

API Account Registration

An Application Programming Interface (API) has been developed for 3rd party developers to interface their applications with the Eldercare Locator data. In order to get access to the API, developers must register to create an account. Once registered, the developer will use the API toolkit (*API Requirements* pdf) which provides the necessary information on how to connect to the API. The API does not provide a Graphical User Interface (GUI) or downloadable file for visual representation or data manipulation. It is strictly for programs/applications to communicate with each other.

Over the last couple of years, Web services (Web APIs) have expanded to become more popular with application developers.

Web services technology represents an important way for businesses to communicate with each other and with clients as well. Unlike traditional client/server models, such as a Web server or Web page system, **Web services do not provide the user with a GUI** (graphical user interface). Instead, Web services share business logic, data and processes through a programmatic interface across a network. The applications interface with each other, not with the users. **Developers** can then add the Web service to a GUI (such as a Web page or an executable program) to offer specific functionality to users.

Web services' distributed computing model allows application-to-application communication. For example, one purchase-and-ordering application could communicate to an inventory application that specific items need to be reordered. Because of this level of application integration, Web services have grown in popularity and are beginning to improve business processes. In fact, some even call Web services the next evolution of the Web. More information can be found at: http://www.webopedia.com/DidYouKnow/Computer_Science/2005/web_services.asp or http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/W/Web_Services.html

The Eldercare Locator API (web service) is just such a system. Upon the successful completion of a query against the Eldercare database using the specific transmitted parameters, either City/State or Zip code, the appropriate raw data is returned to the requesting application. The requesting application can then use the raw data as desired.

Suffice it to say that web services, APIs, can only be used by Application Programmers/Developers who develop applications to interface (communicate) with the web service (API). Once the application has been created the **target user community** is then free to use the application and the returned data.

The process by which the application retrieves the data is as follows:

At runtime the legitimate user id and password created using the API Registration Form is passed to the web service the first time the web service (API) is accessed. If the user id and password are authenticated a generated token is then passed back to the requesting application. During the current session each data request includes the generated token and the query parameters, city/state or zip code. Once the web service verifies the token the requested data is retrieved and sent back to the requesting application.

Remember.... The Eldercare API (web service) can only be access by a 3rd party application programmer/developer while developing an application to be used by a target user community.