



Tip Sheet

## Tips for Transforming Early Childhood Data into Insights for Advocacy and Engagement

### Synopsis

The following tip sheet provides information for state policymakers to consider when developing or enhancing data tools that transform data into insights and compelling stories that can move stakeholders to act to improve the early childhood options available to young children. It identifies key stakeholder groups and their likely data needs, provides a summary of data insight tools and types of data, highlights important design considerations and provides examples of data insight tools already in practice.

### Context

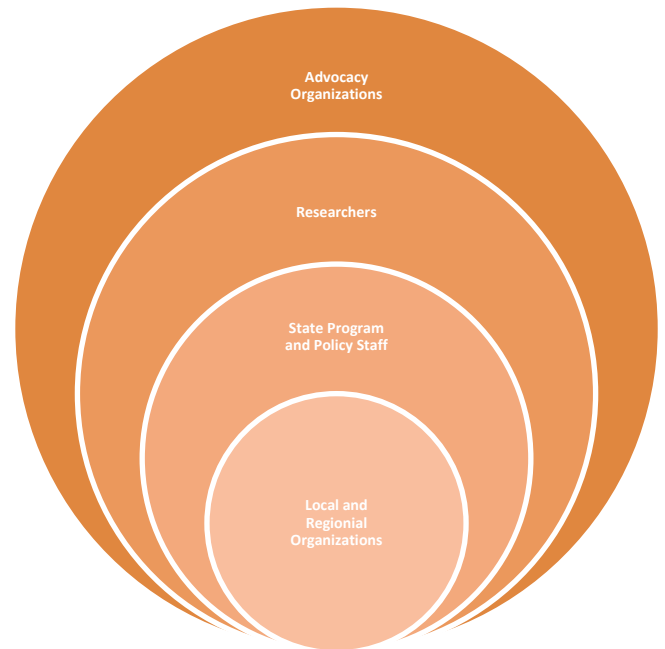
States have made significant progress in the past decade in developing early childhood data systems that integrate data on children and programs across multiple programs and agencies. As a result, states now have the opportunity to leverage the data through different tools (ranging from interactive public websites to internal team-based data dashboards) to bring insights to different stakeholders and help them create narratives that command attention and direct decisions that will improve early childhood options for families. Different strategies and tools can be used for different stakeholders to inform policymaking, to bolster advocacy efforts, to expand access to high-quality care, to monitor and strengthen program quality, increase accountability and encourage collaboration.



## Key Stakeholders to Consider

The design of early childhood data insight tools should be driven by the needs of the stakeholders that will be using them. Key stakeholders and their data needs may include:

- Local and Regional Organizations** – Local and regional organizations – e.g., early learning hubs, community engagement agencies, quality improvement consultants, etc. - that are responsible for supporting local early childhood programs may benefit from access to a **Shared Early Childhood Insights Dashboard** that provides data for their region (e.g., county or selection of specific census tracts) that includes the types of data identified in Table 1 to support various types of collaborations, including those related to identifying and reducing child care supply deserts, improving early childhood program quality, and improving school readiness.
- State Program and Policy Staff** - State program and policy staff may benefit from access to an **Internal Early Childhood Insights Dashboard** – with ability to share limited access with local and regional organizations - that includes the data identified in Table 1 to support policymaking, program improvement efforts, resource allocation and collaborations with local and regional organizations that support early childhood programs. The staff also need to have the ability to produce and share reports that are requested by researchers.
- Researchers** – Researchers may benefit from access to an **Interactive Early Childhood Insights Public Website** (with information that can be downloaded in tabular format) that provides the basic demographic information identified in Table 1 about the early childhood programs and the children and families that they serve at the state level, county level and census tract level. They may also benefit from the ability to submit requests for non-public data that are maintained in the Internal Early Childhood Insights Dashboard.
- Advocacy Organizations** – Advocacy organizations and the general public may benefit from access to an **Interactive Early Childhood Insights Public Website** (with quick facts and simple infographics that can be downloaded and shared broadly) that provides basic demographic information identified in Table 1 about the early childhood programs and the children and families that they serve at the state level, county level and census tract level.



