Introduction: The Head Start/SLDS Working Group

In a series of calls sponsored by the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) Grant Program, state representatives shared experiences and offered tips on engaging Head Start in an SLDS. By engaging with the Head Start/SLDS working group, the SLDS grant program hopes to offer practical suggestions and resources for each step in the overall process of integrating Head Start data into an SLDS.

The first Issue Brief in the Head Start series, "Getting Started: Incorporating Head Start Data into an SLDS," is available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/headstart_GettingStarted.pdf*. Among other topics, this Issue Brief addresses

- potential benefits of integrating Head Start data;
- defining a vision;
- communication and engagement strategies (who to engage, when, and how);
- pilot approaches;
- providing incentives; and
- vendor collaboration.

The SLDS Grant Program also sponsored an introductory webinar on integrating Head Start data into an SLDS. This webinar contains an overview of SLDSs, a description of Head Start/Early Head Start, a description of what Head Start data are available, and case studies from Utah and Missouri. This webinar, "Head Start and SLDS: Getting to Know You," and related summary are available at *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/webinars.asp#CW_Mar_2012_07*.

This document explores the journeys of seven states as they work to examine and share Head Start data, both among Head Start agencies and with state agency partners. Please note that, in the context of this document, the term "Head Start" is used as an all-encompassing term for Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and Tribal Head Start.

Mapping Your Route

The states highlighted in this document agree: Head Start program data are essential to inform research, policy, and practice. But while the states share a common goal of full integration of Head Start data in the SLDS, the path to this goal may vary greatly depending on each state's starting point. To successfully traverse the road ahead, states need to examine where they are currently. The questions on pages 2-3 will help guide this effort.

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Head Start Agencies

> **How many Head Start agencies in your state are working collectively to examine data?**

State Partners

> **Who are your agency partners in the data-sharing effort?**

Head Start Agencies: How many Head Start agencies in your state are working collaboratively to organize and examine data within and across agencies to support program improvement and school readiness?

1. Do you have a clear purpose for including Head Start data in your SLDS?
2. Have you reached out to Migrant Head Start and Tribal Head Start?
3. Are your Head Start agencies on board? What have Head Start agencies been most interested in learning from inclusion in the SLDS?
4. Have you identified leadership within Head Start to be involved in guiding the conversation?
5. Do you have ongoing infrastructure to support professional development?
6. How are Head Start data stored and governed?

State Partners: Who are your agency partners in the data-sharing efforts? Head Start agencies only? Early Childhood? K12? Higher education? Workforce?

1. Do you have funding to support the engagement of Head Start in the early childhood data system (ECDS) or SLDS?
2. How do you plan to sustain the Head Start connection with SLDS in the long term? What barriers exist and how can you overcome them?
3. Have your state agencies and/or Head Start leadership developed a broad set of policy questions focused on Head Start children and programs?

Data & Reports

What are your plans for sharing data & developing reports? In what direction will the data flow?

Data Sharing

At what stage are you in the data-sharing relationships?

Data and Reports: What are your plans for sharing data and developing reports? In what direction will the data flow?

1. Have you identified the elements needed to answer your policy questions?
2. Are the elements aligned to CEDS?
3. What level of data are you planning to include in the SLDS?
4. Are you working with vendors on extract files to support the process? Are the vendors Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) certified?
5. What sorts of reports do you envision producing with the data?
6. What is the quality of your Head Start data? What plans are in place to ensure the ongoing maintenance for the quality of the data?
7. Will data flow horizontally between Head Start agencies? Will data flow vertically to an ECDS or SLDS?

Data Sharing: At what stage are you in the data-sharing relationship?

1. Are you in regular conversations with your partner agencies?
2. Are you developing and finalizing your data-sharing agreements?
3. Have your partner agencies signed a data-sharing agreement?
4. Are you in the process of analyzing shared data?
5. Have you released reports from the data?

Reaching Your Destination: Where are Other States?

Hawaii

At this time, Hawaii P-20 is inviting all early childhood programs, including Head Start, to participate in a simple "Data Matching" activity to match their students to the Hawaii Department of Education data system. Once the EC programs commit by signing a Memorandum of Agreement, seven data elements of their students are released to Hawaii P-20. Phase I involves simply finding these students in the DOE system. After this phase is completed, additional conversations will be held to talk about questions the programs would like to see answered (e.g., 3rd grade reading level, attendance rate, etc.).

