

Engaging Stakeholders in Home Visiting Data Integration Efforts

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Introduction

Home visiting is an important component of the early childhood (EC) landscape,¹ but home visiting data are often not part of the larger early childhood data integration efforts that states undertake. Building support for home visiting data integration and coordinating efforts across sectors, systems, and programs require the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

This resource presents an approach for engaging a diverse group of stakeholders—from families to home visiting model developers to researchers and legislators—when creating a process to integrate home visiting data with other early childhood data. It describes steps for:

1. Identifying relevant stakeholders.
2. Determining the types of information to share with and solicit from stakeholders.
3. Choosing when to engage stakeholders in the process.

This resource will be particularly valuable to those who lead efforts to connect home visiting data with other early childhood data. These data integration leaders may be state-level data managers or individuals who have taken the ownership of linking data across early childhood programs.

Stakeholder engagement is essential to successfully build integrated data systems. Leaders should engage stakeholders early in the process and maintain their engagement throughout in order to:

- Foster a sense of inclusion by keeping stakeholders informed as the system changes.
- Build support and knowledge by broadening the range of individuals and organizations familiar with the system.
- Inform stakeholders of the goals of the work, which can facilitate communication and help to ensure the data collected meet the needs of the system.
- Give stakeholders the opportunity to inform the goals and direction of the system.
- Allow for a diversity of perspectives so that the system meets the needs of multiple users.

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.



¹ Early childhood is the time of child development from prenatal through age 8, with most programs targeting children from birth to age 5. The early childhood system is a set of policies, approaches, and services that are delivered through existing systems, such as education (e.g., pre-K), health care (e.g., immunization), or social services (e.g., subsidies to offset the cost of child care).

Step 1. Identify key stakeholders for data integration.

For data integration leaders, the first step toward engaging stakeholders in data integration efforts is to identify the specific individuals and organizations that have various roles as stakeholders. With respect to integration of home visiting data into ECIDS, there are three stakeholder roles:

- **Data providers:** Individuals providing data that will be integrated
- **Data collectors and managers:** Individuals and organizations collecting, managing, storing, and overseeing integrated data
- **Data users:** Individuals and organizations that will use the data for program, research, or policy purposes

An individual or organization may have multiple roles, and their role(s) may also change over time. For example, a home visiting program that collects data on their participants to include in the integrated system would be considered a data collector and manager. The program may also use the data from an integrated system to understand the landscape of home visiting services operating in their area to inform improvements to their program or to tailor outreach to target populations, making them also data users. To identify key home visiting stakeholders that may have one or more of these roles, data integration leaders should consider the following questions²:

- Who is regularly involved in discussions about home visiting in the state? Who is involved in discussions about data collection, management, and security?
- Who is affected by home visiting but is not usually involved in discussions about it? For example, is there interest in home visiting data integration among school administrators or health providers serving individuals who receive home visiting services? Does the integration of home visiting data reflect the perspectives of families, as data providers?
- Where might data integration leaders learn about stakeholders that have not been previously engaged?
- Do the stakeholders represent the diversity of the home visiting field (in terms of their roles, experiences, cultural identities, geographic locations, etc.)?
- Do the stakeholders represent people at all levels of home visiting (i.e., from those who provide or receive services to those who oversee home visiting systems)?

The table below provides examples of the roles that different stakeholders may play in data integration.

Role	Potential Stakeholders
Data providers	Caregivers may provide data on the outcomes they achieve while participating in home visiting. They may also provide data on the outcomes their children or family experiences. Home visitors may provide data on the activities they are conducting with families, the number of visits they conduct, and other program factors.
Data collectors and managers	Parents may collect data on their children's development, participation in activities, and other indicators of home visiting program progress. Home visitors collect data from the families they work with. Home visiting model developers and program managers manage the data collected by home visitors.