## Types of Data Insight Tools and Examples of the Types of Data Included

The types of data insight tools developed and the types of data included should be driven by the stakeholder needs and intended purpose of the tools. Examples include:

**Table 1. Types of Data Insight Tools and Examples of the Types of Data Included**

	Internal Insights Dashboard	Shared Insights Dashboard	Public Insights Website
<b>Access</b>	Limited access for state policymakers and program staff	Shared and used broadly within a team or external partners – e.g., early learning hubs, community engagement agencies, quality improvement consultants, etc. - but not publicly available	Open to anyone inside or outside of an organization to access, use and share. Ideally with interactive features.
<b>Types of Data Included</b>	Populations statistics, progress toward meeting internal performance indicators – e.g., to track technical assistance provided, child care placements that meet parent needs, school readiness, etc. - and exploratory data to help spot trends	Populations statistics, progress toward meeting internal performance indicators – e.g., to track technical assistance provided, child care placements that meet parent needs, school readiness, etc. - and exploratory data to help spot trends	Population statistics, progress toward public targets – e.g., school readiness targets, providers at higher quality levels, etc. - aggregated social or economic data
<b>Purpose</b>	To support policymaking, program improvement efforts, resource allocation and collaborations with local and regional organizations that support early childhood programs. The staff also need to have the ability to produce and share reports that are requested by researchers.	To support various types of collaborations, including those related to identifying and reducing child care supply deserts, improving early childhood program quality, and improving school readiness.	To provide the general public, including advocacy groups and researchers, with basic demographic information identified about the early childhood programs and the children and families that they serve at the state level, county level and census tract level.

## Key Development and Design Considerations

The following are key considerations to keep in mind with developing or enhancing data insight tools:

- **Engage key stakeholders** up front and throughout the design process
- **Keep an open mind about potential users** and build to accommodate different user needs
- **Align with systems-change efforts** and other strategic initiatives
- **Start small and expand** to pull in more data over time
- **Use filters and other user design features** that make it easier for different stakeholders to view just the data that they need
- **Design to allow users to download data in the way that's most useful** – e.g., maps, tables, PDF and infographics that are organized around specific advocacy stories
- **Make it easy to share** with others
- **Design with sustainability** in mind

## Examples of Early Childhood Insight Dashboards and Websites

The following are examples of early childhood insight dashboards and websites at the national, state and local levels:

- [Center for American Progress Child Care Deserts Analysis](#) – Offers information on the supply and demand for child care and identifies “child care deserts” by state and zip code.
- [Children at Risk Child Care Desert Map for Texas](#) - Offers an interactive map that shows four different types of child care deserts, including program capacity deserts, subsidized child care deserts and program quality deserts.
- [Pennsylvania Early Learning Dashboard](#) – Offers a variety of information on the supply and performance of early learning programs that can be tailored by the user to provide information most relevant to specific stakeholders – e.g., business leaders, families, school districts – and for different geographic levels – e.g., state, county, legislative district.
- [King County Data Roadmap Project](#) – A community-wide effort to drive dramatic improvement in student achievement from cradle to college and career in South King County and South Seattle. Includes data metrics for children birth through grade 12 and beyond.
- [Santa Fe Early Childhood Dashboard](#) – Offers information on specific early childhood outcomes and indicators, including indicators related to births, health and nutrition, school readiness and program quality.

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### About the Author



**Kenley Branscome** is a consultant with ICF who specializes in working with public sector agencies and advocacy organizations at the state and national level to manage strategic, data-driven early childhood initiatives. Have directed or conducted numerous early childhood related studies and led initiatives to integrate state-level early childhood data systems across multiple programs and funding streams. Have facilitated or presented in more than 50 national conference sessions and webinars. Current and past clients include the U.S. Office of Child Care, U.S. Department of Labor, Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center, Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance, Louisiana Department of Education, California Department of Education, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Michigan Early Childhood Investment Corporation, Minnesota Department of Human Services, National Child Care Information Center and National Council on Teacher Quality.

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