



## Early Childhood Data Governance in Action! An Introduction

Recognizing that social and academic success is shaped long before students enter the elementary school classroom, states are working to increase access to high-quality early childhood programs. Supporting that work, Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems (ECIDS) allow agencies and programs to efficiently collect and use robust information about state and local early childhood programs, workforce, and child outcomes. As states work to integrate information across these programs—including state preschool programs, Head Start and Early Head Start, Early Intervention, Preschool Special Education, and private programs—data governance is critical to success.

Data governance provides a means to establish a common vision for early childhood data use in the state, with key policy and program decisions supporting that vision. Further, when data governance is effectively established, the quality and security of data collected, reported, and used by early childhood programs and agencies is enhanced; staff burden is reduced; and communication, collaboration, and relationships across the various agencies, programs, and information technology (IT) staff is improved.

This introduction defines data governance for an ECIDS, identifies who should be involved in it, and describes their roles and responsibilities. It is intended to support states in beginning the process of developing their early childhood data governance.

### What Is Data Governance?

Data governance is the means by which organizations or groups of organizations make decisions about their collective information assets. It is both an organizational process and a structure. Data governance establishes responsibility for data, organizing program area staff to collaboratively and continuously improve data quality through the systematic creation and enforcement of policies, roles, responsibilities, and procedures.

Whether supporting one or multiple sectors, an effective data governance model is founded on the following central principles:

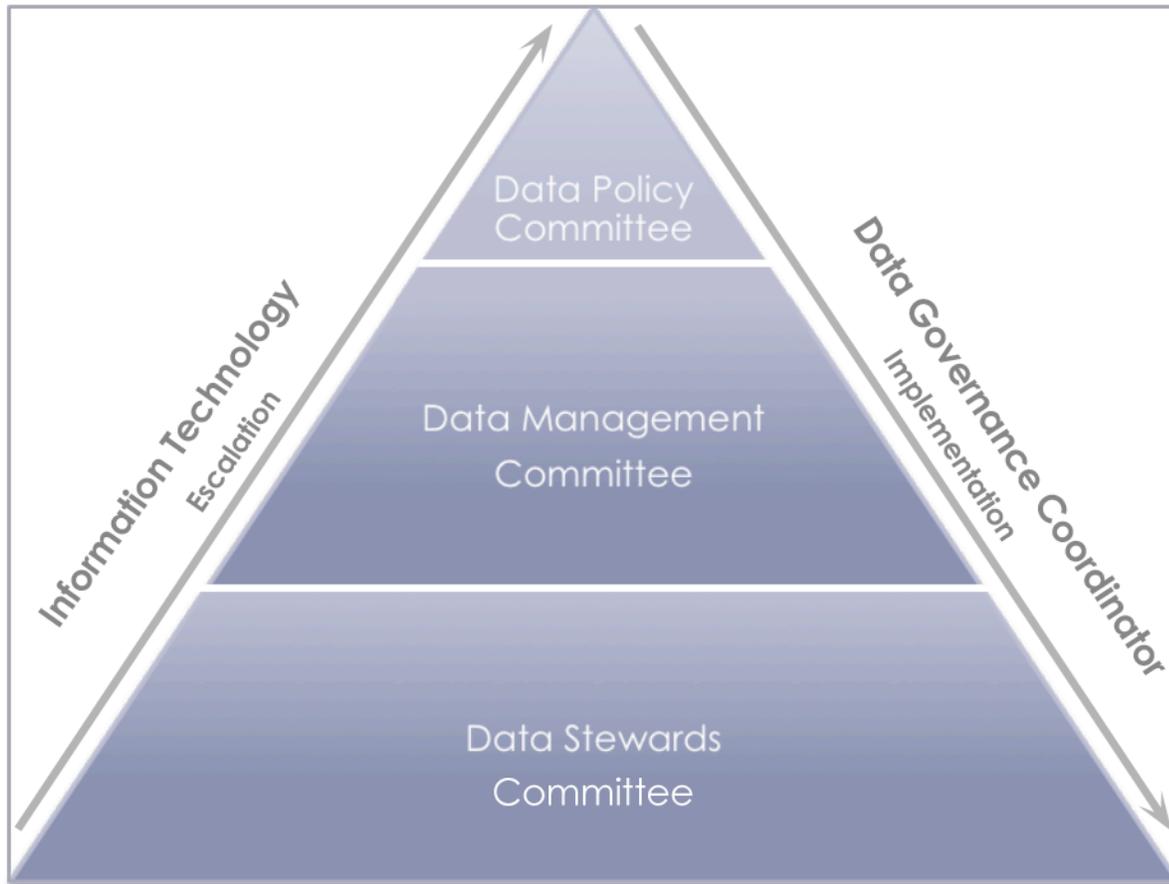
- **Coordination:** All agencies and programs contributing early childhood information to the system are represented at the leadership and implementation levels.
- **Responsibility:** Program areas, IT, and leadership hold distinct roles and decisionmaking authority, and clear relationships exist among their roles. The agencies and programs contributing data to the system are responsible for the data; data governance is not an IT initiative.
- **Consistency:** The agencies and programs establish common data definitions, business rules, and processes for managing the ECIDS data.
- **Leadership:** The data governance effort is facilitated by an inter-agency or program data governance coordinator.

