2009 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Breakout B-1
Thursday, October 29, 2009, 2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

**Appropriate Linking of Data for Purposes of Examining Child Outcomes**

**Description**

Researchers can play a role in working with administrators and other stakeholders in designing systems of data collection and in linking data that can help address research and evaluation questions for a variety of purposes. For example, at the child level, we might be interested in how individual children are progressing; at the program level, we might be interested in how children are responding to a particular curriculum; and at the state-level, we might be interested in children's school readiness skills across the State or within certain subgroups (e.g., for children receiving subsidies). Often multiple assessment instruments and sampling structures are needed to fully answer these different questions or research purposes. In addition, there are always risks involved in using child assessments for purposes for which they were not intended. While best practices would suggest that a logic model be used in planning how to achieve and evaluate goals, this is not always the case.

Speakers representing States or different subgroups discussed their plans and approaches for appropriately linking child outcome data with other data, such as program-level or state-level data. The importance of identifying specific research and evaluation questions in advance, selecting appropriate measures for various research and evaluation purposes, selecting appropriate measures for various populations, linking data across different data collection systems, and using data for the purposes for which they were collected were examined. A facilitated discussion generated thoughts and ideas about the best ways to use child outcome data and linking data within and across different evaluation systems, keeping in mind different populations (e.g., low income, English language learners, and children with special needs).

**Moderator**

Wendy Robeson, Wellesley College

**Panel Members**

Rolf Grafwallner, Maryland State Department of Education
Nicole Forry, Child Trends
Carolyn Drugge, University of Maine, Farmington
Rod Southwick (Consultant), Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
Diana Tester, Research Director, South Carolina Department of Social Services

**Scribe**

Desireé Reddick-Head

**1. Documents in Session Folder**
- "The Use of Assessment Data in Massachusetts," Rod Southwick.

- "What the 2008-2009 School Readiness Data Mean for Maryland's Children," Rolf Groffwallner and Nicole Forry.
- "South Carolina's Child Care Data Bridge Project: Building Bridges from Data to Policy to Practice," Diane Tester.

2. **Summary of Presentations**
   - **Summary of Presentation #1: Carolyn Drugge**
     - *Child Care Data Capacity and Research Grant 2004 recipient.* Maine has:
       - Compiled a compendium of data sources.
       - Linked child care licensing data, registry data, and career lattice information; all linked to State's Quality Rating System.
       - Made structural and policy changes including the creation of one information technology department; legislature passed law supporting State data linking (longitudinal data collections), sharing of social security numbers, etc.
     - Maine is looking for additional funds to build system to that can include data about children up to age 20.
     - Maine was selected to work with Early Childhood Outcomes Center.
       - State has developed a child outcome summary form.
       - Data is used to review child progress over time.
       - Approach based on the Colorado Growth model.
       - Maine's next step is to link with Head Start, Higher Education, and the Department of Labor.
     - The goal is to make the data available for research purposes.

   - **Summary of Presentation #2: Rod Southwick**
     - Massachusetts developed an annual of baseline of child wellbeing using School Readiness Indicators. These describe demographics, risk factors and early educational and care resources. Indicators were difficult to capture from data that was available at that time.
     - There is a difference between statewide measures of school readiness versus child assessments and screening—different purposes, different level of information about children.
     - Currently, many providers are using a developmental assessment or screening tool to inform practice and individualize instruction. Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) providers use a variety of assessment measures.
     - The new system in Massachusetts was not intended to replace what is being used at program level for developmental assessment.
     - Massachusetts has selected four tools to be used in UPK; the original purpose was to have a snapshot of where UPK children were at one time; intention is to identify children in need of clinical assessment, with developmental concerns, and for individualized curriculum planning.
     - FY 09 UPK Classroom Quality grantees were required to submit assessment data in 2009. Experienced challenges in merging electronic data due to use of multiple tools.
     - Separate from UPK, Massachusetts is in the early stages of developing a statewide system to measure developmental progress in young children. Questions about what to measure (narrow versus broad, which skills/outcomes) and how to measure (who

should assess). Linkages with other assessment efforts are being considered (i.e., kindergarten school readiness).
  - o Interagency agreement has been signed to assign Public School Student Identifiers to pre-k children. Intent is to improve transitions of children from pre-K programs to public schools.
  - o A longitudinal data system for research and program evaluation is being developed—agencies will cooperate to share child outcome data including grade retention, MCAS scores in the 3rd and 4th grades, and other standardized test data.

- **Summary of Presentation #3**: **Rolf Grafwallner & Nicole Forry**
  - ° Maryland educational reform required child outcome data. Data has now been collected for eight years and changes in child performance are being seen. State reports for each school in the State; coordinating councils, budget directors and others are using these reports.
  - o Trend toward moving child care to education. Child care subsidies are now administered by the Maryland State Department of Education.
  - o Received OPRE grant to support extension of data collection.
    - ▪ Will enhance administrative data through data linkages and conduct policy and program research on the enhanced administrative data.
  - o Ultimate goal is to track subsidy children through high school including:
    - ▪ Merging child care and school readiness data.
    - ▪ Quantitative analyses addressing associations between child care subsidies, availability/use of quality care, and children's school readiness upon kindergarten entry.
  - o Plans include:
    - ▪ Using research to help families: Identify needs of at-risk children, track trends over time, entice business community to invest, and advocate for funding.
    - ▪ Building a sustainable consortium of researchers and early care and education professionals with unified goals.
  - o A chart book is being developed that compares subsidy children and non-subsidy children (graphic display of information, to be disseminated as a supplement to annual reporting).
  - o Attendance is an issue surrounding collecting child data. There are inconsistencies when children arrive at a program that may affect child data.

- **Summary of Presentation #4**: **Diana Tester**
  - o *South Carolina's Child Care Data Bridge.*
    - ▪ Partnerships include Department of Social Services (DSS), Clemson University, University of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Budget and Control Office.
    - ▪ South Carolina wanted to have web-based tools and an integrated data infrastructure.
    - ▪ Partnerships are built with researchers and others.
  - o Have one integrated data warehouse, which includes most State systems and South Carolina's Departments of Education and Health.
    - ▪ Looking at child outcomes and provider outcomes.
    - ▪ Looking at who, what, and where.

- South Carolina system involves data linking (and data cubes) including:
  - Linking methodologies between providers and children.
  - Within the child care system (licensing, quality, etc.).
  - With other systems to get personal data.
  - Geo mapping.
  - Access to child data using ASQ and piloting net books.

3. **Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants**
   - Discussion of the challenges of a State data warehouse.
     - The system is housed in only one department. Must have quality assurance controls in place to maintain data. Difficult to look for identifiers for use in merging data. When you change or want additional information, you change the complexity of the system.
     - Sometimes the system is not flexible. Costly to change or to maintain.
     - May need to look for low-cost ways to gather other data.
     - Must have technical staff to support the system.
     - Must understand the limitations.
     - Data need to be in a neutral setting to keep from being manipulated out of context.

4. **Key Themes and Issues**
   - States are trying to align data systems to collect information on children via statewide and longitudinal databases.
   - States have found many challenges in creating a common data collection system, including the cost of the system, cost to train professionals, and the cost to maintain the system.
   - States have also found challenges in working with other departments. They are finding ways to work through this by having a common child identifier or legislation requiring departments to work together.
   - States have to consider factors that affect collecting child outcomes (dosage of experience, attendance policies, etc.).
   - States are still looking for child assessment measures that meet the needs of all children.