



# Forum Guide to Early Warning Systems

## Lessons Learned from Case Studies

### ***System Planning and Implementation***

- Secure broad support from staff and leaders across the agency by establishing a common understanding of the early warning system's purpose and value.
- Draw on professional learning communities and the experiences of colleagues to learn about the barriers, strategies, and successes other states and districts have faced in developing, implementing, and using an early warning system.
- Involve individuals from diverse professional backgrounds in planning teams to ensure that early warning data are easy-to-use in analysis, evaluation, and decisionmaking.
- Collaborate with trusted partners to support the system development process and reduce development time and costs.
- Pilot test the system and solicit feedback to ease the system implementation process.
- Consider in-house system development and maintenance, which may make it easier to refine and improve the system based on user feedback.
- Develop a plan to communicate with staff throughout the system development and implementation process.
- Provide professional development to create awareness and engage stakeholders.
- Share information about the system prior to implementation to help build anticipation amongst stakeholders.
- Think of implementation as an ongoing process, not a one-time activity.
- Prepare for the system to evolve as changes occur in agency staffing, priorities, and programming.

### ***Early Warning Indicators, Data, and Analytics***

- Budget a sufficient amount of time to develop the system's analytical model.
- Balance analytical model complexity and transparency.
- Verify the accuracy of the early warning analytical model and data prior to implementation.
- Clearly and objectively explain to users the capabilities, limitations, and accuracy of the analytical model and its predictive abilities.

### ***System Use***

- Promote and build capacity for data inquiry and continuous improvement planning.
- Provide appropriate training at opportune times to help early warning system users understand the effectiveness of the system, how risk level is assigned, and how the system can be used across the organization.
- Create resources to encourage use, such as a toolkit to assist with selecting interventions or communication materials that explain the utility of early warning indicators.
- Identify ongoing opportunities to leverage all data, including early warning system data, to inform stakeholders.
- Use early warning data to inform discussions, actions, and interventions at the school, district, and state levels.
- Establish an early warning system team to systematically review school-level and student-level early warning data and assess how well current interventions are working for students identified as at risk of dropping out.

- Prioritize regularly scheduled early warning system team meetings and develop responsibilities for each team member.
- Have an early warning system champion in place to help improve the likelihood that the system will continue to be used.
- Support each step of the early warning process by integrating early warning system use with intervention provision, assignment, and monitoring.
- Find out what works best for individual students and schools, and offer customized intervention programs and services that will best meet their needs.
- Work with community partners to align out-of-school interventions with education agency priorities to ensure that community-based programs and services address student and school needs.
- Celebrate student successes, such as recognizing formerly at-risk students when they graduate from high school.