

## **A2: Children with Disabilities in Child Care Settings—A Discussion of Data Discoveries and Dilemmas**

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Penn Quarter B

### **1. Descriptive Information**

#### **A2: Children with Disabilities in Child Care Settings—A Discussion of Data Discoveries and Dilemmas**

Providing access to early care and education programs for young children with disabilities and coordination between early care and special education services can foster not only positive child outcomes across all domains of development but also support family outcomes and provide families with more choices to meet their families' childcare needs.

This session discusses children with disabilities in the context of early care and education settings and focuses on gaining a better understanding of the children with disabilities, developmental delays, and those at-risk by examining the definition of disability and types of data currently collected around disability and how these impact practice and policy.

First, presenters will share different definitions of disability used across systems and consider how different definitions affect administrative data collected by those systems and services provided and program outcomes.

Next, presenters will share information from national data from the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Head Start Program Information Report to examine current data availability.

Finally, staff from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) will share the collaborative work they are engaged in with other agencies and offices to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in all early care and education settings. Discussion during this session will consider the benefits and challenges of integrating data systems and gaps in data in order to inform future work in research, policy, and practice related to children with disabilities.

#### **Facilitator**

**Jenna Weglarz-Ward**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

#### **Presenters**

**Kathleen Hebbeler**, SRI | *What Do We Need to Better Understand Special Populations from a National Perspective?*

**Cornelia Taylor**, SRI | *Recent Data on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Care and Education Settings*

**Christy Kavulic**, U.S. Department of Education | *Federal Resources to Support the Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities*

#### **Discussant**

**Beth Rous**, Department of Educational Leadership Studies, University of Kentucky

#### **Scribe**

Caroline Faux

### **2. Documents Available on Website**

- Children with Disabilities in Child Care Settings
- Hebbeler\_Supporting Young Children with Disabilities
- Whaley\_State Early Childhood Inclusion Self-Assessment

### **3. Brief Summary of Presentations**

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Kathleen Hebbeler, SRI International**
  - To better understand special populations from a national perspective, there are definitional issues in our data that need to be addressed. We often question the count, characteristics, and experience and outcomes of children with disabilities. The issue is that of definition—there is no universally accepted definition of childhood disability, which affects challenges in research and policy. For example, size of the count depends on definition.  
It is estimated that IDEA is under-serving children. There has been a shift away from a biomedical model to other models, a social model. The notion of limitation is a social construct that depends on the environment. IDEA may be more medical definition. These definitions can have a child meeting disability qualifications without needing services.

- Disability in young children is not a stable characteristic. It is contextually determined. The number of children with speech or language impairments increases until age 6 and then drops off. It is transitory.
  - Children with disabilities are an extremely heterogeneous group.
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Cornelia Taylor, SRI International**
    - National data that is available: recent data on the child care of children with disabilities in early and education settings. IDEA data reports requirements related to service settings that states report on settings where child receive their special education services. In Part C, states report if the child received services in a community based setting. Most infants and toddlers receive Part C services in their homes, 8% are in the community, which is an overlap with Early Head Start or child care.
    - Settings data Reported for Preschool Special Education also has considerations: does the child attend a regular setting, where do they receive their special education services, other environmental factors (special education classrooms, special school, home, provider location, or residential facility).
    - The percentage of children receiving IDEA services has remained steady over the years. There is a substantial variation across states in the percent of children 3-5 receiving IDEA services in regular early childhood programs, 2017-2018.
    - Head Start: Program Information Report reported in 2018 and looked at children determined eligible prior to enrollment year against during enrollment year. The percent of children with speech or language impairments served in Head Start is greater than the percent served under IDEA across settings (10.8% have vs 3.8% identified in head start)
    - Looking at Child Care Data from the CCDF Data Collection, all infants and toddlers receive IDEA services in natural environments which primarily include family homes but may also include child care settings, less than half of preschool age children receive IDEA services.
  - **Summary of Presentation #3: Christy Kavulic, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Program Staff**
    - Federal resources to support the inclusion of young children with disabilities
    - DEC/NAEYC Position on Early Childhood Inclusion: Children having access to the program, meaningfully participate, data collection. Federal Policy Statement also discusses inclusion and access to early childhood programs and to occur, needs ownership across multiple systems. There are different considerations for state and local programs to include and improve quality. Dear Colleague Letter LRE is available at the department of education website.
    - Data Considerations: set goals for expanding access to inclusive and high quality early learning opportunities, we need to establish a baseline that identifies the number of early childhood slots available, children under five with and without disabilities, and the benchmarks that track progress in reaching the state's goals. Ensure that children across the state have equal access to inclusive early childhood programs.
    - Resources include the State Early Childhood Inclusion Self-Assessment which is a framework for examining key aspects of a State infrastructure that are useful for promoting high quality inclusive practices, programs, and policies. There is a section of the self-assessment that specifically focuses on setting goals and tracking data
    - State Early Childhood Self-Assessment can be used to inform program quality. Please visit [dasycenter.org](http://dasycenter.org) toolkit.
    - Resources: Governance of Data Partnerships is a toolkit that contains information on how to share record level data with another program or agency. It provides foundational information to prepare partners as they jointly consider and build a data sharing agreement and/or data partnership management plan.
    - Data culture toolkit: supporting state and local data use

