# Research and Evaluation Capacity Building

**A Resource Guide for Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies**

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# Research and Evaluation Capacity Building: A Resource Guide for Child Care and Development Fund Lead Agencies

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## DISCLAIMER

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# Contents

# Introduction to this Resource Guide

The 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act and related regulatory changes provide a key opportunity to evaluate the effect of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) policy changes on children, families, and providers, and on the operations of CCDF lead agencies. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has funded grants for CCDF lead agencies to plan an evaluation of these policy changes, build their research and evaluation capacity, and identify gaps in data to track child, family, and provider outcomes. Also through funding from ACF, the Urban Institute is supporting those grantees and other CCDF lead agencies as they plan and conduct rigorous research to inform new policies and initiatives in response to the 2014 CCDBG Act.

This resource guide contains a list of selected publications and other tools to support states, territories, and tribes seeking to build research and evaluation capacity. For agencies that are new to evaluation or have limited research resources, the prospect of designing and implementing a high-quality evaluation may be daunting, especially given the abundance of available resources. This guide provides a concise, curated list of user-friendly and practical resources focused on tools with the greatest relevance to child care subsidy agencies. The guide sorts resources in each section alphabetically by title and includes tools categorized as follows:

- comprehensive resources on program evaluation
- logic models
- evaluation design and planning
- building organizational research and evaluation capacity
- working with evaluators
- working with administrative data

We encourage users of this bibliography to use the links to quickly scan most of the listed resources in a section to determine which best meet their particular need. In addition, many documents listed in the section "Comprehensive Resources on Program Evaluation" contain useful information on other topic areas. For users looking for an introduction to research and evaluation principles, we recommend starting with the material listed in that section.

Although the guide is designed for CCDF lead agencies implementing policy changes in response to the reauthorization of the CCDBG Act of 2014, it can also serve as a general resource for state agencies, researchers, and technical assistance providers in child care and other human services sectors. This guide may be updated periodically with new resources and new topic areas, following the approach to identifying and selecting resources outlined in the appendix. If there are resources you would like to suggest for inclusion, please write to CCDBGbibliography@urban.org.

# Comprehensive Resources on Program Evaluation

This section includes comprehensive guides to program evaluation. Each tool covers multiple topics such as motivations for conducting evaluation, steps for planning and carrying out evaluation projects from start to finish, research and data collection methods, and other considerations, including staffing, stakeholder involvement, and cultural and contextual responsiveness. For a comprehensive introduction to research and evaluation principles, readers might consider *The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation* or the *Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide.* Readers seeking a brief introduction to evaluation concepts might consider the *Systems Building Resource Guide 8: Program Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement* or *Thinking About How to Evaluate Your Program? These Strategies Will Get You Started.*

## The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation

This guide is aimed at education program managers seeking information to help manage evaluation projects and communicate with evaluators. The handbook includes chapters on the reasons for conducting evaluations and the types of evaluation, the steps in an evaluation (defining a conceptual model, research questions, and measurable outcomes; specifying the evaluation design; collecting data; conducting analysis; and reporting on findings), quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, and strategies for culturally responsive evaluations. It also includes a glossary of common terms and tips for finding an evaluator.

- Frechtling, Joy. 2002. *The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation*. Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation.

## Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide

This how-to guide is designed to help managers and staff in public, private, and community public health programs "plan, design, implement and use comprehensive evaluation in a practical way…[and] ensure that evaluations meet the diverse needs of internal and external stakeholders." The guide is organized around six steps: (1) engage stakeholders, (2) describe the program, (3) focus the evaluation, (4) gather credible evidence, (5) justify conclusions, and (6) ensure use of evaluation findings and share lessons learned. The guide includes worksheets and checklists for each of these steps. It may be useful for many organizations beyond the public health field, including CCDF lead agencies, seeking actionable information about how to engage in evaluation activities that meet the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders.

- Office of Strategy and Innovation. 2011. *Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation, Second Edition

This tool provides information to help human services program managers understand each step in the evaluation process so they can be actively involved in evaluation, whether assisted by outside evaluators or in-house agency staff. The guide addresses the following questions: Why evaluate your program? What is program evaluation? Who should conduct your evaluation? How do you hire and manage an outside evaluator? How do you prepare for an evaluation? What should you include in an evaluation plan? How do you get the information you need for your evaluation? How do you make sense of evaluation information? How can you report what you have learned? The guide also includes a glossary and list of additional evaluation resources.

- Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. 2010. *The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation, Second Edition*. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

## The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Evaluation Toolkit

This toolkit for state CCDF administrators, early care and education practitioners, and others working on child care systems describes how a QRIS works, the importance of QRIS evaluation, and how to design and implement an evaluation of a QRIS. The guide includes QRIS-specific examples of key steps in the evaluation process, including logic models, research questions, data sources, and research design. Although its content and examples are very specific to the evaluation of a QRIS, the guide includes a comprehensive set of concepts that can be applied to a range of evaluation topics.

