SLDS Topical Webinar Summary

Head Start and SLDS: Getting to Know You

This webinar featured presentations from states on how Head Start fits into their statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS). Missy Cochenour of the State Support Team (SST) explained the goals of SLDSs and how they align with Head Start. Ben Allen (Vermont) described Head Start and Early Head Start, while Kimberly Shinn-Brown (Missouri) discussed which data are collected, aggregated, and analyzed through Head Start. Colleen Murphy (Utah) presented on how Utah and Head Start work together on the state's SLDS, and Kathy Thornburg (Missouri) discussed why Head Start data are critical to answering school readiness questions.

What is a Statewide Longitudinal Data System?

A longitudinal data system is "a data system that collects and maintains detailed, high quality, student- and staff-level data that are linked across entities and over time, providing a complete academic and performance history for each student; and makes these data accessible through reporting and analysis tools."[1]

An SLDS is generally created to respond to questions asked by various stakeholders, and to help states make informed policy and practice decisions. Some states have an SLDS specifically for early childhood (EC) data. An EC SLDS can pull data from any number of programs (see Figure 1). Ideally, these EC data will then be integrated into the state's P-20W (preschool through workforce) SLDS.

Figure 1: Possible sources for EC data

With regard to EC data in an SLDS, there are myriad possible stakeholders, including

- Department of Social Services;
- Department of Education;
- Department of Health;
- Department of Mental Health;
- Department of Economic Development;
- Department of Corrections;
- Head Start-State Collaboration Office;
- Head Start and Early Head Start providers;
- Institutions of Higher Education/ Faculty;
- Researchers;
- State Advisory Council; and
- other organizations that may vary by state.

In summary, Head Start is one piece of the large EC SLDS puzzle.

[1]National Forum on Education Statistics. (2010). *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems. Book One of Four: What is an LDS*? (NFES 2010–805). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

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Webinar Presenters:
Ben Allen
Vermont Head Start

Colleen Murphy
Utah Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative

Kimberly Shinn-Brown
Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation

Kathy Thornburg
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Moderator:
Missy Cochenour
SLDS Program, State Support Team

For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program or for support with system development, please visit http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS.

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What are Head Start and Early Head Start?

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally-funded programs that promote the school readiness of at-risk children. Early Head Start focuses on pregnant women and children birth–three years of age; Head Start focuses on preschool-age children. These programs are administered as federal-to-local programs, with funding going directly from the federal government to local grantees housed in community-based organizations. Eighty percent of the funding is federal; 20 percent of the funding consists of "local match" or "in-kind" contributions from the local community.

Head Start and Early Head Start are governed by the Head Start Act (as amended) and the Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations.[2] Although Head Start is not administered by states, each state has a Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) Director. HSSCO Directors must serve on the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council and work to promote collaboration, coordination, and alignment of Head Start programming, services, and/or standards with those of other EC education and care providers within the state.[3]

What Kind of Head Start Data are Collected, and How Are the Data Used?

Head Start programs track child, family, and service delivery data across program service areas, with particular emphasis on child education and health, family well-being and engagement, child development, and staff professional development. Head Start programs collect, aggregate, and analyze data on

- program models;
- participant demographics;
- services provided or referred;
- frequency, duration, and intensity of services; and
- child, family, and program outcomes.

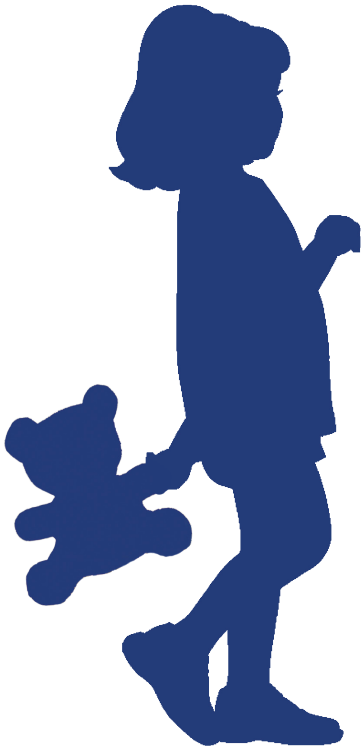
Data must be collected, aggregated, and analyzed for multiple purposes, at least three times a year, and at multiple levels within each grantee. Head Start collects a large quantity and wide variety of data. Data are used to understand and improve child outcomes (developmental assessments, attendance, health status, family well-being, and engagement); assess teacher qualifications and classroom quality; perform self-assessments of program planning and evaluation; and write reports to Congress, governing bodies, policy councils, communities, and other stakeholders for accountability purposes.

Head Start & SLDS: Bringing Together Two Conversations

Because Head Start program data are essential to inform research, policy, and practice, Head Start practitioners should be included in the SLDS conversation early on. SLDS project staff should reach out to the HSSCO Director and invite Head Start representatives to sit on data management and/or data policy committees. If Head Start stakeholders are hesitant to participate, SLDS project staff should meet to address concerns and find solutions.

When reaching out to Head Start programs for inclusion in the SLDS, the following are key:

- *Communication*. If necessary, build extra time into the process to ensure that all partners are fully informed.
- *Research*. Know and understand data collection methods used throughout the state—this is a vital step before all data can be collected in one system.
- *Gratitude*. Don't forget to say "thank you."



[2]See *http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Act* for details.

[3]Visit *http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration* for more information on the roles and responsibilities of HSSCO Directors.

Utah SLDS/Head Start Challenge and Solution

Challenge: Head Start directors were reluctant to buy into yet another reporting system.
Solution: Utah's data experts are developing a separate data warehouse into which to push all Head Start data. The state is exploring how best to do this while keeping the different data collection methods in mind. This information will then be pushed into Child Health Advanced Record Management (CHARM, Utah's existing data integration system), where it will be de-identified and then integrated with the P-20 SLDS. This will enable Head Start programs to track how children perform once they move on from Head Start and into the K-20 spectrum.

Why Head Start Data Are Critical to Answering School Readiness Policy Questions: Lessons from Missouri

One of Missouri's education goals is that all children will enter Kindergarten prepared to be successful. In the state, there are nearly as many preschoolers involved in Head Start as there are in the Missouri Department of Education's programs. However, because Head Start is a federal program, data on the participants were more elusive. For instance, the state could not answer questions such as

- how many Head Start programs are there in Missouri;
- how many Head Start classrooms are there in the state; or
- how many Head Start sites are there in each legislative district?

In order to make easily accessible the workforce, program, and child/family data needed for determining Head Start's effects on Kindergarten readiness, Missouri needed to include Head Start data in its SLDS. Such data are used to determine appropriate professional development offerings, improve programs and classrooms, and inform teachers and parents about children's performance.

Head Start programs are primary partners in SLDS efforts, and Head Start data are essential for informing research, policy, and practice. By proactively engaging with an SLDS effort, Head Start practitioners demonstrate the effectiveness of Head Start programs and contribute to strengthening all EC education services to better prepare children and families for success in school.

Resources

- Traveling through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems, Book I: What is an LDS? *http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010805.pdf*
- Head Start Website: *http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc*
- Head Start Performance Standards: *http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements*
- Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework: *http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/sr/approach/cdelf*
- Head Start-State Collaboration Offices: *http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration*