

## CT Early Childhood Data Systems: March 2009 Progress Report<sup>1</sup>

### Data Development, Interoperability and Reporting

#### Review of Data Systems and Recommendations for Action in 2009

Utilizing resources allocated by the Early Childhood Education Cabinet for data development, the Office of the Cabinet engaged the Public Consulting Group to assist in evaluating our early childhood data development progress, identifying our challenges, modifying our course, and measuring our results. As a part of this review, PCG identified seven systemic early childhood data challenges.

1. Many agency data systems contain information about children and families receiving service, but these data systems do not interface.
2. There is no single, common, unique identifier to easily connect child/consumer data from multiple data systems (e.g., SDE uses a SASID for K-12 students and some preschool children; DSS and DPH employ a Medicaid number, and DPH, DOL and DCF use a SSN).
3. Agencies have implemented some agreements to promote data sharing, but these agreements are generally unknown to staff within the agencies and do not exist in the public domain, limiting their effectiveness to promote data reporting and sharing.
4. Strict data ownership policies within CT agencies impact negatively on the ability of other agencies to access information.
5. Agencies and programs may not collect data with sufficient detail to link information on children with information on their families.
6. Paper-based data collection and the slow process involved in data sharing impedes timely data analysis, reporting and outcomes measurement.
7. While many agencies related to early childhood now utilize the RBA framework to describe their programs, many indicators and measures are not consistent across within and across programs.<sup>2</sup>

The Public Consulting Group also made six recommendations for improving the state's early childhood data development, interoperability and reporting processes:

1. Enter all data sharing agreements into the public domain and maintain a copy of all agreements centrally
2. Develop a unique identifier for early childhood clients and for programs serving them
3. Examine individual agency data systems to determine how additional elements may be added or how links may be made to connect data on families
4. Implement a statewide policy to promote the sharing of data to improve service delivery, program evaluation and budgeting
5. Examine data collection, maintenance and system support staffing to determine if additional resources are necessary or additional coordination is possible in order to support enhanced data sharing efforts
6. Develop common indicators and measures to be used by the RBA process in order to compare the efficacy of one program with another.

#### Data Sharing Development and Data Sharing Agreements

The Public Consulting Group also acquired, reviewed and charted more 47 cross-agency memoranda related to data sharing, service integration and administration/reporting. Twenty four (24) of these agreements contain information

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<sup>1</sup> This summary was prepared by Dr. Janice Gruendel, Co-Chair of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, March 9, 2009

<sup>2</sup> A series of reports resulting from this yearlong period of analysis by the Public Consulting Group is online at – [www.ctearlychildhood.org](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org). Click on "Being Accountable for Results" and then on "Data Matters."

that will be helpful to the Cabinet’s accountability and data work as we move forward, and the following agreements are of primary importance in building a longitudinal data system that begins in the early years of children’s lives:

- **State Department of Education – Department of Labor:** In this MOU, the K-12 education department designated the labor department as an “authorized representative” of SDE for purposes of obtaining and reporting information on the placement and retention of students in employment. This is a good example of working through perceived FERPA challenges at between the K-12 data system and the DOL.
- **CT Project LAUNCH MOA:** In this 2008 MOU, six key Early Childhood Education Cabinet agencies agree to provide individualized data to support case management and performance monitoring.
- **State Department of Education – Department of Developmental Services:** This agreement lays the foundation for the development and implementation of a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary and interagency program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. SDE unique child identifiers are assigned to children enrolled in the DSS Birth to Three program upon acceptance.

### Early Childhood Information System (ECIS)

The Office of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, with consultation from the Charter Oak Group, state agency partners, and the national Data Quality Campaign,<sup>3</sup> is working to design and implement a Connecticut Early Childhood Information System (ECIS). The new ECIS system is based on the Early Childhood Professional Registry and on unique child and program identifiers. Progress on each of these components is summarized below. Only when the three components are functional will we be able to answer questions from policymakers about how program and workforce investments are related to early childhood outcomes.

