Including Home Visiting Programs in Early Childhood Data Governance Bodies

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Introduction

While home visiting services are an important component of the early childhood (EC) landscape, few states include home visiting data in their early childhood integrated data systems (ECIDS).[1] An ECIDS links together data from different early care and education programs to generate data used to support program and policy decisions. One reason for the lack of home visiting data in many ECIDS is that home visiting programs are often housed in departments of health, while ECIDS and other EC programs, such as preschool and child care assistance programs, are typically overseen by departments of education, human services, and social services.

Effectively integrating home visiting data into state ECIDS requires strong data governance. Governance bodies have authority to oversee the maintenance, integration, appropriate use, and confidentiality of data. This resource discusses the importance of developing data governance bodies that include home visiting programs in order to facilitate comprehensive integration and use of data to inform early childhood policies. It includes examples of state data governance structures and recommendations for how home visiting leaders can be engaged in data governance.

The State-level Home Visiting Integration with Early Childhood Data Systems (SHINE) project aims to support states in integrating their home visiting data with other early childhood data. SHINE is a project of the Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC), which focuses on the development and use of coordinated state early care and education data systems. This resource was funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation.

How a data governance body supports home visiting data integration

Including home visiting stakeholders in the state data governance body helps to ensure that the goals of the ECIDS align with home visiting data structures, data collection, and security guidelines. In addition, home visiting stakeholders act as key connectors between ECIDS and the home visiting staff collecting data. They can ensure that the appropriate staff receive training, that training aligns with home visiting staff needs, and that home visiting data is reviewed for quality. These stakeholders can also inform home visiting staff about the data integration work happening and solicit feedback on how to improve the process. Below are examples of how a governance structure that includes home visiting representation can support data management areas that are important for integrating home visiting data with other EC programs.[2]

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[1] https://www.childtrends.org/shining-a-light-lessons-from-the-early-care-and-education-field-for-home-visiting-data-integration. For more information on ECIDS, please go to the Early Childhood Data Collaborative website: https://www.childtrends.org/research-topic/ECDC.

[2] These were developed from guidance on building a coordinated data system. For more information, see *The 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Data Systems* available at https://www.childtrends.org/publications/the-10-fundamentals-of-coordinated-state-data-systems.

- **Effective and useful data collection:** The governance body approves common data definitions and identifies specific elements that should be collected. It also creates guidelines for entering and reporting on data. For example, home visiting has a variety of models, and their data collection and reporting requirements differ. A governance structure may work collectively with all EC programs and home visiting models to identify a standard process for tracking families' enrollment in programs to assess program participation.

- **Data security:** The governance body leads data oversight, including making sure that the process follows federal and state regulations around data collection and record retention. In addition, it ensures that appropriate procedures are in place to protect personal information. For example, home visiting and other EC programs have different rules about using and accessing data, such as whether parent consent is required. A governance body would ensure all programs' security and privacy policies are met.

- **Staff training and knowledge:** Home visiting stakeholders, including home visitors, model developers, and home visiting policymakers, may lack prior experience with ECIDS. The governance body is in charge of making sure that all individuals collecting data have appropriate training and those accessing the data are working with the correct level of information.

- **Quality control:** The governance body oversees data quality assurance, including auditing data to ensure accuracy. Having home visiting represented in governance structures would provide expertise on home visiting data to support the accurate use and interpretation of these data.

Integrating home visiting stakeholders into an ECIDS governance structure

To ensure effective integration of home visiting data into ECIDS, home visiting stakeholders should be involved at all levels of a state's data governance structure. Governance bodies can be structured in different ways, but typically have committees operating on at least two levels: an executive or policy level and the data management level. At the executive level, committee members focus on setting the overall goals of the work, developing the key questions that will guide the ECIDS, and making sure the system has adequate resources. At the data management level, committee members create policies that govern data collection and management practices.

It is important that home visiting stakeholders participate at the executive or policy level to help establish policies and determine requirements for how data are used. It is also important for home visiting stakeholders to participate at the other, lower levels of data governance, where they can provide insight into how their data are collected, stored and used; what the requirements are for data sharing; and other data management issues. For instance, at the executive or policy level, home visiting stakeholders could include a state's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting[3] (MIECHV) lead and chairs of the state's home visiting consortium or committee. At the data management level, home visiting model representatives could participate and provide input on data collection and management from the home visiting perspective.