- Lugo-Gil, Julieta, Samina Sattar, Christine Ross, Kimberly Boller, Kathryn Tout, and Gretchen Kirby. 2011. *The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Evaluation Toolkit*, OPRE Report #2011-31. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

## Systems Building Resource Guide 8: Program Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement

This short guide provides a general overview of program evaluation and continuous quality improvement for CCDF state administrators and other early childhood partners not familiar with evaluation. The guide covers the purpose of evaluation and common concerns and considerations, explains program evaluation in general (including the cost of evaluation and how to find an evaluator), and offers additional resources. This is the only resource included in this section that provides an overview of a continuous quality improvement process and the role of evaluation data in that process.

- State Capacity Building Center. 2016. *Systems Building Resource Guide 8: Program Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement*. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

**Thinking About How to Evaluate Your Program? These Strategies Will Get You Started**

This article contains strategies human services program practitioners can use when preparing and implementing program evaluations. It defines important terms and offers practical ideas about (1) how to specify program activities, indicators, and outcomes of interest and (2) how to collect data on the indicators for the purpose of assessing the quality and quantity of program achievements. It employs illustrative examples for an early childhood education intervention and offers tips for adapting the examples to other types of initiatives.

- Gajda, Rebecca, and Jennifer Jewiss. 2004. "Thinking About How to Evaluate Your Program? These Strategies Will Get You Started." *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation* 9 (8).

# Logic Models

A program logic model (or theory of change) serves as an important starting point in evaluation planning. Logic models are visual summaries of programs that articulate how key program features relate to expected outcomes. They can help evaluators define appropriate research questions, focus the evaluation design, and determine what data need to be collected about program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. This section includes two types of resources: tools to help agencies develop logic models and examples of logic models used in prior child care research projects.[1]

### Developing a Logic Model

This short brief explains why public and private organizations should consider developing logic models and shows the connections between logic models and data collection plans. It includes descriptions of the basic components of logic models and data collection plans and provides examples for a hypothetical program to reduce child maltreatment.

- James Bell Associates. 2007. "Developing a Logic Model." Arlington, VA: James Bell Associates.

### A Guide to Developing an Outcome Logic Model and Measurement Plan

This presentation guides users through the steps needed to produce a logic model and related outcome measurement plan. It includes templates and examples relevant to early childhood education and after-school programs. Although prepared for nonprofit organizations, the concepts and tips are broadly applicable to the work of both public and private human services organizations.

- United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg. n.d. "A Guide to Developing an Outcome Logic Model and Measurement Plan." Richmond, VA: United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg.

### Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Child Care, A Strategic Planning Approach: The Logic Model

This short presentation from the Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care Strategic Planning Tool Kit explains the role of logic models in strategic planning, defines the key elements in a logic model, and offers an example logic model for an infant/toddler specialist network. The tool is designed for states planning for the use of targeted infant and toddler funding.

- National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative. n.d. "Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Child Care: A Strategic Planning Approach: The Logic Model." Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

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[1] See also the sources cited in the "Comprehensive Resources on Program Evaluation" section, many of which contain chapters on logic models or theories of change.

## Tips for Developing Logic Models

This poster presents brief guidelines for dealing with issues that commonly arise when developing a logic model. It tackles four common issues: what level of detail to include, which categories of information to include, how to distinguish between outputs and outcomes, and how to use a logic model to plan and evaluate a program. The resource is useful for program staff and leadership at a range of organizations.

- Burke, Michael. 2007. "Tips for Developing Logic Models." Poster presented at the 135th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Washington, DC, November 3–7.

## W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

This guide contains a comprehensive explanation of how to develop and use different types of logic models. Although targeted at nonprofit agencies, it provides practical tools—including exercises, examples, templates, and checklists—useful for any type of organization developing logic models and using them in evaluation design.

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation. 2004. *Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation, and Action: Logic Model Development Guide.* Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

## Examples from Child Care Research Projects

The following reports include examples of logic models developed for early childhood systems research projects:

- McGroder, Sharon M., Eboni C. Howard, Mike Fishman, Victoria E. Rankin, and Fiona K. Helsel. 2014. "Putting the Pieces Together: A Program Logic Model for Coaching in Head Start: From the Descriptive Study of the Head Start Early Learning Mentor Coach Initiative," OPRE Report # 2014-06. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

- Porter, Toni, and Juliet Bromer. 2017. "Building A Coordinated System of Support for Family Child Care: Lessons Learned from Philadelphia." Chicago: Erikson Institute.

- Weber, Roberta B., and Deana Grobe. 2015. *Contracted Slots Pilot Program Evaluation Final Report.* Corvallis: Oregon State University.

# Evaluation Design and Planning

This section includes resources to support agencies working to design an evaluation and write an evaluation plan. The resources are grouped into four categories: types of research and evaluation, overviews of evaluation designs and methods, evaluation planning, and defining research questions and evaluation indicators.[2]

## Types of Research and Evaluation

### The Administration for Children & Families Common Framework for Research and Evaluation

This report describes six types of research and evaluation, aiming to inform potential Administration for Children and Families grantees about the rationale for choosing a given study type. For each type, the report defines the overarching purpose, the nature of evidence that can be obtained, and aspects of research design that contribute to high-quality evidence. It also provides examples of reports covering each type, including descriptive studies (foundational, exploratory, and design and development) and impact studies (efficacy, effectiveness, and scale-up).

- Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. 2016. "The Administration for Children & Families Common Framework for Research and Evaluation," OPRE Report #2016-14. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

### Process Evaluations: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners
### Outcome Evaluation: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners

These two briefs, part of a series on practical evaluation methods, provide a short overview of process and outcome evaluations.[3] The briefs describe why process and outcome evaluations are important, identify situations where each is useful, outline steps to conduct an evaluation, and include an overview of an after-school program evaluation as an example. The briefs are written for agencies that operate after-school programs but are also relevant for CCDF lead agencies and others interested in information on how and when to conduct process and outcome evaluations.

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[2] Many of the sources cited in the "Comprehensive Resources on Program Evaluation" section include chapters that also cover these topics.

[3] *Process evaluation* "examines the extent to which a program is operating as intended by assessing ongoing program operations and whether the targeted population is being served" (Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, *The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation* [Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010], 100). *Outcome evaluation* is "designed to assess the extent to which a program or intervention affects participants according to specific variables or data elements. These results are expected to be caused by program activities and tested by comparison of results across sample groups in the target population. Also known as impact and summative evaluation." (Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, 99).

- Bowie, Lillian, and Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew. 2008. "Process Evaluations: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners." Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

- Allen, Tiffany, and Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew. 2008. "Outcome Evaluation: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners." Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

# Evaluation Design and Methods

### A Framework for Evaluating Systems Initiatives

This paper supports stakeholders planning and evaluating early childhood systems initiatives. The paper defines five distinct areas of focus for systems initiatives; presents a "theory of change menu" that outlines the types of activities, outcomes, and impacts associated with each focus area; and details the evaluation questions, designs, and methodologies that apply to each of the five focus areas.

- Coffman, Julia. 2007. *A Framework for Evaluating Systems Initiatives*. Des Moines, IA: Build Initiative.

### Qualitative Evaluation Checklist

This checklist helps evaluators determine whether qualitative methods align with their evaluation goals and provides information about factors to consider when planning a qualitative inquiry. The checklist covers a comprehensive set of topics, from aligning a specific qualitative approach with an evaluation's expected uses to data collection, analysis, and reporting.

- Patton, Michael Quinn. 2003. "Qualitative Evaluation Checklist." Kalamazoo: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University.

### Quasi-Experimental Evaluations

This brief examines different types of quasi-experimental designs for evaluations. It explains what can be learned from quasi-experimental designs, when they are useful, the different types of designs, and the risks and obstacles involved. The brief is written for child care program managers and funders.

- Moore, Kristin Anderson. 2008. "Quasi-Experimental Evaluations." Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

### Random Assignment Evaluation Studies: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners

This brief provides an overview of random assignment designs for evaluation studies, including why they are important and when they are useful, and explains the process of implementing random assignment evaluations in out-of-school time programs. The brief is written for child care program managers and funders.

- Moore, Kristin Anderson, and Allison Metz. 2008. "Random Assignment Evaluation Studies: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Program Practitioners." Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

### Research Connections' "Research Methods" Web Pages

These web pages offer a general orientation to research methods. The landing page includes a concise listing of different research designs, data collection methods, and analytic techniques. Links take readers to additional pages with more in-depth definitions of key concepts.

- "Research Methods" landing page, Research Connections, accessed October 2, 2017, http://www.researchconnections.org/content/childcare/understand/methods.html.

### Selecting an Evaluation Approach

This short report discusses "programmatic and contextual factors to consider when choosing an evaluation approach, reviews the most common types of evaluation designs, and offers a critique of common myths and misconceptions regarding various evaluation designs and research methods." Written for recipients of child welfare discretionary grants from the US Department of Health and Human Services, the concepts and examples are readily generalized to other issue areas.

- James Bell Associates. 2009. "Selecting an Evaluation Approach." Arlington, VA: James Bell Associates.

## Writing an Evaluation Plan

### Designing Evaluations

This paper "introduces key issues in planning evaluation studies…to best meet decision makers' needs while accounting for the constraints evaluators face. It describes different types of evaluations…the process of designing evaluation studies, and key issues to consider toward ensuring overall study quality." The paper is intended to support the work of federal program evaluators in the US Government Accountability Office, but the guidance is also broadly applicable to state and local government evaluators.

- US Government Accountability Office. 2012. *Designing Evaluations: 2012 Revision*. Washington, DC: US Government Accountability Office.

### Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan

This workbook describes what evaluation plans are, why they are important, what components to include, and how to develop effective evaluation plans. It provides detail on issues such as engaging stakeholders in planning, developing evaluation questions, choosing data sources and methods, budgeting, and disseminating results. In addition, it includes worksheets and other practical tools that can be used when developing an evaluation plan. The workbook is aimed at managers, administrators, and evaluators of public health programs, but the concepts, exercises, and worksheets are easy to generalize to other public programs.

- Office on Smoking and Health and Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. 2011. *Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan: Setting the Course for Effective Program Evaluation*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Evaluation Plan Workbook

This workbook introduces the concepts and processes involved in planning a program evaluation. It walks users through the process of developing plans to evaluate a program's implementation and outcomes, including a series of specific action steps related to defining program activities, indicators for outputs and outcomes, and data collection methods. The document also includes two short evaluation plan templates, one for implementation evaluation and one for outcome evaluation. The templates can be used to record information as users carry out the recommended action steps. The workbook is useful for anyone interested in understanding and implementing evaluation plans.

