

Meaningful Data for Research and Practice: State Roles in Supporting Local Early Childhood Data Use

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Background

- * State early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE) programs want to work with local agencies to:
 - Ensure local programs and staff recognize the usefulness of collecting high-quality data
 - Improve the quality of their child outcomes data
 - Use data for program improvement
- * State EI and ECSE programs have child outcomes data from each local program and are at the forefront of figuring out effective ways to promote local data use.
- * States are working with local staff to formulate critical questions, access data, conduct data analysis and interpretation, and use data for program improvement.



Supporting States with Local Data Use

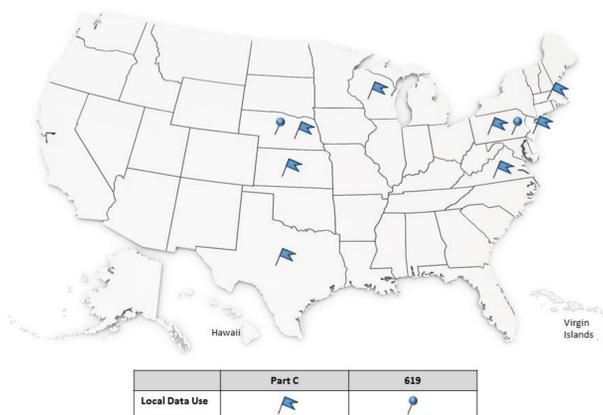
- * DaSy worked with states to identify critical questions that data can answer and is now collaborating to design report templates to visually display data.
- * National TA centers and key stakeholders, including higher education faculty, are working with state staff to identify and support their needs. State staff and their partners are considering how best to support the needs of local agencies in maximizing use of their data for program improvement (e.g., through data infrastructure, reports, or developing data “champions”).



Sample

- * Eight state programs (Part C and Part B 619) participate in a local data use meeting held November, 2015.
- * Programs indicated a strong interest in promoting local data use and shared plans to work on this area in the next year.

State Participation in DaSy Cross-State Learning Opportunities:
Local Data Use Part C and 619



Methods

- * Qualitative analysis of themes from two sources related to the cross-state meeting:
 - State applications for participation that described states’ current work supporting local data use.
 - Notes from the 2-day meeting that included eight teams of state and local program staff.

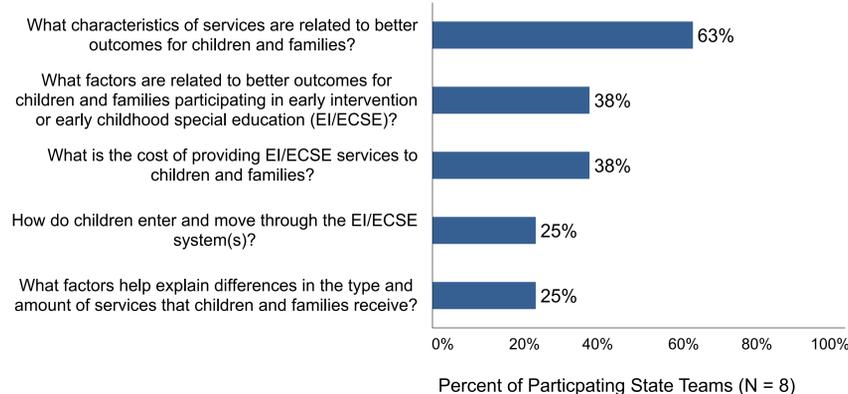
Research Questions

- * What critical questions are states trying to answer with their data?
- * What do state EI and ECSE programs report as their current status related to local data use?
- * How are states planning to support building capacity for local data use and promote local use of data for program improvement?

Findings

Critical Questions that State-Local Teams Want to Answer with Data

State and local teams jointly identified priority critical questions they want to answer. Discussions were held on quality data elements which must be linked in order to answer chosen questions. Top questions included:



See information on DaSy critical questions:
<http://dasycenter.org/new-dasy-resource-critical-questions/>

States’ Current Status Related to Local Data Use

- * Many states are building a data culture through commitment from leadership; strengthening existing and forging new relationships; and showcasing positive ways data are used.
- * There is variability in:
 - State capacity to support local data use and challenges they encounter.
 - State capacity to link data across agencies and data elements.
 - How integrated different types of data are (e.g., child outcomes data may be embedded with IFSP/IFSP data).
 - Timeliness of local access to data and types of reports:
 - o Some local agencies have access to data products such as dashboards, ad hoc query tools, and reports.
 - o Varied capacity to use and interpret reports provided.
- * State-local teams are trying to address needs such as supporting:
 - Increased local agency understanding of purpose and benefits of data use and better data quality.
 - Increased data sharing with effective data visualization.
 - Better approaches to get the right data to the right people at the right time.
 - Dedicated staff and data analysts to support interpretation of local data.

Findings

Next steps are focused around the following:

- * Building data culture and buy-in
- * Local data use guidance and policy
- * Reviewing quality of/patterns in current data
- * Changing data systems
- * Professional development

To do this, states may be:

- * Participating in cross-state learning TA opportunities
- * Convening stakeholders
- * Partnering, including with researchers
- * Thinking about evaluating changes



Implications

- * In summary, states are moving past asking **if** they should share data to **how** to effectively support use of data for program improvement in state and local settings.
- * Researchers could partner with state-local teams to identify and begin to answer critical questions.
- * Researcher expertise with data and planning about data systems makes them valuable stakeholders for states.
- * Improving local data quality makes IE and ECSE data more useful for additional analysis, including for questions researchers and state staff identify together.

Discussion Questions

- * How might your work to build buy-in or improve data quality with local agencies in research projects inform activities states are undertaking?
- * Have you had experience working with state or local staff in analyzing or using their EI or ECSE data? If so, in what ways and what did you learn from the process?
- * Why might researchers be interested in local data use? What are the challenges to partnerships?
- * What strategies build local staff capacity to gather and use quality data?
- * In your experience with research data, what type of data use products (e.g., infographics, dashboards) have been effective to increase buy-in and data use among local program staff?