It is also important to ensure that the perspectives of all home visiting models operating in a state are represented. For instance, some home visiting models in a state may be MIECHV-funded while others are not; similarly, some models may be operated out of a state department while local organization operate other models. Therefore, it is important to determine how to best represent the different home visiting in a state on the data governance body.

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[3] MIECHV is a federal source of funding for home visiting services from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

One way to include the perspectives of all home visiting models, especially if there are only a few models in the state, is to have a representative from each model on the governance committee. This would allow input from all home visiting models and help to ensure that ECIDS policies and practices align with data privacy and policies across the models. As part of the governance committee, model representatives can also make sure that requested data is available through all models, so that all models are represented in the data collected.

Another option, particularly for states that have many different home visiting models, is to have one member of the data governance committee representing the perspectives of all models; this individual would report back to the other home visiting stakeholders, getting their input and feedback to inform the governance committee's decision making. This individual representing the different home visiting models could be:

- **A leader from a model with a large presence in the state:** In states where one home visiting model serves the majority of families receiving home visiting services, this option ensures that the perspective of a key source of home visiting data is represented. In states with multiple home visiting models, however, this option risks developing ECIDS policies that are not compatible with models not represented on the committee.

- **The MIECHV state leader:** The MIECHV state leader may have experience with multiple MIECHV-funded models operating in a state and may be able to speak to ECIDS goals and resources that align with home visiting interests. However, due to lack of involvement in on-the-ground home visiting work, the state lead may have difficulty providing sufficient information about data collection and management practices that are compatible with home visiting models' systems.

- **The state home visiting consortium or committee lead:** In states that have a home visiting consortium or committee, the leader of this group can provide valuable information about data topics relevant to home visiting across models. However, it is important that this leader consult with the other home visiting stakeholders, understand their views and the specific requirements of their models, and communicate this information to the data governance group.

Examples of state data governance structures that include home visiting

State data governance bodies can be structured in many different ways. Most structures include stakeholders from a range of agencies and programs that families access during the early childhood years, including Head Start Collaboration Offices, school districts, and food assistance programs. The two examples below illustrate types of governance bodies to consider when developing a structure.
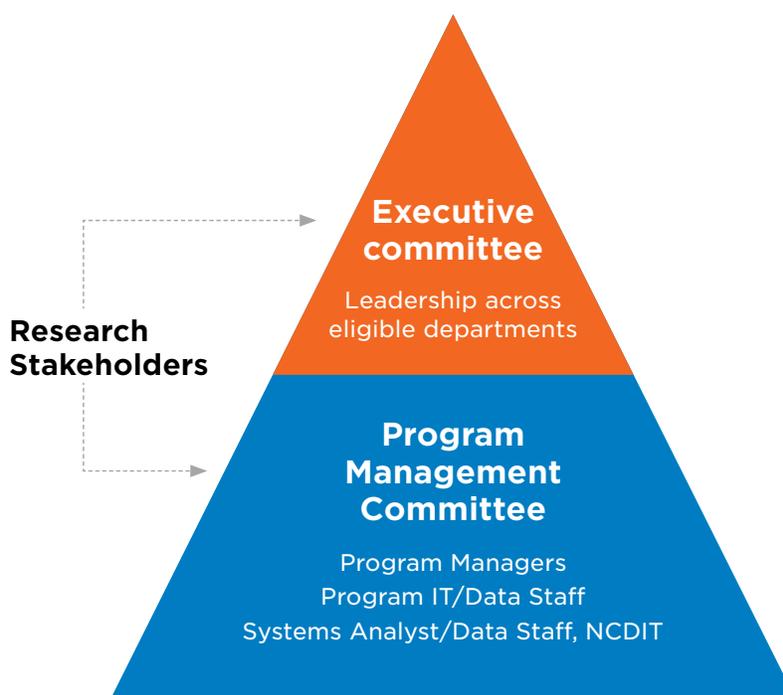
North Carolina

North Carolina's ECIDS governance structure, for example, has two levels: the executive committee and the program management committee (Figure 1). The executive committee includes agency-level leadership from state departments that contribute data to ECIDS, such as the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Public Instruction. The executive committee is responsible for setting policies related to their ECIDS and determining which programs and data to include in the system. The program management committee includes program managers and data staff for programs that are contributing data. In North Carolina, for instance, the state's Pre-K program participates in ECIDS. Since the program is housed within the state's Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), leadership from all three entities— North Carolina PreK, DCDEE, and DHHS—are eligible to be members of the

governance council on the program management committee. In addition, North Carolina has an external group of research stakeholders who provide advice and recommendations about the data system but are not members of the council.