- Innovation Network. 2005. *Evaluation Plan Workbook*. Washington, DC: Innovation Network.

## How to Write an Evaluation Plan and Report

This presentation offers a brief overview of the purpose and components of an evaluation plan and lists key considerations for addressing each component. The resource was developed for AmeriCorps grantees and is appropriate for staff involved in evaluation planning at various types of organizations.

- Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Evaluation. n.d. "How to Write an Evaluation Plan and Report: Overview for AmeriCorps Grantees." Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service.

## Quality Investments: How to Use Administrative Data and Other Sources to Evaluate What is Working, Slides from Webinar Sessions 1 and 2

These two webinars are from a three-part series focused on evaluation of child care quality initiatives. The series is designed to help states and territories learn about options for evaluation, identify their own evaluation needs and opportunities, develop an evaluation plan, and report on findings. Session one in the series is an introduction to evaluation plans and use of evaluation in state planning and decisionmaking. Session two focuses on data needed to implement an evaluation plan including information about how to determine data needs, identify data sources, and work with administrative and other data sources. Both sessions include examples from state quality improvement research projects.

- Tout, Kathryn, and Kelly Maxwell. 2016. "Quality Investments: How to Use Administrative Data and Other Sources to Evaluate What's Working. Session 1: Evaluation Basics." National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, March 24.

- Tout, Kathryn, Carlise King, and Kelly Maxwell. 2016. "Quality Investments: How to Use Administrative Data and Other Sources to Evaluate What's Working. Session 2: Data Collection and Analysis." National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, April 21.

# Evaluation Questions and Indicators

## Criteria for Selection of High-Performing Indicators: A Checklist to Inform Monitoring and Evaluation

This checklist provides criteria for assessing the quality of potential evaluation indicators. It is designed to facilitate a dialogue among stakeholders for indicator selection, ensure linkages between indicators and evaluation questions, and aid in the planning of data collection that reflects the intended use of findings. The resource is designed for use in the early stage of evaluation planning by staff responsible for evaluation and monitoring at various types of organization.

- MacDonald, Goldie. n.d. "Criteria for Selection of High-Performing Indicators: A Checklist to Inform Monitoring and Evaluation." Kalamazoo: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University.

## Evaluation Questions Checklist

This concise checklist provides information about the characteristics of good evaluation questions. The tool is designed to "aid in developing effective and appropriate evaluation questions and in assessing the quality of existing questions." The resource is appropriate for use by staff involved in evaluation planning at various types of organizations.

- Wingate, Lori, and Daniela Schroeter. 2016. "Evaluation Questions Checklist for Program Evaluation." Kalamazoo: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University.

## A Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions

This guide describes a five-step process for engaging stakeholders in developing evaluation questions. It includes practical tips and worksheets to help organizations identify relevant stakeholders, choose among engagement approaches, and address challenges to working with stakeholders. The guide is written for organizations receiving grants from foundations, but the concepts are broadly applicable to any public or private agency seeking to develop research questions that support credible, relevant, and useful evaluation findings.

- Preskill, Hallie, and Nathalie Jones. 2009. *A Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions*. Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

# Building Organizational Capacity for Research and Evaluation

This section lists general resources on how to build organizational capacity for research and self-assessment tools that can help agencies identify and prioritize their capacity-building needs.

## General Resources

### Building Evaluation Capacity in Human Services Organizations

This brief defines evaluation capacity, explains why internal evaluation capacity is important, and describes specific steps organizations can take to build evaluation capacity. It is written for human service organizations and includes examples from both public and private agencies.

- James Bell Associates. 2013. "Building Evaluation Capacity in Human Service Organizations." Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.

### A Checklist for Building Organizational Evaluation Capacity

This checklist covers action steps organizations or agencies can take to increase their capacity to conduct and use evaluation as part of their regular operations. Topics covered include organizational context, structures that can build evaluation capacity, and resources for evaluation.

- Volkov, Boris B., and Jean A. King. 2007. "A Checklist for Building Organizational Evaluation Capacity." Kalamazoo: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University.

## Self-Assessment Tools

### Elements to Build Capacity for Evaluation and Accountability: Discussion Guide

This discussion guide is organized around six elements of capacity building for evaluation and accountability: establish a culture of accountability; develop a long-range strategic evaluation plan; partner with researchers and experts; ensure data quality; engage families, community leaders, and legislators; and communicate results simply and often. The guide includes questions to support discussion among planning and stakeholder groups and suggested strategies for addressing each of the six elements. It was developed for Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grantees.

- Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start. 2014. "Elements to Build Capacity for Evaluation and Accountability: Discussion Guide." Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

## Research and Evaluation Capacity: Self-Assessment Tool and Discussion Guide for CCDF Lead Agencies

This tool is designed to help CCDF lead agencies assess their research and evaluation strengths and needs. Part one invites agencies to consider how their organization is doing in seven major areas of research and evaluation capacity. Part two helps agencies define overarching goals for their capacity-building efforts. Part three helps agencies articulate key questions about how to address the gaps and goals identified in the first two parts.