**Early Childhood Professional Registry.** The Cabinet, with the Department of Social Services and other state agencies, provides fiscal and consultant support to the evolving Early Childhood Registry administered by CT Charts–A–Course within the Community College system. This cross-agency relationship has been codified through a Memorandum of Understanding. Five other state agencies are also partners in the development of this data system: the Departments of Children and Families, Education, Higher Education, Public Health, and Social Services. Over the past fiscal year, the Registry gathered data on over 4,000 employees in the early care and education sector with an initial focus on those working staff in state-supported preschool programs. Cabinet resources for the ECE Workforce Data Registry were included in the Cabinet’s SFY 10 budget proposals; however, the Biennial Budget now under consideration eliminates all Cabinet data funding. As sample of data, finally available, follows:

| Staff Qualifications              | Teachers           |         | Assistant Teachers |         |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
|                                   | Number             | Percent | Number             | Percent |
| BA or beyond, plus 12 ECE credits | 378                | 31%     | 79                 | 6%      |
| AS + 12 ECE credits               | 307                | 25%     | 89                 | 7%      |
| CDA + 12 ECE credits              | 212                | 17%     | 149                | 12%     |
| Less than a CDA + 12              | 338                | 27%     | 935                | 75%     |
| Totals                            | 1,235 <sup>4</sup> | 100%    | 1,252              | 100%    |

<sup>3</sup> The Data Quality Campaign has led national and state-by-state development of K-12 longitudinal data system development. The Campaign has now begun to identify potential state partners for expansion of this work into the early childhood years. Online at – [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org). See a profile of CT’s K-12 data status at -- //dataqualitycampaign.org/survey\_results/state.cfm?st=Connecticut

Additional Cabinet SFY 09 resources have been allocated to Charts-A-Course to develop as part of the Professional Registry a component that includes early childhood consultants. Completion of this work will enable local early education and care programs to gain access to a network of health, mental health and education consultants (as well as those in other clinical areas such as speech, hearing and vision). Development of this database of consultations was one of the Cabinet's early and top priority action items.<sup>5</sup>

***Unique Child Identifiers.*** Meetings have been held with the Department of Public Health to explore the assignment of a unique child identifier at or shortly after birth, as part of the agency's vital records or immunization reporting process. In addition, meetings are underway with the State Department of Education which already assigns a unique "student identifier" (the SASID) to all children entering kindergarten in the public schools. SDE is also assigning a SASID to preschoolers enrolled in state-supported early education center-based programs through the School Readiness Program and the Department of Social Services' child care contract centers. At the present time, there are 27,000 preschool children with SASIDS recorded in an SDE Pre-Kindergarten Information System (PKIS) and the SDE Public School Information System (PSIS). These represent, for the first time ever, an unduplicated count, with data available by town.

We have learned that the cost of having the State Department of Education assign a SASID for additional children (as in children at birth) would be nominal, since the program for generating random SASID numbers is already in place.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the Department of Developmental Services already assigns a SASID to each child enrolled in its Birth to Three Program. This Program serves young children with developmental delays and disabilities. We are currently exploring both the challenges and opportunities of an expanded SDE SASID-based system of assigning unique child identifiers to children at much earlier ages, especially with regard to the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).<sup>7</sup>

***ECE Unique Program Identifiers.*** The cross-agency Workforce Registry working group has agreed to pursue development of a unique program identifier for early care and education programs funded or supported by state agencies. Participating agencies -- the State Department of Education, Department of Higher Education, Department of Social Services and Department of Public Health -- have ruled themselves out of consideration as the data host and developer for ECE unique program identifiers, although each has committed to assist the development process. The group determined that the United Way of Connecticut was the most favorable entity for development and hosting the system of ECE program data identifiers, based on the massive program database already constructed as part of Connecticut's 2-1-1 system.

Work is currently underway with the United Way to outline and begin a development process, utilizing initial resources from the Cabinet's SFY 09 budget. Ongoing technical assistance is being provided by the Cabinet's RBA consultant, the Charter Oak Group, by the cross-agency ECE Workforce Registry working group, and by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC). Fiscal support has been allocated from SFY 09 Cabinet funds; however, cuts to the Cabinet's data development budget for SFY 10 and SFY 11 may result a significant delay in development of this core ECIS component.