² https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR_Stakeholder_Engagement_Stakeholder_Mapping.final.pdf

Role	Potential Stakeholders
Data users	Model developers may use data to understand outcomes within their program and to understand the broader landscape of home visiting interventions in the region in which they work. Leaders in other early childhood sectors may use data to understand the services that families they work with may be receiving and better coordinate services. Researchers use data to explore questions at the local, state, and national level across early childhood sectors. Legislators and policymakers may use data to examine overlap in services, large-scale family outcomes, and other topics that can help them prioritize funding effectively and efficiently.

Step 2. Determine what information to share with and solicit from each group of stakeholders.

Data integration leaders' next step is to determine what type of information could be shared with each stakeholder group. Stakeholders need to understand the goals of the data integration, as well as the benefits and challenges the effort might lead to for themselves or their organization. This understanding will help build stakeholders' support for building the system and for continued maintenance and collection of data. Additional information that stakeholders need to know varies depending on their role in relation to the integration system and their level of involvement in shaping it. The questions below are not exhaustive but provide a starting point for thinking through important topics to communicate with stakeholders in different roles.

Data providers

Data providers may be interested in knowing what privacy protections they and their data will receive, as well as what access they will have to the data, such as to reports created using the data after it has been collected. In addition, they may want to know whether they will have a role in determining how the data will be used, and if so, what that role will entail. The following questions are important to consider when engaging data providers:

- **Data protection:** Who will have access to the data? What types of identifying information (e.g., zip codes, household income) will be accessible? How will data be secured?
- **Data provider access:** Will data providers be able to access the data collected (e.g., via a public online database, via a private database)? Will the data be used to create public reports that data providers can access?
- **Data provider roles:** Will data providers give input on how the data are used (e.g., participating in advisory groups, attending public meetings to discuss reports)? In what format and how often will their feedback be collected?

Data collectors and managers

Data collectors and managers may be most interested in understanding how the data and systems they oversee will fit into the data integration process. For example, they may want to learn how data integration may affect their day-to-day functions, such as gathering data or obtaining consent. They may also want to know whether and how state leaders plan to involve them in ongoing data integration work. The following questions are important to consider when engaging data collectors and managers:

- **Informed consent:** Who will be consenting to provide data (e.g., caregivers, children, programs, or models)? What barriers might data collectors encounter when asking for consent (e.g., language barriers, challenges explaining terminology in plain language)? What power dynamics may influence whether families feel they have the option not to consent (e.g., social or community dynamics, fear of institutions)? What training is required to ensure informed consent?
- **Collecting high-quality data:** Do current data collection systems align with the database that will be created for integrated data? How might data need to be modified or standardized to facilitate data integration? What training might data collectors need to successfully collect high-quality data?
- **Data collector and manager roles:** Will data collectors and managers be consulted about how to address challenges to data collection or management? Will they have the opportunity to provide input on the data collection process to inform modifications?

Data users

Data users may be most interested in learning about the types of data and reports that may be available once data are integrated. While some data users may already know how they want to use the data, others may not know. Consequently, it is important to share information about how different data user stakeholder groups may benefit from using integrated data so that they can consider how they want to engage with the process. Sharing information about how data users can advocate for or support integration can be useful for creating support within a community, especially if data can be provided to communities served by home visiting. The following questions are important to consider when engaging data users:

- **Data use:** What type of data will be available and how will it be linked? Will data users have access to a codebook or data dictionary of integrated data along with a manual for how to use the integrated data?
- **Supporting data integration:** How can data from the integration process be leveraged to build support for home visiting or other early childhood programs? How can the data inform or support different stakeholders' priorities and activities (e.g., researchers, state officials, policymakers, early childhood practitioners)?
- **Giving back to the community:** How can the integrated data lead to actionable steps to improve the community? How might integrated data inform services that data users provide to communities? For data users who typically have few interactions with communities (e.g., researchers, policymakers), how might the data facilitate their ability to connect with communities in new or deeper ways?
- **Data user roles:** How can the expertise provided by data users be leveraged to inform the data integration process? Do the data users engaged in the process represent a variety of roles (e.g., researchers, families, legislators, program administrators, or advocates)?

