuition billing (same amount each week/month)	●	●	M2	M4
Works with late pickup and overtime billing (if child comes in early or leaves late)	●	●	M2	M4
Works with hourly/daily/weekly/monthly billing (child is billed for each hour they are at the center)	●	●	M2	M4
Works with part time/full time billing (child is billed for either full days or part days based on hours)	●	●	M2	M4
Ability to automate late start, early dismissal, and no school charges for school age children	●			
Ability to itemize charges for additional classes (dance, etc)	●			
Ability to itemize charges for additional daily charges (lunch bunch, etc)	●			
Ability to add global discounts (sibling, employee child, member, etc)	●			
Ability to enter additional charges (field trips, registration, etc)	●	●	M2	M4
Agency billing to separately track parent copays and balances	●	●	M2	M4
Automatically generate child bills	●	●	M2	M4
Automatically email child bills	●		M2	
Insert center logo into bills	●	●	M2	M1
Maximum number of siblings that can be billed together	8	∞	4	?
Automatic <u>ACH</u> and <u>Credit Card</u> Account processing	●	●	M2	M17
Use <u>Barcode scanning</u> to add charges into accounts	●			
USDA Meals Program				
Meals and Menu functionality integrated into main system	●		M7	M12
Track child meals, meal times, and foods consumed	●	M2	M7	M12
Automatically track meals through TimeClock	●	M2		M12
Print meals count charts	●	M2	M7	M12
Create, store, recall, and print daily menus / meal plans for newborns, infants and older children	●	M2	M7	M12
Copy meal plans between days	●	M2	M7	M12
Create production reports	●	M2		
Staff Timesheets				
Graphically track staff hours	●	●	M3	M9
Keep track of vacation, personal, sick-leave and holiday hours	●		M4	M9
Print staffing reports that show daily staff counts and staffing schedules	●	●	M4	M5
Print staff schedules	●	●	M4	M3
Staff Wages				
Automatically calculate and record wages	●	●	M6	M9
Store payments to staff	●	●	M6	M9
Works with fixed salary payroll	●	●	M6	M9
Works with overtime	●	●	M6	M9
Works with hourly/daily/weekly payroll	●	●	M6	M9
Setup different rates that apply to different days and hours (higher hourly rate for evenings or weekends)	●			
Ability to enter additional wages and expense reimbursements	●	●	M6	M9
Automatically generate staff paysheets with hours, wages, and expense reimbursements	●	●	M6	M9
Full Payroll system that withholds taxes and print paychecks	●		M6	M9
Track monthly and quarterly federal and state payroll taxes	●	●	M6	M9

Child/Contact Functions				
Find contacts and children through any combination of information	•		M1	M2
Store and Recall search criteria	•			
Create custom reports with selectable information, information column order and contact grouping	•	•	M1	M6
Center Functions				
Track and schedule center inspections, maintenance, etc	•			
Keep a daily center journal	•			
Waitlist with waitlist aging reports	•	•		M11
Center Ledger / Expenses				
Store center expenses such as food, rent, utilities, etc	•	•	M5	M8
Setup and apply recurring expenses (rent, utilities, etc) (don't have to reenter for each month)	•			
Track and reconcile bank accounts	•	•	M2	M4
Calculate Net Income, Profit/Loss, etc	•	•	M5	M8
Store mileage expenses	•	•	M5	M8
Add time-use % to expenses	•			M8
Accounting Reports				
Reports that show childcare payments made and owed	•	•	M2	M4
Account aging and overdue reports	•	•	M2	M4
Reports that show staff wages paid and owed	•	•	M6	M9
Organization Functions				
Daily Activities and To Do List	•			
Built in Appointment date book and alarms	•			
Create form letters through Microsoft Word®	•	•	M1	M15
System Functions				
Multiple level password system (8 levels)	•	•	M1	M1
Username/Password log in system	•	•	M1	M1
Built in On-Line Database Backup function	•		M1	
Networkable	•	M3	M12	M13
Multiple Site Functionality	•		?	M10
Quickbooks Pro™ Integration	•	•	?	M18
Support for International Currency	•			
Cost for System with Common Modules (unlimited children)	\$895	\$2,485¹	\$3,265³	\$2,800⁵
Cost for Complete System with all Childcare Sage Functionality	\$895	\$3,280²	\$3,460⁴	\$3,200⁶
Free Support With Purchase	1yr	1yr	1yr	3 months
Annual Support	\$100	\$95	\$95	\$350 +
Support Includes Major Updates (6.0, 7.0, 8.0)	•			•
Included License Seats for computers that manage the center (Main Program/Timeclock)	∞ / ∞	1 / 1	2 / 1	1 / 1
Cost for additional License Seats (prices are to add network functionality to the package)	\$0	\$295	\$195	\$395
Return Policy	60 Day 100%	No Returns	No Returns	No Returns