### ***SDE Kindergarten 2006-07 Data Bulletin***

This Bulletin<sup>8</sup> presents a one-time analysis of demographic, family and kindergarten data for the statewide public school kindergarten class of 2007. The data are presented by District Reference Groups (DRGs). Much of the data was obtained from the SDE Public School Information System (PSIS) and the Department of Children and Families

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on the consultation database, contact – [joyce.staples@ct.gov](mailto:joyce.staples@ct.gov)

<sup>6</sup> Written communication from the SDE Chief Fiscal Officer, Fall 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Online at -- [www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html)

<sup>8</sup> Online at -- [www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/databulletins/db\\_kindergarten\\_11\\_07.pdf](http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/databulletins/db_kindergarten_11_07.pdf)

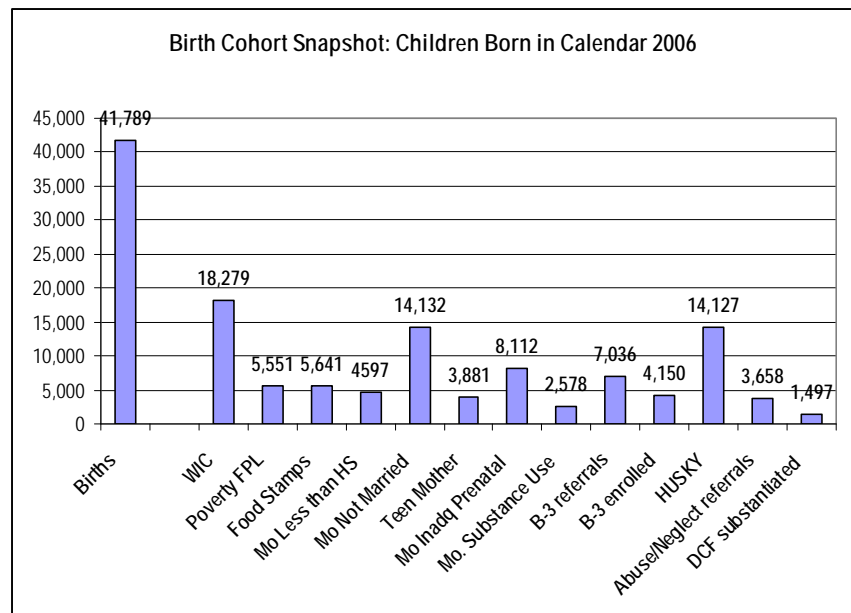
Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). Data elements include reports of abuse or neglect, town of residence, minority enrollment, student mobility, poverty, birth weight, English language learners, public pre-kindergarten enrollment, behavioral incidents, absenteeism, language spoken, literacy, numeracy, and motor skills. Many of these data elements are the same risk indicators highlighted in the Cabinet's *Ready by Five and Fine by Nine* report and associated with poor outcomes later in life.

### Initial Data on Cabinet's First Cohort: Babies Born in 2006

Working closely with the Departments of Public Health, Social Services and Children and Families, the Public Consulting Group assembled data on risk factors associated with the Cabinet's first birth cohort, babies born in 2006.

Of the 41,789 babies born in Connecticut in 2006, 44% were born into families living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, a proportion much higher than would be expected utilizing similar economic data collected in elementary school through enrollment in the federal Free and Reduced Price Meals Program.

These data, while concerning in their own right, highlight several key data challenges facing us: (a) the inability to identify how many of these children have multiple risks; and (b) the inability to track unique children prior to kindergarten at which time they are assigned a unique student identifier.



Because we do not yet have a unique identifier for all of these children, we are unable to determine an unduplicated count of at risk children in the Cabinet's first birth cohort, nor can we yet report on how many of these infants and toddlers experience multiple risks placing them at risk of "toxic stress" as described by the Harvard Center on the Developing Child.