Illinois

The Office of Early Childhood Development in the Governor's Office received federal funding through a State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care grant and a Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Phase 2 grant (RTT-ELC) to advance the Early Learning Council's priorities, one of which is responding to new federal and state mandates to design a unified, statewide early childhood data collection system. This ECDS will provide access to data and information related to education, health, and human services data systems, giving a comprehensive picture of publicly funded early childhood programs and services for young children and families in Illinois. Specifically, one of the activities is to integrate Early Head Start and Head Start data into the primary data system. Illinois is forming a Head Start/Early Head Start data cooperative, through which the Illinois Head Start Association will develop and maintain a common data file containing child-level demographic and developmental data; family, health, and well-being characteristics; program site information; and classroom identifiers. Plans are underway to enter Head Start and Early Head Start children into the State Information System that contains a unique statewide child identifier. On July 1, 2013 all early learning programs, including Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start, will be required to be part of the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies will maintain workforce data. The Unified Early Childhood Data System will connect and improve data related to children, early childhood programs, and providers from individual records housed within multiple public and private agencies, and provide a unified data set with differing levels of access to end users for research, policy, and practice purposes.

Maine

Maine has nine Head Start agencies, which are being treated as part of a non-reporting school district with nine schools in the K12 data system; students within Head Start will be assigned unique state student identifiers within the SLDS system, and a crosswalk will be built between the Head Start and SLDS systems. Data elements are driven by a set of research questions—many of which look at outcomes—and these questions have been shared with Head Start and public Pre-K entities. Maine has coordinated data collection and analysis to inform policy and practice by developing a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services for early childhood data sharing, has developed research questions that have been adopted by a seven-state early childhood data consortium, and is establishing early childhood linkage pilots to track participation in Head Start and Educare.

Minnesota

The state is working with approximately one-third of its Head Start agencies to determine what essential questions could be answered if there was a unique ID in place for Head Start students. Existing work in Minnesota over the last three years has combined child outcome and program data to cooperatively develop strategic, real-time interventions for children and families currently enrolled at the agency level. Through establishing cross-agency data sharing agreements with certain data sources, there is interest in better understanding the relationship between Head Start exit information with early elementary process information. There is also interest in better understanding cross-agency participation while the families remain in Head Start. Questions have also arisen regarding child health and welfare.

Minnesota received an RTT-ELC grant to support a plan to improve the state's results for children and build capacity and accountability into its early learning system. The Governance Committee for this effort met in late April; the committee

includes representation from the Office of Early Learning and a Head Start representative. Once the committee finalizes a set of initial research questions, data elements will be refined and aligned to CEDS. Due to data privacy issues, individual data sharing agreements will be in place between each agency and the EC LDS before any data can flow through to the EC LDS.

Mississippi

Mississippi has an early childhood working group that covers dozens of programs, including those in health, human services, education, and Head Start. The National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University has been integral in building the partnerships critical to efforts of this nature. Building on this strong cooperative foundation, efforts are underway to map and model early childhood data across programs and entities. With Memoranda of Understanding in place, Head Start has been sharing data with the SLDS in Mississippi as part of a pilot project. As the state data clearinghouse, nSPARC manages and analyzes pilot project data to help Head Start programs take ownership of their evaluation and assessments so that they can better define their quality and effectiveness.

Missouri

Missouri has a Head Start data pilot project, which is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) through the Department of Social Services. The funding is supplied to the state's Coordinating Board for Early Childhood (Missouri's Head Start Advisory Council), which contracts with the state's professional development registry and the state's resource and referral network to facilitate the transfer of Head Start child- and program-level data into the SLDS for matching and analysis. The state's department of education was also a key partner, as it provided the secure transfer environment for receiving the child-level data and completed the child identifier batching process, data cleaning, and matching. While the current project is specifically focused on Head Start, the facilitating agencies are developing processes and applications that can later be adapted to incorporate data from other early childhood programs interested in child outcome data and analysis. The Memoranda of Agreement between each participating Head Start agency and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education contain a specific analysis plan that was developed through data element workgroup meetings (involving state agencies, facilitators, and Head Start leadership). The analysis that takes place on the Head Start data collected for this project is restricted to the questions in the agreed-upon plan. Missouri has aligned data elements from the Head Start annual Program Information Report, the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (SLDS), and CEDS for the purposes of this project. The facilitating organizations were initially responsible for aligning the elements, which were then vetted through the data element workgroup and other Head Start leadership.

