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Title Slide: Introduction to the ECLS-B

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This module introduces users to the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort, or ECLS-B for short. This module provides users with basic information about the study's target population, the sample and study design, the years in which data were collected, the different respondents included in the study, and the methods used to collect the data.

This module also provides a broad overview of the topics for which data are available for analysis to help you answer the fundamental question... "Are ECLS-B data for me?" The subsequent ECLS-B training modules contained within this system discuss some of these topics in greater detail and address questions about how to effectively use the dataset for your analytic purposes.

Throughout this module, underlined blue screen text indicates a link to additional resources.

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The ECLS-B is a study of children who were born in the United States in the year 2001. The frame from which the study sample was drawn comprised birth certificates of children born in the calendar year 2001. States are required to send birth certificate data to the National Center for Health Statistics on a monthly basis. NCES entered into an agreement with the health statistics agency to obtain that birth certificate information as it was submitted. NCES then sampled birth certificates on a monthly basis, as the information became available, for each month of the entire calendar year 2001. Approximately 14,000 birth certificates were initially sampled from the frame.

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The ECLS-B sample includes oversamples of certain subgroups including children who:

- had low or very low birth weight,
- were twins,
- were American Indians or Alaska Natives,
- were Chinese, or
- were other Asian/Pacific Islander children apart from Chinese children.

These groups were oversampled to ensure that the study included enough children in each of these groups to be able to make precise estimates for them.

The twin oversample results in the ECLS-B being one the largest twin studies in the United States, with the advantage that the ECLS-B includes the comparison group of non-twins.

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The target population for the ECLS-B, or the group for which the ECLS-B data are representative, is the population of children who were born in the United States in 2001. The data can be used to make statements about these children as they age over time. There are a few limitations about the target population that must be kept in mind because these limitations may impact some analyses.

First, the target population does not include children born to mothers younger than age 15. These children were excluded from the study due to concerns about sharing birth certificate information for children with very young mothers.

Second, the target population does not include children who died or moved abroad prior to the first data collection, which occurred when children were about 9 months old.

Third, the target population does not include children who were adopted prior to the first data collection. This is because the information used to contact families and recruit them for the study was obtained from the birth certificate and thus pertained to the children's biological parents. Logistically it would have been very difficult to find adoptive parents at that time.

If children of young teenage mothers, children born with severe health problems, or adopted children are an area of interest in your research, these limitations on your population of interest should be considered.

Finally, another issue to keep in mind is that as the study progressed, the study population excluded children who died or moved permanently abroad.

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The study includes data collected from a number of sources at multiple points in time using a variety of data collection methods.

Data collection centered around a visit to the children's homes. The first home visit occurred when the children were about 9 months old. Subsequent home visits occurred when the children were about 2 years old, preschool age, and in kindergarten.

Although the ECLS-B children were all born the same calendar year, they entered kindergarten in two different school years. Generally, children born in January through August were age-eligible for kindergarten in the 2006-07 school year, and children born in September through December were age-eligible for kindergarten in the 2007-08 school year. In order to capture children's status and experiences at kindergarten entry, there are two rounds of data collection for the children's kindergarten year.

The home visits for the first two data collections, when the children were about 9 months old and then 2 years old, were timed to occur as close as possible to the day the child turned the focal age for the collection. For the preschool and kindergarten

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collections, the data collection schedule was changed to have the home visit occur during the fall of the academic year.

Information about the child's status at birth is also available and therefore represents an additional data time point. However, this information was obtained from the birth certificate, not a separate data collection at the time of the child's birth.

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Multiple methods were used to collect information from different sources. Data were collected from the children through direct assessments, one of which involved audiotaping the children retelling stories that had been read to them. The direct assessments also included videotaped observations of structured parent-child interactions made during the home visit, as well as an observation of children's behaviors in order to evaluate attachment status. An in-person interview was conducted with the parent respondent, who was usually the mother but was sometimes the father. A self-administered questionnaire with more sensitive questions was also given to the parent interview respondent. Separate hard-copy, self-administered questionnaires were used to collect information from both resident and nonresident fathers in various rounds of data collection.

Telephone interviews were conducted with children's nonparental child care providers and observations were made of the care settings of a subsample of children. When children were in kindergarten, data were collected directly from their teachers using a hard-copy, self-administered questionnaire. Information about the children's schools was compiled from other data sources.

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As mentioned, two data collections were needed to collect information about children's status and experiences at kindergarten entry, since children born earlier in the calendar year were age-eligible for kindergarten in the 2006-07 school year and children born later in the calendar year were age-eligible for kindergarten in the 2007-08 school year. Also, some of the children experienced a delayed entry, meaning they did not enter kindergarten when they were age eligible to do so and instead entered kindergarten the following year.

All study children were included in the 2006 kindergarten collection whether or not they were in kindergarten at the time data collection began. During this first kindergarten collection, about 75 percent of the children in the ECLS-B sample were in kindergarten or higher, either enrolled in school or being homeschooled. The remaining 25 percent of the children were not yet in kindergarten or a higher grade.

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A non-random subgroup of the ECLS-B sample was included in the 2007 kindergarten collection. This subgroup included children who had not yet entered kindergarten or higher in the prior school year and children who were in kindergarten during the previous school year and were repeating kindergarten. Additionally, twins of children in these two groups were included.

It is important to remember that, because of this study design, any analysis of the ECLS-B children at kindergarten entry must use data from both kindergarten rounds of data collection. Data from one round do not represent the kindergarten entry experiences of all children in the cohort.

It is also important to keep in mind that the data are not representative of all kindergartners. They are representative of the kindergarten experience of children born in the United States in 2001.