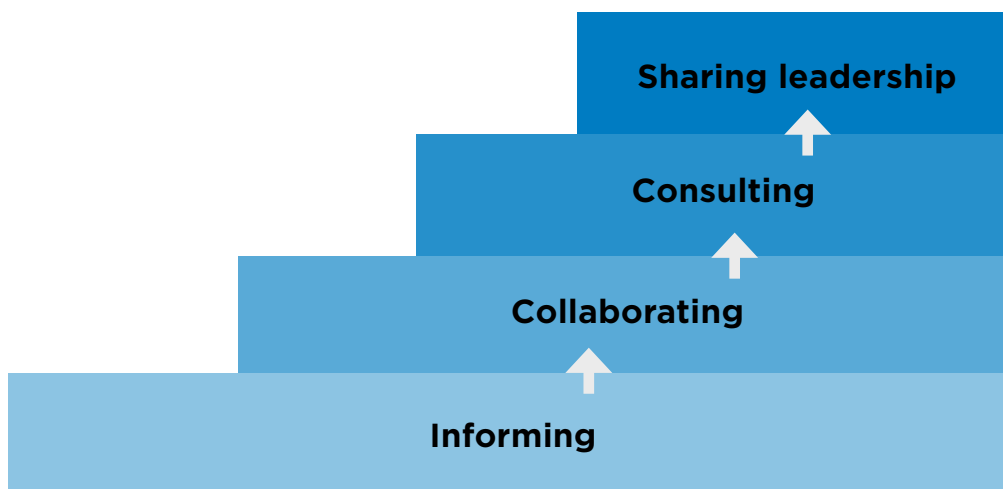
Methods for sharing and soliciting information will vary depending on who the stakeholders are and what role(s) they are playing as part of the data integration effort. In addition, it is important to identify the most appropriate data users to connect with and deliver information to stakeholders. For example, home visitors would likely be the best people to directly talk with home visiting participants about data integration and to ask for consent to use their data. On the other hand, agency leaders may be the best people to share information about the data integration effort with other early childhood leaders, such as in the areas of health and education, because of their experience in working with programs across systems.

Step 3. Choose how to engage stakeholders in the data integration process.

After identifying key stakeholders and the types of information to share with or solicit from them, data integration leaders should determine how to engage stakeholders in the data integration process, recognizing that stakeholders may differ in what they can contribute to the process. For example, some stakeholders may be able to offer valuable guidance about how data can be shared, whereas others may have greater insight into the best uses of data with the populations that can benefit most from integrated data. Therefore, individuals and organizations may take different roles in the data integration process or participate at different stages of the process.

Figure 1 illustrates four levels at which stakeholders may engage in the data integration process: informing, consulting, collaborating, and sharing leadership. The number of stakeholders involved in the process will vary according to their level of engagement, with the largest group of stakeholders being informed about data integration and the smallest group sharing leadership of the system.

Figure 1. Stakeholders' levels of engagement in the data integration process



Source. The above figure has been informed and developed based on stakeholder engagement recommendations from the Home Visiting Applied Research Collaborative. (2018). *The Importance of Participatory Approaches in Precision Home Visiting Research*. Baltimore, MD: Child Trends and James Bell Associates. Retrieved from: <https://www.hvresearch.org/precision-home-visiting/participatory-approaches/>

Informing

It is important for leaders to keep all stakeholders informed throughout the data integration process. For instance, leaders should ensure that stakeholders understand the goals of the data integration process and are aware of any major changes or updates. Data integration leaders will be most successful in building stakeholder support if they engage stakeholders at the beginning and then inform them regularly throughout the process, so that individuals, programs, and communities stay informed of changes or decisions that will affect the way data are collected, managed, and used. Leaders may choose to send email newsletters, provide updates via social media, share information at targeted meetings about the process, or present at conferences and meetings.