- Rohacek, Monica. 2017. *Research and Evaluation Capacity: Self-Assessment Tool and Discussion Guide for CCDF Lead Agencies*, OPRE Report #2017-63. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

# Working with Evaluators

This section includes resources with information and guidance related to selecting and working with internal and external evaluators.[4]

### Community Toolbox, "Choosing Evaluators"

These web pages are part of a larger online publication designed to support community change and improvement efforts. This section focuses on considerations in choosing an evaluator, including how to decide between external and in-house evaluators and what to look for in an evaluator. Additional pages include suggested interview questions for prospective evaluators and a PowerPoint presentation summarizing key points from the main text. The resource is written for community-based organizations but is also appropriate for any type of organization interested in working with a program evaluator.

- "Section 4: Choosing Evaluators," University of Kansas, Center for Community Health and Development, accessed October 2, 2017, http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/choose-evaluators/main.

### Five Steps for Selecting an Evaluator: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners

This brief, part of a series on practical evaluation methods, describes five steps for choosing an effective evaluator, including a discussion of trade-offs between working with internal and external evaluators. The brief also addresses the question of how much evaluations cost. It was developed for child care service delivery agencies interested in evaluation.

- Bronte-Tinkew, Jacinta, Krystle Joyner, and Tiffany Allen. 2007. "Five Steps for Selecting an Evaluator: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners." Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

### Guidelines for Working with Third-Party Evaluators

This comprehensive resource describes how to plan for, find, hire, and work with third-party project evaluators. The guide includes a needs assessment to help organizations decide if a third-party evaluation is needed or if the work can be done in-house. It also includes chapters on finding and hiring a third-party evaluator, monitoring and managing the evaluator's work, and closing out the project. Subsections cover evaluation budgeting, developing a scope of work and request for proposals, contracting, and otherwise defining expectations for the evaluator. A brief evaluation primer is included as an appendix. The guide was developed for Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs grantees and project officers.

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[4] Many of the sources cited in the "Comprehensive Resources on Program Evaluation" section also include sections related to working with evaluators.

- Heinemeier, Sarah, Anne D'Agostino, Jill Lammert, and Thomas A. Fiore. 2014. *Guidelines for Working with Third-Party Evaluators*. Rockville, MD: Westat.

## Hiring an Evaluation Consultant

This white paper describes six critical skills to look for in an evaluation consultant. It also includes strategies for finding an evaluation firm and improving the request for proposal process. The guide was developed for nonprofits, but the ideas are useful for a range of organizations interested in an innovative perspective on finding and assessing the qualifications of evaluation consultants.

- Graig, Eric. 2011. "Hiring an Evaluation Consultant." Riverdale, NY: Usable Knowledge.

# Working with Administrative Data

This section includes resources with information and guidance related to working with administrative data, organized into four subsections. The "General Resources" subsection covers materials that offer an overview of key considerations in working with administrative data or data systems. It also includes a web page hosted by Research Connections offering additional resources. The "Data Management, Governance, and Linking" subsection contains resources that focus more specifically on *how* to work with administrative data. The "State Examples" subsection includes reports that summarize specific state experiences with administrative data, including the questions they seek to answer, their systems for collecting and managing administrative data, and key lessons learned. The "Indicator and Use Examples" subsection contains resources that offer lists of key administrative data variables relevant to the early care and education sector and presentations that offer an overview of general use cases for early childhood administrative data.[5]

## General Resources

### Answering Key Questions with an Early Childhood Data System

This document provides examples of questions states have sought to answer using statewide early childhood longitudinal data systems, explains the utility of specifying clear policy questions, and outlines how to do so. This product is intended for state policymakers interested in using and sharing early childhood data.

- Cochenour, Missy, and Stephanie Porowski. 2013. "SLDS Issue Brief: Answering Key Questions with an Early Childhood Data System." Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

### Building and Using Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data Systems: A Framework for State Policymakers.

This tool helps state policymakers develop coordinated state early care and education data systems. The tool identifies six key policy questions states may want to answer and describes 10 fundamentals of systems for collecting and managing data to address those questions. The tool also outlines additional policies, practices, and structures that state policymakers must establish to ensure appropriate access to data and build stakeholder capacity to use data to guide decisionmaking. It also provides examples of how stakeholders throughout the early care and education system use data for continuous improvement.

- Early Childhood Data Collaborative. 2010. *Building and Using Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data Systems: A Framework for State Policymakers*. Washington, DC: Early Childhood Data Collaborative.

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[5] Many of the sources cited in the "Comprehensive Resources on Program Evaluation" section also address issues related to working with administrative data.

## Considerations in Preparing to Analyze Administrative Data to Address Child Care and Early Education Research Questions

This resource provides information to help new and experienced researchers and state program staff identify and address potential issues related to working with early care and education administrative data. The report contains sections on understanding the scope and limitations of administrative data, selecting variables to analyze, assessing the feasibility of the plan, preparing a data request, and developing and maintaining adequate data documentation.