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The basis for participation in each round of data collection was a complete parent interview. That is, in order to be considered a respondent for a given round, at a minimum a parent interview had to be conducted. Additionally, only cases with a complete parent interview in one round were followed in the next round for continued participation. For example, only cases with a complete parent interview in the 9-month collection were contacted to participate in the 2-year collection. There is one exception to this rule about following up for later collections. To preserve the sample of American Indian/Alaska Native children, which was relatively small, all such children were eligible for all subsequent data collections if they had a complete 9-month parent interview, regardless of whether they had a complete parent interview in other rounds. For example, a complete parent interview in the 2-year data collection was not needed for American Indian/Alaska Native cases to be eligible for the study in the preschool round, as long as they had a 9-month parent interview.

Even though a complete parent interview was the basis for participation, the study followed the child. If a child was no longer living with the parent who was the parent interview respondent in a prior round, the study attempted to find the child and conduct the interview with the individual most knowledgeable about the child in the child's current household. Thus, there are children in the study who were adopted or living with foster parents after the 9-month data collection.

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This table shows the data collection years, rounded sample sizes, and response rates for each round of data collection. In the first round, about 10,700 children and their families participated, which corresponds to a weighted response rate of about 74 percent. This response rate is somewhat low relative to NCEES standards, but it must be kept in mind that parents were asked to participate in the study when their children were

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newborns, and it was made clear that they were being asked to participate for several years with researchers in their houses for several hours per home visit.

The response rates for later rounds, all of which are above 90 percent, indicate that once families entered the study, they tended to continue to participate.

Between the preschool round and the first kindergarten round, there is a decrease in sample size of about 2,000 cases. This is due to a planned sample reduction. The small sample size for the last round of data collection reflects the non-random subsample that was discussed earlier.

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The next two slides show the components included in each round of data collection.

Every round of data collection included child assessments and a parent interview. Other components were included in various years.

A video of parent-child interactions was included in the first three data collection rounds. The resident and nonresident father questionnaires were included in the 9-month and 2-year data collections. Only resident fathers were given a questionnaire in the preschool round. The nonresident father questionnaire was not fielded after the 2-year data collection because of low response rates.

The early care and education provider telephone interview was introduced in the 2-year data collection and fielded in the preschool and first kindergarten round as well. In addition, direct observations of the early care and education settings were also conducted in the 2-year and preschool collections.

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The wrap-around care and education provider telephone interview, which collected information about children's before-and after-school care arrangements, and a self-administered questionnaire for teachers were introduced in the kindergarten 2006 data collection for those children who were in kindergarten or higher.

The early care and education telephone interview was fielded in 2006 for children who had not yet started kindergarten. While the wrap-around care and education provider telephone interview was included again in the kindergarten 2007 collection, the early care and education telephone interview was dropped because most children were in kindergarten by that time.

Additionally, for children enrolled in school for kindergarten or higher, information about their schools was obtained from school universe data files compiled by NCES. Data for children in public school come from the Common Core of Data, and data for children in private schools come from the Private Schools Survey.

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The topics that are covered within each of the data collection instruments are listed here.

As can be seen from this list, the study has collected a great deal of information on many different topics over time. In order to enable analyses of change across the course of the study, many of the same or similar questions were asked in multiple rounds of data collection. However, there are differences in the exact sets of questions asked in each round because the questions needed to be both appropriate for and relevant to the children's ages at the time of data collection.

Most of the study data collection instruments are available online for researchers to review the exact wording of questions asked of different respondents. Some instruments and questions are not available because copyright agreements prevent NCES from distributing them. Links to the study instruments, as well as additional details regarding data collection in general, are provided in the 'ECLS-B Data Collection module'.

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This diagram shows the broad topics covered in the two father questionnaires. The middle column shows topics that are common to the resident and nonresident father questionnaires. The outer columns show the topics that are asked only of resident or nonresident fathers. These are topics that would be inappropriate to ask all fathers given their different residential situations and relationships to the child.

For example, it would not make sense to ask a resident father about child support, so questions on that topic are only included in the nonresident father questionnaire.

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The parent interview was conducted with a household member who was knowledgeable about the child's care and education.

There was an order of preference specified for the respondent to the parent interview: first the biological mother, then the biological father, next another parent or guardian, and then another household member. This preference for the mother over the father was specified for the 9-month parent interview because the interview included questions regarding the birth experience and breastfeeding and it was felt that the mother would be better suited to answer those questions. In that round of data collection, the mother or mother figure was the respondent for 99 percent of the study children. Though this order of preference was retained for later rounds of data collection, the number of children whose father or father figure was the parent interview respondent increased over time.

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Thus, the parent interview respondent can change over time, and this should be taken into account in any analysis where the specific identity of the parent respondent is important. Respondents can be identified using variables available in the ECLS-B data file. This is described in detail within the module titled 'Considerations for Analysis of ECLS-B Data'.

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This module has provided you with an introduction to the ECLS-B and described the study's target population, the sample and study designs, the years in which data were collected, the different respondents included in the study, and the methods used to collect the data. Additionally, this module has highlighted topics for which data are available for analyses. Important resources that have been provided throughout the module are summarized in this slide along with the module's objectives for your reference.

The subsequent ECLS-B training modules contained within this system discuss some of these topics in greater detail and address questions about how to effectively use the dataset for your analytic purposes.

Users may elect to assess their learning by answering multiple choice questions pertaining to this module through the Check Your Knowledge option located at the bottom of the screen. This is an optional tool that users may use at any time to review key concepts. You may now Check Your Knowledge, proceed to the next module in the series or exit the module.