# Building Evidence-Based State Early Childhood Systems: A Marriage of Developmental Science and Policy

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## Need for Early Childhood System Building

Recent early childhood (EC) policy work has focused on:

- expansion of EC programs and services, and
- improving the quality of programs to achieve positive child outcomes.

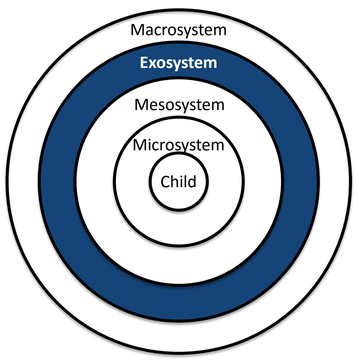
Federal and state policymakers are building state and local EC systems that focus on:

- evidence-based programs and practices,
- results-based accountability, and
- data-informed decision making.

To inform policies, developmental research has emphasized the more proximal (microsystem) influences that affect children and their caregivers (e.g., family, school, peers).

This poster presents a framework for examining exosystem influences (e.g., state systems of support and economic systems).

### Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model




Source: Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (6th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 793-828). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

- We believe that by collecting information about the quality of exosystem influences, we can contribute to evidence-based policymaking that helps improve our early childhood systems.
- This poster describes a system framework and measurement strategy to support states in improving the quality of their statewide early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE) programs, which serve children with disabilities ages birth–3, and 3–5, respectively.
- These tools were developed for EI and ECSE audiences, but the content is applicable across all early care and education programs because they face similar infrastructure challenges at the state level.

## Early Childhood System Framework

### Overview

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center developed a framework that addresses the question:

**"What does a state need to put into place in order to encourage/support/require local implementation of evidence-based practices that result in positive outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families?"**


### Purpose

The purpose of the ECTA System Framework is to guide state EI and ECSE state staff in:

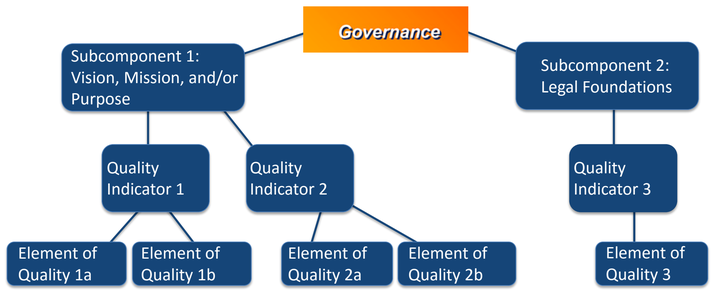
- evaluating their current systems,
- identifying potential areas for improvement, and
- developing more effective, efficient systems that support implementation of evidence-based practices.

### Structure

The Framework is organized around 6 interrelated components:

- Each component contains a set of subcomponents that identify key areas of content for the component.
- Each subcomponent contains a set of quality indicators that specify what needs to be in place to support a high-quality state system.
- Each quality indicator has corresponding elements of quality that assist in progressing from implementation to operation.

### Example of a Framework Component




## Framework Self-Assessment Tool

The ECTA Center also has developed a self-assessment tool that accompanies the framework and provides a measurement strategy for state programs to:

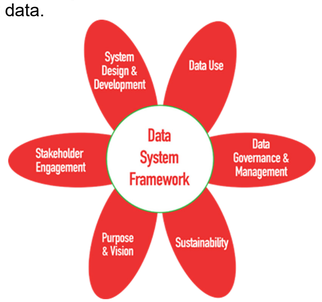
- record the current status of their state system,
- set priorities for improvement, and
- monitor improvement over time.

The self-assessment is an Excel-based tool that:

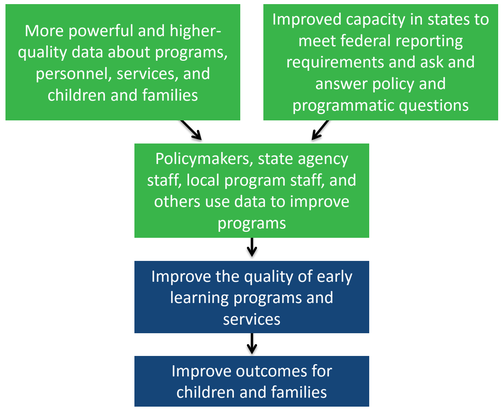
- provides a current status "snapshot" to help states prioritize improvement efforts,
- provides quantitative self-assessment scores to enable states to measure progress over multiple points in time, and
- encourages state participants to engage in rich conversations about the system.

## Data System Framework

- The DaSy Center developed the DaSy Framework, which is the data system component of the larger ECTA System Framework.
- This framework is designed to assist EI and ECSE state staff in:
  - developing and enhancing high-quality state data systems, and
  - improving the quality of their Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) data.




## Why are State Data Systems Important?

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