Consulting

To promote continuous system improvement, data integration leaders may consider consulting with a group of data providers, data collectors and managers, and data users to gather their feedback about what works well and what can be improved. From the group of informed stakeholders, leaders may collect information or feedback from these stakeholders about how the data integration process is going. By collecting feedback at regular intervals, data integration leaders can implement changes that improve the accessibility and utility of the system. Leaders can take one of two different approaches to consulting stakeholders or use a combination of approaches. In the first approach, data integration leaders identify a group of stakeholders they will consult at regular intervals to gather feedback on changes over time. Alternatively, leaders consult different groups of stakeholders at different points in time to ensure that they capture the perspectives of a broad group of individuals and programs that interact with the system; these stakeholders may be invited to participate when pertinent topics or issues arise in the data integration process. Typically, meetings—whether they happen in person or virtually—are most effective for consulting with stakeholders because the format allows for discussion and collaboration. Other approaches include focus groups, surveys, or individual conversations.

Collaborating

Data integration leaders may ask an even smaller subset of stakeholders to collaborate with them to shape each step of the data integration process, from project planning through completion, as equal partners. Stakeholders at this level of engagement would be expected to have a dedicated role in the process as well as a larger say in decision-making. Stakeholders who collaborate with data integration leaders on the full process of developing and running the data system will have a more intensive role in the system than those who are involved only at the informing and consulting levels of engagement. Therefore, these individuals should have the capacity to dedicate time to the process, as well as an understanding of the system and how it works. It is likely that these stakeholders will be convened or asked to collaborate on a frequent and regular basis, such as in monthly or quarterly meetings.

Sharing leadership

Finally, data integration leaders may choose a select group of stakeholders, who represent individuals, programs, and communities involved with or affected by the data, to play a role in governing the system. These stakeholders may be responsible for setting policies, making decisions about how and when data are used, and determining which data are integrated within the system. They may serve on a governance entity specifically around the use of integrated data.³

Stakeholders who share leadership of the data integration process may be expected to have more expertise than those who are involved at the collaborating level because these individuals govern, monitor, and oversee the system. Partners at this level of engagement are expected to have to or develop an understanding of data governance and privacy issues. At the start of the integration process, they may participate in weekly or monthly meetings. Once the system is developed, and governing is primarily focused on maintenance, stakeholders who share leadership should still meet regularly, but their meetings may occur on a monthly basis.

³ For more information about establishing data governance structures with home visiting stakeholders, see *Including Home Visiting Programs in Data Governance Bodies* available at childtrends.org/shine-initiative.

Conclusion

Support and input from a variety of stakeholders is critical for the successful integration of home visiting data with other early childhood data. The first step toward engaging stakeholders in data integration efforts is to identify key stakeholders and inform them about the goals of data integration, solicit information from them to learn how to best meet their needs, and describe their role in the integrated data system and how the system might benefit their work. Data integration leaders can successfully involve stakeholders in the process by selecting the appropriate stakeholders to engage, communicating important information to them, and staying engaged with them on an ongoing basis.

Stakeholders can be involved in this process in one or more of the following roles: data providers, data collectors and managers, and data users. It is important to think beyond the individuals and organizations who are usually at the table for home visiting discussions and decisions when identifying who should be informed about data integration efforts, which may require intentional and extra effort on the part of data integration leaders. For information on crafting messages to reach stakeholders with different roles and priorities, see the additional resources section below.

- **Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems (ECIDS) Toolkit: Stakeholder Engagement:** The State Longitudinal Data System team developed a toolkit to support the development of an ECIDS, which includes a section on stakeholder engagement. This resource can be adapted for engaging home visiting stakeholders and includes self-assessments, planning guides, communication plans, and other guidance that may be important for successful stakeholder engagement.
- **Stakeholder communication:** The University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development's [Community Toolbox](#) (Chapter 6) provides information about creating a communication plan, including identifying the best methods for communicating with different groups and crafting successful messaging.
- **Key questions for stakeholders:** The Early Childhood Data Collaborative's [graphic outlining key questions](#) that can be answered by integrated data for different stakeholder groups can be helpful for determining what types of information to share about the benefits of the system.
- **Informed consent:** The International Rescue Committee's research toolkit, [Obtaining Meaningful Informed Consent](#), outlines barriers to informed consent, methods for overcoming these barriers, and methods for minimizing coercion.