

Integrated Data Systems

Description

A panel of child care administrators and researchers from two States began with a discussion of issues related to the integration of data systems designed to improve outcomes for families and children. State efforts to build, align, and integrate State child care data systems and to link these data systems with health and human services data systems are better achieved when State child care personnel, information technology personnel, and researchers share a common vision. State administrators described what they want to know so that researchers can help them develop and/or refine information systems to better inform child care policies, including those related to helping people in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program obtain and maintain employment by assisting them with safe and affordable child care. Researchers discussed how they are working with State administrators to ensure that information systems serve child care policy and program needs.

Moderator

Janet Marsh, Clemson University

Panel Members

- Leigh Bolick, South Carolina Department of Social Services
- Sandra N. Canon, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Patricia Singleton, University of Kentucky
- Diana Tester, South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics

Scribe

James Libbey, Communications Management Center

Documents in the Session Folder

- South Carolina's Child Care Data Bridge
- Kentucky Integrated Data System

Discussion Notes

South Carolina

Child Care Data Bridge

- Vision—Integration with common identifiers.
- Part of the ABC Child Care Program.
- Child Care Research Capacity Grant—an increase in resources and improvement regarding the speed at which data are integrated and accessed.
- Objectives—continuation in building data capacity and an enhancement in the relationship between Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) quality enhancement

and the quality of child care through independent variables, such as CCDF funds and initiatives, and dependent variables, such as the quality of care.

- Inventory of databases—Current capabilities, necessary future resources, and the need to link both current and future data capacity.
- Various databases—State-regulated centers and providers, ABC program centers and providers, and ABC program voucher client children.

Building Tools for a Foundation

- Philosophy of the South Carolina (SC) Office of Research and Statistics—People’s services and needs cross the lines of many agencies and programs—such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, juvenile justice, mental health, and education programs as well as emergency room and vital statistics data—whose databases need to be integrated to better serve the agency and program clients.
- The SC data warehouse was constructed from existing databases, which have been linked over time.
- The data are still owned by the original agency, which grants access and permission to the warehouse to compile and integrate the data with those from other systems.
- The data identifiers are only used to create a tracking number; after that process has been completed, the data are merely statistics, with no personal information available to be gleaned from the warehouse databases.
- The data tracking is done randomly.
- HIPAA best practices have been incorporated, and an extensive security system has been set up to protect this secure, Web-based system. The system data can be accessed from individual desktop computers.
- Extensive data integration should help State early childhood (EC) system staff members better evaluate the programs and analyze the data.
- The data are set up like a Rubik’s Cube, with many possible data interconnections among the agencies and programs.
- The proposed cubes for child care services would include provider-level data and child-level data (e.g., TANF, Medicaid, education). Such data would allow for a “bridge” to connect providers with all children served by a provider.

Kentucky Integrated Data Systems

- Those databases that have been linked were done so out of necessity, and the process is continuing, with some databases having been fully upgraded and others upgraded using older technology.
- The process of data upgrading and linking is intended to increase the ability of research to inform practice, allow the State EC systems to improve the data usability by going paperless, and improve current systems and functions.
- Some databases are being upgraded on an individual basis, but their ability to communicate with other databases is limited or nonexistent.
- The State of Kentucky supports the professional development (PD) tracking system. Some data need to be under State control because they represent a central part of a larger State system or because the data history needs to be maintained.

- There are many agencies within the orbit of the Division of Regulated Child Care and Division of Child Care. Other key elements in the State EC system include Eastern Kentucky University, the registered community colleges within the State, and the Kentucky Partnership for Early Childhood Services.
- Research and reporting are done for quality rating systems (QRS), licensing, program monitoring, child progress regarding Kentucky standards and benchmarks, PD monitoring, and prekindergarten-to-kindergarten transitions.
- Kentucky Early Childhood Data System (KEDS)—This system can track child outcomes over time and will one day align with education program data. The upgraded systems should be able to demonstrate EC progress over time.

Discussion Summary

- Family medical home information does not play a major role in the upgraded systems of either South Carolina or Kentucky.
- Different States are tracking and collecting QRS scores.
 - Pennsylvania is still using an Excel spreadsheet, but they are beginning to construct an integrated data system (IDS) for QRS.
 - Idaho is purchasing an IDS through a contractor.
 - Utah cannot track and collect QRS scores until the funding has been allocated.
- Leigh Bolick from South Carolina asked if any States were collecting outcomes data on all children and their providers.
 - Pennsylvania is planning to collect outcomes data on all children—both those in subsidized care and those not part of the subsidized care system.
 - South Carolina is assessing the need for such a data retrieval system, especially as a way to track outcomes data regarding providers.
- Herman Knopf discussed the pilot project he is working that would represent an update to the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. The project would track the outcomes of children as they move among child care centers and non-center-based child care settings.
 - Parents could log onto a project Web site to provide the children's information.
 - Such information could be used for research at a later date, with parental permission.
 - Parents could log onto Web sites showing real-time classroom activities so as to track their children's progress, possibly through the use of a tablet PC with a touch screen.
 - The project is currently being tested in two child care centers.
 - Workshop attendees expressed concern that parents would consider the project too invasive, as many parents seem reluctant to share information on their children's education. However, early feedback from teachers in the two aforementioned centers has been positive.

Future Research Questions

2008 CCPRC Meeting
Concurrent Breakout, Session 6 (A-4)
Thursday, July 31, 10:45 am

- Is there universal tracking of child outcomes across all child care settings? Such a system is possible, but government privacy laws and parental reluctance to discuss or release information concerning their children's education would act as a hindrance to such a system. However, even a limited universal tracking system might increase the amount and quality of child outcome information.
- How can researchers and State EC personnel be certain that IDSs will provide the expected outcomes? IDSs vary from program to program, but quality data are a key to getting the U.S. Congress and State legislatures to fund EC programs.
- Is there research on the validity of the methodology used in the improper payments initiative?