- Lin, Van-Kim, Kelly Maxwell, and Nicole Forry. 2017. "Considerations in Preparing to Analyze Administrative Data to Address Child Care and Early Education Research Questions." OPRE Research Brief #2017-18. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

## The Integration of Early Childhood Data

This report is designed to help states better use early childhood program data to improve service delivery. The report puts forward a vision for integrated early childhood data systems and describes how states can use these systems in decisionmaking. The report also provides key considerations around integrating and linking data based on lessons learned from states engaged in developing data systems and from established best practices. Eight states engaged in this work are profiled. Appendices include information on federal supports for data integration, links to additional resources, and a summary of key data privacy laws and regulations that may affect early childhood data.

- Lee, Erica, Lindsey Hutchison, and Kimberley Burgess. 2016. *The Integration of Early Childhood Data: State Profiles and a Report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education.* Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services and US Department of Education.

## Issues in Accessing and Using Administrative Data

This brief provides an overview of key considerations for state agency staff and researchers accessing administrative data to conduct social policy research. The brief highlights four aspects of access: determining availability, receiving the data, merging datasets, and understanding what the data mean. It also discusses the importance of relationship building, capacity building, and valuing both confidentiality and access in overcoming challenges to working with administrative data.

- Maxwell, Kelly. 2017. "Issues in Accessing and Using Administrative Data," OPRE Report #2017-24. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

## Putting Administrative Data to Work: A Toolkit for State Agencies on Advancing Data Integration and Data Sharing Efforts to Support Sound Policy and Program Development

This comprehensive resource is designed to help state early childhood agencies understand and strengthen critical components of their data and research infrastructure. The toolkit provides practical tips and illustrative examples organized around four "getting started" steps (secure commitment from agency leadership, determine enhancement needs, evaluate resources to address needs, and general project management/implementation guidelines) and four areas of infrastructure enhancement (data quality, data linking/integration, data access, and research capacity).

- Duran, Frances, Susan Wilson, and David Carroll. 2005. *Putting Administrative Data to Work: A Toolkit for State Agencies on Advancing Data Integration and Data Sharing Efforts to Support Sound Policy and Program Development*. Farmington: Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut.

## Research Connections' "Working with Administrative Data"

This web page lists resources on administrative data in the early care and education and related fields, organized into four categories: linking and integrating data, analyzing data, managing data, and the confidentiality and security of administrative data. The page also links to additional tools, conferences, trainings, and technical assistance resources. The web page was developed by the Child Care Administrative Data Analysis Center for child care and early education researchers, administrators, policy staff, technical assistance providers, students, and others.

- "Working with Administrative Data," Research Connections, accessed October 2, 2017, http://www.researchconnections.org/content/childcare/understand/administrative-data.html

## Stacking the Blocks: A Look at Integrated Data Strategies

This chapter in the BUILD Initiative's e-book, *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families,* describes the goals state Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge grantees established for their early learning data systems and lays out five building blocks for states to strengthen their data systems, including examples of state activities under each building block. The chapter also discusses obstacles and strategies for success drawn from the experiences of the grantees. This resource is useful for state early care and education staff seeking examples of efforts to develop early learning data systems to improve service delivery and child outcomes.

- Jordan, Elizabeth, and Carlise King. 2015. "Stacking the Blocks: A Look at Integrated Data Strategies." In *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families: A BUILD E-Book,* edited by Harriet Dichter. Boston: BUILD Initiative.

# Data Management, Governance, and Linking

## Confidentiality Issues: Addressing Questions about Sharing Data among Organizations

The Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance program's community of practice on developmental screening hosted this webinar. Experts discussed confidentiality issues around sharing developmental screening data and putting these data or other sensitive data on children into statewide databases. A written summary outlines key points on sharing data covered by federal privacy rules and regulations, as well as common questions and answers. This content is potentially useful for staff from organizations serving children who are interested in sharing sensitive data on the children they serve.

- Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance. 2014. Confidentiality Issues: Addressing Questions about Sharing Data among Organizations. Webinar summary. Washington, DC: Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance.

## Data De-identification: An Overview of Basic Terms

This document reviews key concepts and strategies around data de-identification ("minimizing the risk of unintended disclosure of the identity of individuals and information about them") and provides explanations of key terms. The document is intended for state staff administering Individuals with Disabilities Education Act early childhood programs but is useful for anyone seeking to understand key privacy and confidentiality concepts as they apply to early childhood data.

- Privacy Technical Assistance Center and DaSy Center. 2014. "Data De-identification: An Overview of Basic Terms." Menlo Park, CA: DaSy Center.

## Data Governance and Stewardship
## Data Governance Checklist

These resources are designed to help agencies establish data governance systems to ensure availability, confidentiality, and integrity of data. The first document is a brief that defines data governance and "lists the ten key components of a comprehensive data governance program and summarizes critical issues that should be considered when designing the program." The second document is a checklist for agencies establishing and maintaining a data governance program. The resources are written for education agencies but serve as a useful starting point for those working on systems spanning early childhood and other issue areas.

- Privacy Technical Assistance Center. 2011. "Data Governance and Stewardship." Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

- Privacy Technical Assistance Center. 2011. "Data Governance Checklist." Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

## Data Security Checklist

This resource is a checklist of critical components stakeholders should incorporate when developing a data security program (i.e., the management of technology, people, and processes to ensure security of organizational data). It also explains the importance of data security in an organizational data governance structure. This resource is intended for education agencies but is helpful for any stakeholder interested in building a data security program.