Module and Function Comparison:

In this section, we put together a minimal list of features that most centers need and then priced out the modules needed for that minimal functionality from our “module” competitors. The minimal list of features that most centers need are:

1) [Keeping Child Records](#), 2) [Scheduling Children and Staff](#), 3) [Tracking Attendance for Children and Staff](#), 4) [Billing Parents](#), and 5) [Tracking center expenses](#) (some modules we didn't include: *USDA/CACFP, quickbooks integration, networking, door lock, etc.*)

The following is a list of the modules you would need from Procare™ and EZ-Care2™:

Procare Mini™: (less than 60 families)	Procare™: (more than 60 families)	EZ-Care2™: (unlimited)	
Family Data (\$349)	Family Data (\$695)	<u>Management Package (\$1995)</u>	
Family Accounting (\$199)	Family Accounting (\$395)	Database / Center Manager	Database Personalization
Attendance Tracker (\$199)	Attendance Tracker (\$395)	Family / Child Drawer	+ Accounts Payable (\$395)
Agency Accounting (\$99)	Agency Accounting (\$195)	Staff Drawer	+ Timeclock (\$395)
Employee Data (\$249)	Employee Data (\$495)	Accounts Receivable	
Payroll (\$149)	Payroll (\$295)	Advanced Attendance / Billing	
Accounts Payable (\$399)	Accounts Payable (\$795)	Custom Report Writer	
Total: \$1,643	Total: \$3,265	Total: \$2,400	

The results show that for the minimal list of functions, the least expensive versions of Procare™ and EZ-Care2™ are from **3x to 5x** the price of the Childcare Sage. If you add all of the modules needed to have similar functionality that comes standard in the Childcare Sage, those other programs would be from **4x to 7x** the price of the Childcare Sage.

Comparison Chart Symbol Legend:

(^{number}) – footnote
M(number) – module id for that feature
(+price)) – additional cost for that feature

Footnotes:

1- Typical cost includes: M1
2- Similar cost includes: M1,2,3
3- Typical cost includes: M1,2,3,4,5,6,7
4- Similar cost includes: M1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8
5- Typical cost includes: (M1-7),8,16
6- Similar cost includes: (M1-7),8,9,10,12,13,16

Modules:

<u>Childcare Manager</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Procare v10</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>EZ-Care2 v6</u>	<u>Cost</u>		
<u>Professional v7</u>							
M1- Time Mgr	\$495	M1- Family Data	\$695	M1- Database / Center Manager	?	M12- Childcare/Food Prog.	?
M2- Nutrition Mgr	\$495	M2- Family Accounting	\$395	M2- Family / Child Drawer	?	M13- Networking	\$395
M3- Networking	\$295	M3- Attendance Tracker	\$395	M3- Staff Drawer	?	M14- Door Access Control	?
		M4- Employee Data	\$495	M4- Accounts Receivable	?	M15- Insta-Merge	?
		M5- Accounts Payable	\$795	M5- Advanced Attendance / Billing	?	M16- Timeclock	?
		M6- Payroll	\$295	M6- Custom Report Writer	?	M17- EZ-EFT	?
		M7- USDA Food Program	\$295	M7- Database Personalization Package	?	M18- EZ2-Post	?
		M8- Agency Accounting	\$195	M8- Accounts Payable	?		
		M9- Door Controller	?	M9- Payroll	?		
		M10- Corporate Organizer	?	M10- General Ledger	?		
		M11- Quickbooks Integration	\$195	M11- Applicant/Waiting List Drawer	?		
		M12- Networking	\$195				

System Screenshots:

Screens in the Childcare Sage are clean and open, with defined entry boxes to help you work faster. Our screens display lots of information to keep you from having to click from screen to screen, and to make you more efficient. Our screens also use soft colors and gray backgrounds, instead of contrasting colors that can distract you.

Childcare Sage 14.11™



Childcare Sage is a Trademark of B & I Computer Consultants, Inc.

Childcare Manager 7™



Childcare Manager is a Registered Trademark of Personalized Software

ProCare 10™



Procare is a Registered Trademark of Professional Solutions

EZ-Care2™



EZ-Care2 is a Registered Trademark of Software, Inc