Early childhood *program* governance and *data* governance are both critical to achieve policy and programmatic goals; however, they are distinct efforts. Program governance oversees the entire scope of the early childhood effort, including establishing overarching goals and plans to achieve them. Data governance oversees how information assets can be used to help achieve early childhood goals and strategies.



## Who Should Be Involved in Data Governance? And How?

A typical data governance structure includes four critical groups (see Figure 1 below): (1) a data policy committee, (2) a data management committee, (3) data stewards, and (4) IT personnel as well as the data governance coordinator. Participants on these groups should have the authority to make the key decisions outlined for the work and understand when to escalate an issue to another group in the data governance structure.



*Figure 1: Groups involved in early childhood data governance*

Each group will have different members based on its unique responsibilities. While external stakeholders, such as researchers, may serve in an advisory role, only those directly responsible for managing the data and setting policies around its collection and use should be involved in data governance. The chart below details membership, responsibilities, and the key decisions typically made by each group.



# STATE SUPPORT TEAM

## Data Governance Roles, Responsibilities, and Decisions

Role	Membership	Responsibilities	Example Decisions
Data Policy Committee (DPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive leaders responsible for each program or agency contributing data to the early childhood data system</li> <li>Chief Information Office (if applicable)</li> <li>Data Governance Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Data Governance Policy</li> <li>Establish Data Governance Management Committee (DMC)</li> <li>Resolve issues escalated by the DMC</li> <li>Approve data policies and major data-related decisions proposed by the DMC</li> <li>Hold program and agency areas accountable for adhering to the data governance policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the state goals, policies, and strategic direction for early childhood (i.e., what is the state trying to achieve)?</li> <li>Who should be part of the Data Management Committee?</li> </ul>
Data Management Committee (DMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Governance Coordinator (Chair)</li> <li>Data managers or directors representing all agencies and programs that contribute data to the ECIDS</li> <li>IT management representative(s)</li> <li>Public Information Officer (if applicable)</li> <li>Legal counsel (if applicable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and document inter-agency or program standards, processes, and procedures for data collection, reporting, and release</li> <li>Identify, prioritize, and resolve critical data issues affecting the quality, availability, or use of the data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the critical policy, program, and research questions in support of the goals established by the DPC?</li> </ul>
Data Governance Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Childhood statewide perspective</li> <li>Understanding of how data use should support and inform early childhood policies and programs</li> <li>Understanding of IT concepts and systems, but not located within IT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair the DMC</li> <li>Serve as liaison between DPC and DMC</li> <li>Ensure all data governance participants are fulfilling their responsibilities</li> <li>Convene working groups of data stewards to address critical data issues spanning multiple program areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which critical data issues need to be addressed and by which group?</li> </ul>
Data Stewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program area staff who are knowledgeable about: (1) the program's policies and (2) the data required/needed about that program area</li> <li><i>At least one</i> steward per agency and/or program area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine definitions, collection frequency, and reporting requirements to meet internal and external data users' needs</li> <li>Resolve critical data issues within program area</li> <li>Communicate policies and decisions made to programs and to DMC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What data elements and business rules are necessary to answer the key questions identified by the DMC?</li> </ul>
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency and/or program IT personnel involved with the ECIDS or source systems that feed data to it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for systems that collect, integrate, store, and report early childhood data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which applications, hardware, etc. will best meet the needs of ECIDS users?</li> </ul>



## Additional Resources

Early Childhood Data Use: Create Phase: Webinar Summary

[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/EC\\_DataUse\\_Part2\\_Webinar\\_March2013.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/EC_DataUse_Part2_Webinar_March2013.pdf)

Early Childhood Data Use: Support Phase: Webinar Summary

[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/EC\\_DataUse\\_Part3\\_Webinar\\_Sept2013.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/EC_DataUse_Part3_Webinar_Sept2013.pdf)

Early Childhood Planning Guide

[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/Early\\_Childhood\\_Planning\\_Guide.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/Early_Childhood_Planning_Guide.pdf)

P-20W+ Data Governance Manual Example

*Available upon request*

P-20W+ Data Governance Manual Template

*Available upon request*

P-20W+ Data Governance Policy Guide & Template

*Available upon request*

Planning for Early Childhood Data Use: Webinar Summary

[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/webinar\\_summary\\_early\\_childhood\\_data\\_use.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/webinar_summary_early_childhood_data_use.pdf)

For technical assistance, please email Missy Cochenour at [missy.cochenour@sst-slds.org](mailto:missy.cochenour@sst-slds.org)

This product of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program was authored by:

Missy Cochenour

*SLDS Grant Program, State Support Team*

Corey Chatis

*SLDS Grant Program, State Support Team*

Stephanie Irvine

*SLDS Grant Program*