- Privacy Technical Assistance Center. 2011. "Data Security Checklist." Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

## Determining the Feasibility of Using State Early Care and Education Administrative Data

This resource provides information to help new and experienced researchers and state program staff identify and discuss key considerations when working with early care and education administrative data. The report contains sections on data stewardship and management, data contracts and coordination, and data usability.

- Lin, Van-Kim, Kelly Maxwell, and Nicole Forry. 2017. "Determining the Feasibility of Using State Early Care and Education Administrative Data." OPRE Research Brief #2017-17. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

## Early Childhood Data Governance in Action! An Introduction
## Initial Steps to Establish Data Governance

These two briefs provide an introduction to data governance and outline a list of initial steps for establishing an early childhood data governance structure. The first brief describes four central principles for effective data governance models and explains the roles and responsibilities of different groups and individuals involved in data governance. The second brief outlines the steps needed to establish an organizational structure, operational plan, and processes and decisions related to data governance for an early childhood integrated data system. The primary audience is state agency staff involved in developing early childhood data systems.

- Cochenour, Missy, Corey Chatis, and Stephanie Irvine. n.d. "Early Childhood Data Governance in Action: An Introduction." Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences.

- Chatis, Corey, Missy Cochenour, and Stephanie Irvine. n.d. "Early Childhood Data Governance in Action: Initial Steps to Establish Data Governance." Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences.

## Research Practice Partnerships: Developing Data Sharing Agreements

This web page offers resources related to developing data sharing agreements between government agencies and institutions of higher learning. It includes answers to common questions about data sharing

agreements and links to sample agreements and other resources. The site is designed to support research–practice partnerships in educational systems.

■ "Research Practice Partnerships: Developing Data Sharing Agreements," William T. Grant Foundation, accessed October 2, 2017, http://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org/developing-data-sharing-agreements.

### Roadmap for Early Childhood and K–12 Data Linkages: Key Focus Areas to Ensure Quality Implementation

This report provides guidance for policymakers building data systems to understand whether state policies and programs are successfully preparing children for school. The resource highlights seven recommended areas for states to focus on: state capacity; data governance; privacy, security, and transparency; linking, matching, and sharing; data quality; data access and use; and stakeholder engagement. The report also includes examples of state efforts in each area. Although focused on supporting linkages between early childhood data and K–12 data systems, many of the principles are broadly applicable to all types of early childhood administrative data.

■ Early Childhood Data Collaborative. 2016. *Roadmap for Early Childhood and K-12 Data Linkages: Key Focus Areas to Ensure Quality Implementation*. Washington, DC: Data Quality Campaign.

## State Examples

### A Look at Maryland's Early Childhood Data System
### A Look at Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Data System

These two briefs are from of a series of case studies that "document states' progress toward building and using early childhood data systems." The briefs for Maryland and Pennsylvania each include an overview of policy, history, vertical and horizontal linkages, data access, reporting and use, and advice for other states.

■ Stedron, Jennifer M. 2010. "A Look at Maryland's Early Childhood Data System." Denver: National Conference of State Legislatures.

■ Stedron, Jennifer M. 2010. "A Look at Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Data System." Denver: National Conference of State Legislatures.

### Linking Early Childhood and K12 Data: A State Example from Kentucky

This brief provides an overview of how Kentucky is using data from its statewide longitudinal data system to examine the scope and impact of early childhood education. The resource details how research products resulting from these efforts are informing stakeholders in the early care and education field and offers best practices and lessons learned.

■ Institute of Education Sciences. 2014. "Linking Early Childhood and K12 Data: A State Example from Kentucky." Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences.

## Maryland: Establishing Partnerships to Build Data Use Capacity

This brief provides guidance on how state agencies can partner with institutions of higher education to promote data-informed decisionmaking. It highlights lessons learned through a partnership between the Maryland State Department of Education and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education around services for children with disabilities. The brief presents a list of state agency needs that are addressed by the partnership; describes benefits of the partnership for state agencies, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders; and offers a list of guiding questions for state agencies considering a data use partnership with an institution of higher education.

- Ruggiero, Tony, Sarika Gupta, Amy Nicholas, and Denise Mauzy. 2016. "Maryland: Establishing Partnerships to Build Data Use Capacity." Menlo Park, CA: DaSy Center.

## Putting the Pieces Together: New York Early Learning Program Data Systems

This resource describes a process undertaken by a consortium of stakeholders in New York to assess the state's capacity to answer a key policy question: Which children have access to high-quality early care and education programs? It offers an example to state agencies of how to conduct an inventory of early care and education data systems and variables as part of strategic planning for an integrated data system to support better understanding of a state's early learning landscape.

- Kreader, J. Lee, and William J. Schneider. 2011. *Putting the Pieces Together: New York Early Learning Program Data Systems*. Rensselaer, NY: New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council.

## Strengthening Workforce Data to Support Quality: State Spotlight on Oregon

This resource provides a case study of Oregon's workforce data infrastructure and the state's use of data to improve the early care and education workforce.

- Early Childhood Data Collaborative. 2017. "Strengthening Workforce Data to Support Quality: State Spotlight on Oregon." Bethesda, MD: Early Childhood Data Collaborative.