North Carolina is in the process of integrating home visiting data into their ECIDS. To begin this effort, the state is working closely with home visiting programs funded through the Division of Public Health in DHHS. Since DHHS is already a part of ECIDS, the agency that houses home visiting already has representation at the executive level on the governance council. Similar to the way in which representatives from North Carolina Pre-K sit on the governance council with DHHS to represent the state's Pre-K program, representatives from the involved home visiting programs will eventually join the program management committee as well.
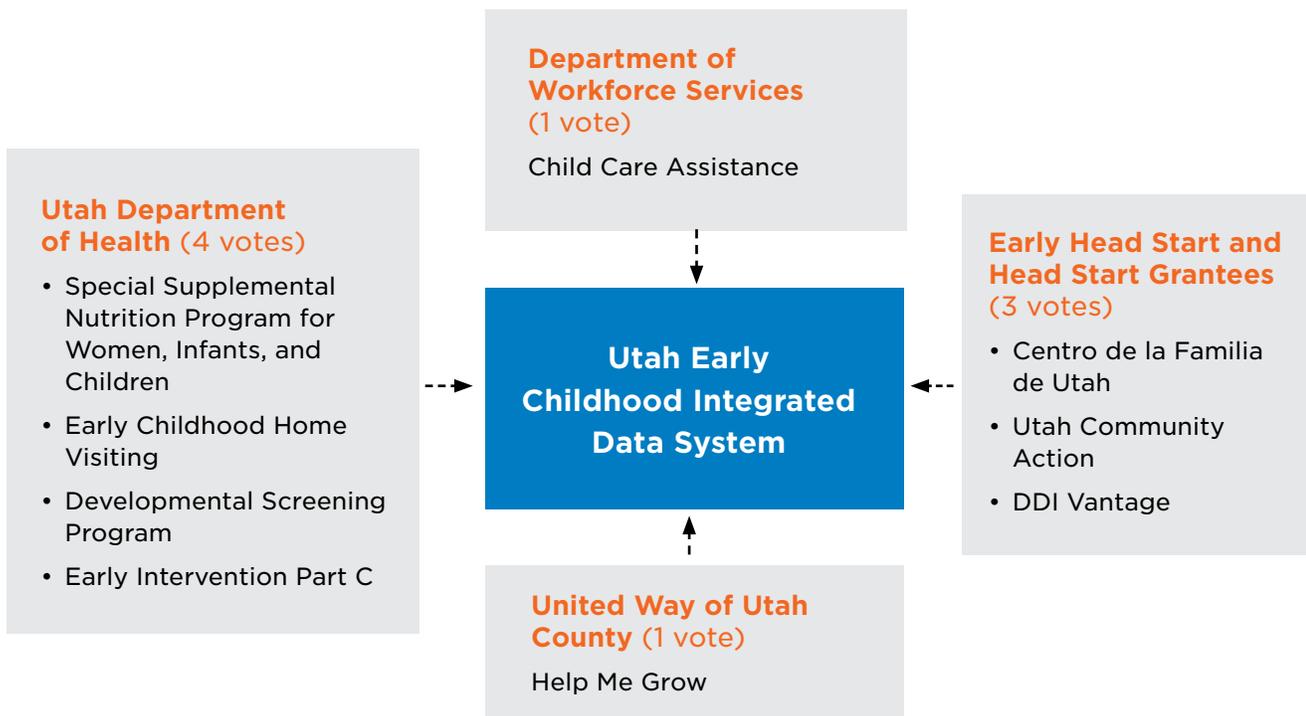
Figure 1. North Carolina ECIDS governance structure

Executive committee
Leadership across eligible departments

Research Stakeholders

Program Management Committee
Program Managers
Program IT/Data Staff
Systems Analyst/Data Staff, NCDIT

Utah
In Utah, a governance body called the ECIDS Data Policy Committee (DPC) has been developed to oversee the implementation, maintenance, and security of their ECIDS. DPC is currently managed by the ECIDS program coordinator to oversee initial development of the ECIDS. A process for electing a chair person or co-chairs to lead the DPC after implementation are specified in the governance. The members of the committee represent programs contributing data to ECIDS. Each program contributing data is given the authority to vote on decisions related to ECIDS. For example, the Utah Department of Health's Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, managed by the state's Office of Home Visiting (OHV) is a voting member on the committee because they share data with ECIDS. This structure can be revised by the committee if the number of voting members becomes unmanageable. See Figure 2 for a diagram of programs contributing data to the state's ECIDS. Utah's ECIDS governance manual outlines the rights and responsibilities of the chair and committee members

