Your Data's Story: Using Critical Questions for Early Childhood Program Improvement

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Background

* High-quality state data systems provide information to answer questions about early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE) at the state and local level to:
  – Administer programs
  – Meet accountability requirements
  – Improve results for children and families

About the Critical Questions

The DaSy Center has developed a set of critical questions (CQs) about children/families, practitioners, and EI programs/local education agencies.

Questions are categorized as:

Bread and butter questions—a comprehensive data system should provide the data to answer.

Aspirational questions—complex questions that require more information than a typical high-quality system may provide or require linking to other data systems.

Who can benefit from the CQs?

* EI/ECSE state agency staff
* Local programs
* Stakeholders
* Policymakers

Have you ever wondered…

What are the characteristics of the services and supports provided for children/families in EI/ECSE?

How do children enter and move through the EI/ECSE systems?

What factors help explain differences in the type and amount of services that children and families receive?

What characteristics of services are related to better outcomes for children and families?

How do you get from questions to answers?

The DaSy Center has created analysis plans for selected critical questions. The plans contain the steps for gathering and preparing data, all the way through designing data visualizations to share your findings. Analysis plans are aligned with CEDS, so you can use MyConnect to identify the variables you have in your data system.
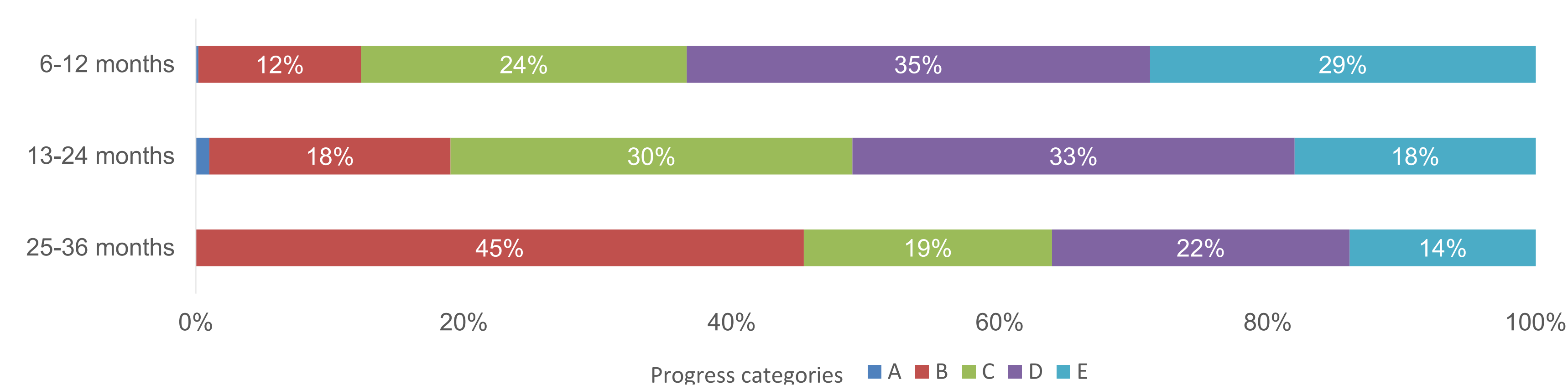
1. Pose a question → 2. Gather & prepare data → 3. Analyze data → 4. Share & use findings

One Example

1. What is the relationship between child outcomes and length of time in a program?

2. Get data from data system & prepare

	A	B	C	D
1	Child ID	Service entry date	Service exit date	Progress category: Use of knowledge and skills
2	12461	1/4/2014	5/1/2016	D
3	12462	1/10/2014	8/15/2014	D
4	12463	2/1/2014	1/24/2015	B
5	12464	2/4/2014	3/24/2016	C
6	12465	2/14/2014	11/11/2014	E
7	…	…	…	…

3. Analyze data

Time in Program	A	B	C	D	E
6-12 months	0%	12%	24%	35%	29%
13-24 months	1%	18%	30%	33%	18%
25-36 months	0%	45%	19%	22%	14%