#### 4. Brief Summary of Discussion

- a. Kathy brought up good points about being transparent with definitions
- b. (Audience Member): One of the things that concerns me is talking about where children receive services, but we know kids are in multiple settings and inclusion has to happen in all settings. And while we collect data, this doesn't give us a picture of how they participate in early childhood settings.
- c. (Audience Member): I think that natural environment can be thought of as home which is also in other settings. Why are families choosing home vs another child care setting? When I think of the preschool population, children with half day programs, but are somewhere else the other half day, so what's happening, what do we know about the other half?
- d. (Donna from state of Georgia): There was a slide that talked about autism in IDEA and Head Start. Is the strong variance because of the age in which they are diagnosed and how they are diagnosed? There is a push for children under the age of 3 to be diagnosed. In order to receive the services in the school setting, there may be differences. I know income is a huge factor.
- e. (Melissa from Vermont IDEA): Seeing family choice to LEA boundaries versus any school state IDEA requirements.
- f. There should also be more help through placing the child throughout the settings (trust, communication issue) over welfare of the child.

#### 5. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- *Emerging findings that may be of particular interest to policy-makers and ACF?*
  - There needs to be more transparency with definitions to achieve a fuller picture of how children participate in early childhood sessions.
- *Methodological issues including innovative methodologies that may help maximize resources available for research and evaluation?*
  - Again, the idea of definitions reoccurs. This can be achieved by being clear about what definitions are being used and from what data sources. There needs to be clear strengths/limitations of each study.
- *Follow-up activities suggested addressing questions and gaps (e.g., secondary analyses of data, consensus meetings of experts, research synthesis or brief, webinar, etc.)?*
  - What do we know about where children go after they are done with their half day programs?
- *Recommendations about future ACF child care research directions and priorities?*
  - Implications for future research: Researchers need to clearly present the definition/criteria they are using, recognize the program eligibility does not equal all definition of children with disabilities, and to be aware of the differences between ever having a disability and having a disability now. States need to continue to build early childhood integrated data systems so we will be able to get an accurate picture of participation. Consensus on a definition would be helpful.
  - There is missing information on how services are delivered.
  - More research needs to be done on how options are presented to parents.
  - Need to emphasize whether or not they're actively participating in the program.
  - Relationship between providers in special education and childcare providers, or agency itself.
  - Look at how people are connecting to services, looking at the service profiles, outcomes, linking individuals to the process
  - Learn from chapter providers about what their knowledge is on early intervention, natural environments, are we identifying enough within childcare settings and to advocate for services?