

Recommendations to Advance the Development of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System: Initial Steps Presented to the ECI Steering Committee (November 3rd, 2016)



This recommendation has been developed in coordination with the Integrated Data System Taskforce, a subcommittee of ECI Results Accountability Workgroup, comprising: Jeff Anderson (DOM), Tammi Christ (DHS), Kelly Davydov (DHR, ECI-RA co-chair), Cassandra Dorius (ISU), Marion Kresse (BooST, ECI-RA co-chair), James Olsen (DPH), Tom Rendon (DOE), Heather Rouse (ISU), and Amanda Winslow (DOE)

Recommendations:

In response to demands on public service systems to *do more, do better, and cost less*, attention is being drawn to the value of integrated data systems (IDS) for research to inform executive decision-making. While ECI efforts to date have focused on enhancing the effectiveness of early childhood services through local area boards, we have recently revisited the legislative recommendations within both the ECI Initiative (Chapter 256i) and the 2007 Head Start Reauthorization Act (H.R. 1429-642b) to advance the development of an early childhood IDS. Such a system would facilitate statewide needs assessments to identify gaps in current service system networks, enhance effective programming efforts at the provider level, broaden our ability to measure successful child outcomes in diverse and meaningful ways, and promote data-driven decisions about funding priorities. Though there has been considerable interest in an IDS for Iowa, until recently we lacked evidence-based models to inform a realistic conceptualization of how to implement such a system. Fortunately, a national network of established IDS now exists to facilitate best practices and support new developing sites (see *Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy* below). Further, Reagent's University partners with strong ties to this network and expertise in the development and use of such systems have recently joined our efforts. **The ECI Results Accountability Workgroup respectfully submits the following recommendations for consideration and formal adoption by the ECI State Board.** Once approved, we believe the execution of these activities will move Iowa toward the critical next stage of development for an early childhood IDS.

1. Identify and execute the necessary "next steps" to **join the Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) Network as an official developing site.** In ongoing consultations with AISP, we understand there will be a competitive process in 2017 for states to join a new cohort of sites. If selected, the AISP will provide resources for training and priority access to national experts and established best practices to guide us through the selection of an appropriate governance model, legal agreements for data sharing, and scientific data integration procedures. The taskforce will work with these experts to ensure the Iowa IDS solution is economically sustainable and fits within the human resource realities of our public service systems.
2. **Identify 2 or 3 high-priority, low-cost demonstration projects** that could be executed with integrated data from health, human services, and education. These projects could be used to test the scientific integration processes as well as the utility of an IDS to answer policy relevant questions that we have previously been unable to answer. These projects will provide valuable learning opportunities that will advance the development of the integrated data system.
3. **Identify funding opportunities** for infrastructure development and demonstration projects. Funding opportunities will be considered both within and outside state government, including external research grants and private foundation support. Our university partners will support these efforts by providing practical and technical expertise in grant writing. Thus far, they have helped our taskforce successfully secure external funding from national and university sources for planning efforts.

Relevant Background:

The idea of an IDS in Iowa is not new. In fact, its suggestion was incorporated in the original ECI legislation, because of its potential to advance coordinated, community-based early childhood services. Over the last several years, agency representatives have frequently discussed how an IDS could support their work, though efforts to date have focused on technical approaches without sufficient attention to the governance and legal solutions also required for a successful and sustainable system. This background, combined with the ECI Results Accountability Workgroup charge to support a statewide understanding of the effectiveness of our early childhood programs, creates a unique space for renewing these conversations. During the fall of 2015, this workgroup recruited two professors from ISU to join these discussions and share their experiences with the successful development and implementation of IDS in other states and municipalities through collaborative partnerships between public service systems and university researchers. A subcommittee was then formed [the ***Integrated Data System (IDS) Taskforce***] comprised of representatives from the Departments of Management, Human Services, Human Rights, Public Health, and Education to consider how university and national resources could be harnessed to support the development of an Iowa IDS for early childhood.

Over the last 6 months the IDS Taskforce has accomplished the following preliminary steps:

- Documented the ***history of IDS discussions*** within and between departments that inform the larger IDS effort, including the following large statewide activities:
 - As part of the federally funded ECAC grant, the state commissioned ***Gold Systems, Inc.*** to conduct a study of existing early childhood data systems and provide recommendations for a longitudinal data system. Completed in 2013, their final report summarized information representing over 50 systems and 5 large data warehouses and provided recommendations for a phased approach to a technical integration solution.
 - Selected recommendations from the Gold Systems report were incorporated into a federal Department of Education ***Race to the Top*** proposal. Though unfunded, the submission represented collaboration among health, human services, and education leadership who each agreed to work through the legal and scientific challenges associated with sharing data.
- Consulted a ***national model and network*** of established sites called *Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy* (www.aisp.upenn.edu). Dr. Rouse helped develop one of the first sites in this network, and leveraging her and Dr. Dorius's personal connections has allowed us access to up-to-date information about current work of the network and upcoming opportunities for Iowa, including strategic advice for the competitive application process to become one of their funded new sites.
- ***Secured funding*** from federal and local sources including the National Science Foundation (through the Midwest Bid Data Hub), ISU's Office of the Vice President for Research, and the ISU College of Human Sciences. This seed funding has supported our planning efforts through attendance at national meetings, recruitment of experts for our mini-summit (see below), and participation in an "invite-only" conference held by the AISP and attended by nationwide users of mature IDS.
- Hosted a ***half-day Mini-Summit*** on integrated data systems featuring AISP expert, Dr. Whitney LeBoeuf. This event included fifteen middle management and program staff from multiple state agencies to learn about successful projects in other states and municipalities and consider the benefits and challenges for developing an Iowa IDS.