Missouri's Head Start pilot project is funded until August 2013, and the facilitating agencies are currently courting funding for another year of coordination, though long-term funding is yet undetermined. Meetings are being held with the Missouri Head Start Association, the Missouri Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start Training and Technical Assistance, and other entities to help them begin to develop a more centralized Head Start data governance structure to ensure the project is sustained over the long term.

Wisconsin

Eighty percent of Wisconsin's Head Start grantees are included in the state's QRIS; some data are stored there, although not down to the individual child level. Some data are also stored in the Head Start state supplement program, which is a separate system, also not down to the individual child level. Individual child level data would now need to come from the grantees, as the previously planned statewide student information system is now unfunded. This places the addition of Head Start data into the future EC LDS efforts.

In Wisconsin, the build of the EC LDS portion of the SLDS is being funded by a RTT-ELC grant. The state is in the first year of this grant and focusing on efforts that will set the stage for data sharing. The EC LDS does not yet exist in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Head Start Collaboration Office's Director is to be involved in the new Data Governance structure (currently being set up), which helps to keep communication lines open regarding Head Start data and how important it is to include, at the appropriate time. Wisconsin plans to align all educational data to CEDS and to align other early childhood data to appropriate standards.

Appendix

The chart below highlights states' routes and status as of June 2013 in engaging Head Start, using the following terms to describe progress:

- *Operational* (O): Capability is fully functional and/or available for use by intended stakeholders.
- *In Progress* (I): Currently building or implementing this capability, but it is not yet fully operational.
- *Planned* (P): Intends to include this capability and has documented a plan and a funding source to implement it, but implementation has not yet begun.

States	Head Start											
	Data			*Data-Sharing Partners*				*Data-Sharing Implementation*				
	Aligned to CEDS	Data Quality Processes	Data Governance	Across Head Start Agencies	With K12 SLDS	With Early Childhood SLDS	With P-20/W SLDS	Initial Discussions	Data-Sharing Agreement	Signed Data-Sharing Agreement	Data Analysis	Reports
HI		P	P	O			P	O	I	I	P	P
IL	I	I	I	I	I	I	P	O	P	P	P	P
ME	P	P	I				P	O	I	I	P	P
MN	P	P	P		P	P						
MS		I	O				I	O	O	O	O	O
MO	I	I	P		I			O	I	I	P	P
WI		P	I				P	O	I	P	P	P

Definitions

Aligned to CEDS: Data standards for key Head Start elements are consistent with the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS).

Data Quality Process: The flow of data from Head Start agencies to partners includes safeguards, such as auditing mechanisms and quality assurance mechanisms, to ensure quality.

Data Governance: Responsibility for Head Start data established among data-sharing partners with the systematic creation and enforcement of policies, roles, responsibilities, and procedures.

Across Head Start Agencies: Head Start data flows between Head Start agencies.

With K12 SLDS: Head Start data is integrated with K12 or a subset of K12 data in a K12 SLDS.

With Early Childhood SLDS: Head Start data is integrated with public Pre-K data in an Early Childhood SLDS.

With P-20/W SLDS: Head Start data is integrated with P-20/W (early childhood through postsecondary and/or workforce) data in a P-20/W SLDS.

Initial Discussions: Head Start data-sharing partners are engaged in regular discussions around exchange of data.

Data-Sharing Agreement: Agreements to share Head Start data between partners are drafted and undergoing review.

Signed Data-Sharing Agreement: Agreements to share Head Start data between partners are reviewed and signed by partners.

Data Analysis: Analysis of linked Head Start and partner data is conducted for purposes such as understanding and improving child outcomes and evaluating program quality.

Reports: Reports providing analyses of linked Head Start and partner data are generated.