# Sample Indicators and Use Examples

## Core Data Elements for Early Childhood and School-Age Registries

This resource provides users with information about key workforce indicators that can be captured through administrative data systems, including definitions, purpose, and best practices for variable capture and management.

- National Registry Alliance. 2013. *Core Data Elements for Early Childhood and School-Age Registries*. Washington, DC: National Registry Alliance.

## INQUIRE Data Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help state administrators and researchers build data infrastructures to answer policy questions related to quality rating and improvement systems, other quality improvement initiatives, and professional development activities. The toolkit includes a linkages guide that outlines key research questions and a dictionary of common data elements. Stakeholders can use the toolkit as they identify priority questions, determine what data are and are not being collected, develop and implement a plan to collect necessary data elements, perform analysis, and use the results of those analyses.

- Friese, Sarah, Carlise King, and Kathryn Tout. 2013. *INQUIRE Data Toolkit*. OPRE Report # 2013-58. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

## The Role of Administrative Data within Economic Evaluation

This presentation provides an overview of different types of economic evaluation (cost, cost-effectiveness, cost-savings, and benefit-cost analysis) and administrative data sources applicable to each type. It also includes an illustrative example of an economic evaluation of an early childhood intervention.

- Crowley, Max. 2015. "The Role of Administrative Data within Economic Evaluation." Presented at the Promises and Challenges of Administrative Data in Social Policy Research, Washington, DC, October 1.

## The Role of the Policy Context in Using and Understanding Administrative Data

This presentation provides an overview of how the policy context (rules and policies, processes and procedures, and the broader environment programs operate in) shapes how administrative data are collected and defined, who is included in datasets, and how findings are interpreted. The content includes illustrative examples related to child care subsidy policy questions.

- Davis, Elizabeth E. 2015. "The Role of the Policy Context in Using and Understanding Administrative Data." Presented at the Promises and Challenges of Administrative Data in Social Policy Research, Washington, DC, October 1.

# Appendix. Approach to Identifying and Selecting Resources for the Guide

The primary purpose of this resource guide is to support CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning grantees and other state, territory, and tribal CCDF lead agencies seeking to build research and evaluation capacity by gathering the most relevant resources available to them in one place. An updated bibliography may be released periodically to include recently published and newly discovered resources on topics already included in the guide or to add resources in new topic areas.

## Search Methods

The guide presents resources in selected topic areas that we identified through four methods:

1. Scans of selected websites (focusing on those most likely to yield materials of use to CCDF lead agencies).

   - Resources from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, and other initiatives

     » US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
     » ACF's Early Childhood T/TA System
     » Office of Child Care's Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide
     » BUILD Initiative
     » QRIS National Learning Network
     » INQUIRE Quality Initiatives Research and Evaluation Consortium
     » Design Options for Home Visiting Evaluation
     » Child Welfare Information Gateway
     » Working with Administrative Data (on the Child Care and Early Education Research Connections website)
     » National Center for Education Statistics Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program publications

» Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands at the Education Development Center

» Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center

■ Websites focused on evaluation

» Early Childhood Data Collaborative

» The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University

» The Evaluation Exchange at Harvard Family Research Project

» American Evaluation Association

» Centers for Disease Control Program Performance and Evaluation Office

» National Science Foundation Online Evaluation Resource Library

■ State government association websites

» National Governors Association

» American Public Human Services Association

2. Targeted keyword searches for relevant resources on the Child Care and Early Education Research Connections website using the following terms:

■ research capacity

■ evaluation capacity

■ data sharing

3. Suggestions from project staff, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Planning grantees, other state and territory lead agencies, and other users of the guide.[6]

4. Follow-up on promising citations found in resources on the sites above and in another resource guide produced for child welfare agencies.[7]

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[6] The first version of the guide only includes suggestions from project staff and the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Later updates will incorporate suggestions from these other sources.

[7] James Bell Associates. 2011. *Evaluation Resource Guide for Children's Bureau Discretionary Grantees*. Arlington, VA: James Bell Associates.

## Criteria for Selecting Resources

These search methods yielded thousands of potential resources. Because the purpose of this guide is to help CCDF lead agencies quickly identify tools that are most likely to meet their information needs, we established criteria to guide our decisions about which resources to list in the guide. In addition, we generally limited the number of resources to no more than eight in a given category or subcategory and chose to include the most relevant. Our criteria for inclusion were as follows:

- Is it relevant to one of the topic categories?

- Is it relevant for CCDF lead agencies?

- Is it user-friendly?

- Was it published after 2001? *(This criterion may be relaxed if the resource meets a unique need that is not addressed by more recent resources.)*

- Is it freely available online? *(This criterion may be relaxed if the resource meets a unique need not addressed by a free, readily available resource.)*

- Is it minimally duplicative of other resources included in the guide? *(In cases where materials were duplicative, we selected the one that best addressed the other criteria.)*

## Periodic Updates

We may periodically release an updated resource guide with additional or alternative resources in existing topic areas and new resources in new topic areas chosen in consultation with the project officer to best meet the needs of grantees and other CCDF lead agencies. To avoid duplicating earlier efforts, we will generally review only materials added to the sites previously searched since the last update unless a broader search is needed to find materials in new topic areas.

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