4. Share and use findings.

Percentage of Children in Each Child Outcomes Progress Category (Use of Knowledge and Skills) by Length of Time in Program
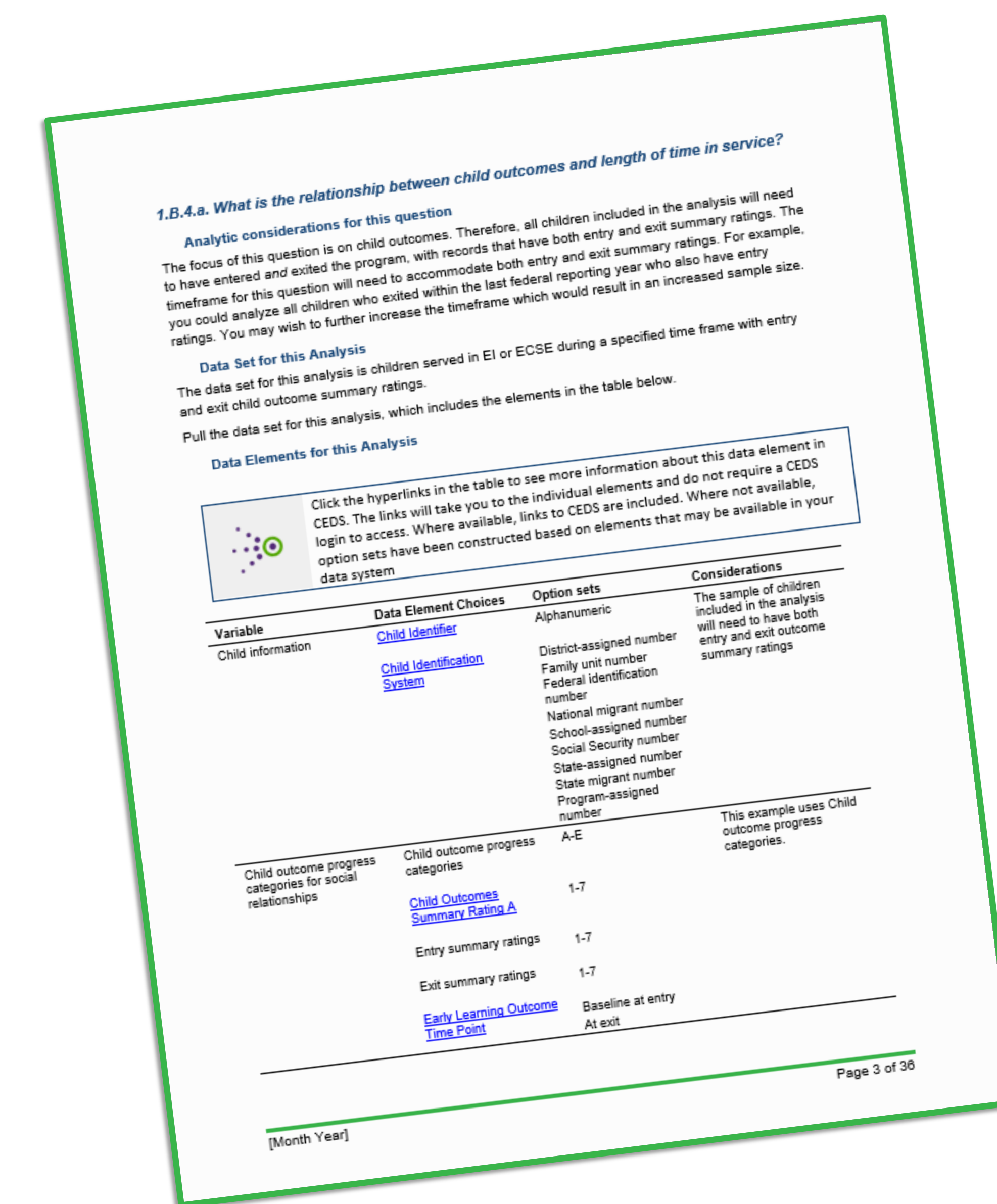

Suggested Uses of CQs

* At staff meetings, discuss program improvement
* At ICC or other stakeholder meetings, explore areas of interest to members
* Help local programs use the data they collect and report
* With parents, to find out their questions about services children use in your state

How to Get Started

Need help asking and answering critical questions?

* Contact us:
  – Laura.Hudson@sri.com
  – Gary.Harmon@unc.edu
* Find CQ resources online: http://dasycenter.org/resources/critical-questions/

Coming soon: analysis plans to help you answer critical questions!

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