Figure 2. Utah's ECIDS Voting Members Contributing Data Sources*

Department of Workforce Services (1 vote)

Child Care Assistance

Utah Department of Health (4 votes)

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- Early Childhood Home Visiting
- Developmental Screening Program
- Early Intervention Part C

Utah Early Childhood Integrated Data System

Early Head Start and Head Start Grantees (3 votes)

- Centro de la Familia de Utah
- Utah Community Action
- DDI Vantage

United Way of Utah County (1 vote)

Help Me Grow

*The ECIDS governance structures permits the consolidation of committee votes as the number of data sources grows. Programs will always retain individual voting rights regarding decisions impacting the use of their program's data.
Source: Utah's Early Childhood Integrated Data System - Data Governance Manual (September 2019)

Recommendations for incorporating home visiting into a data governance structure

States are at different stages of ECIDS development, and the strategies they use to incorporate home visiting into ECIDS will vary depending on the status and structure of their system. The following steps are provided to guide state data integration leaders through the process of incorporating home visiting into a state data governance structure.

- **Step 1:** Determine whether a state has an existing data governance structure. [4]

    o **If a state does not have a governance structure,** identify other strategic planning and EC data integration efforts underway, such as efforts to integrate data as part of Preschool Development Birth through 5 grants or state longitudinal data systems. These may be opportunities for home visiting stakeholders to be involved in data governance planning if there is not a formal state governance body in place.

    o **If a state has a governance structure,** the next step is to investigate the structure's rules or policies for membership. These rules will guide the ways in which home visiting stakeholders can be involved in the existing structure. When home visiting representatives join the data governance body, it is important to ensure that regardless of the structure, all home visiting models operating within a state and stakeholders from various levels of program administration and implementation are able to inform data governance decisions

[4] For more information about whether a state has an existing early childhood data governance structure, see the 2018 Early Childhood Data Systems Survey interactive map accessible at https://www.childtrends.org/publications/2018-state-of-early-childhood-data-systems-interactive-map.

capacity. If the governance structure restricts membership to a small number of representatives or to representatives who hold certain roles, one approach to achieving broader home visiting stakeholder involvement is to create an advisory group that consults with the representatives.

- **Step 2:** Consult with existing home visiting consortia or committees about who should represent home visiting stakeholders in the governance structure.

  o **If a state already has a home visiting consortium or committee, the lead for this group may be the best person to serve as a representative to the governing structure.** They can offer guidance or suggest individual(s) who can serve on the governance structure.

  o **If the state does not have a home visiting consortium or committee,** state leaders will need to consult home visiting stakeholders about who would best represent home visiting interests within the governance body.

In addition to choosing individuals to serve on the data governance body, it is also important to determine how information from those representatives will be brought back to the other home visiting stakeholders to ensure everyone is informed about governance decisions and can contribute to the process.

- **Step 3:** Determine the level of decision-making authority for the home visiting representative. State home visiting administrators, home visiting model developers and executives, and program staff have different types of expertise that they can contribute as part of the governance body. Determine the level of authority that individuals involved in home visiting should have within the governance structure.

Conclusion

Including home visiting representatives in data governance structures helps facilitate the successful integration and use of home visiting data as part of a broader state-level early childhood integrated data system. With comprehensive early childhood data systems, state leaders can answer policy questions about access and outcomes for children and families during a child's earliest years. We recommend that state data integration leaders first determine whether governance structures currently exist in the state and then plan for how to involve home visiting representatives in data integration. Some states have already established data governance structures that incorporate home visiting representation. For states that are in the process of integrating home visiting data, or have not yet begun the process, these data governance structures can serve as guides.

Additional Resources

The following guides and resources include additional recommendations related to data governance that would be helpful for stakeholders leading the home visiting and early childhood data integration efforts.

- Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems Toolkit: This resource from the State Longitudinal Data Systems State Support Team offers a planning guide and template for developing data governance policies specific to early childhood systems.

- Integrated Data Systems Governance: Setting Up for Ethical and Effective Use: This resource from the University of Pennsylvania's Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy initiative provides guidance on developing integrated data systems across all governance programs.

- How Policymakers Can Support Early Childhood Data Governance: The resource from the Early Childhood Data Collaborative shares recommended action steps for policymakers to support early childhood data governance.