PROJECT UPDATE: Advancing the Development of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (IDS)

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Relevant Background:

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.

Project Update:

- During fall 2015, the ECI Results Accountability workgroup collaborated with ISU to learn about successful development and implementation of IDS in other states and municipalities. This involved discussing cases of significant program and policy change resulting from IDS inquiries.

- In early 2016, the ECI Board approved the ***IDS Taskforce's*** commencement of initial stakeholder engagement and planning activities, including collaboration with national experts from AISP.

- In early 2017, department directors represented on the ECI Board approved the IDS Taskforce pursuit to join the ***Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy*** training and technical assistance program that would provide support for our development of an IDS.

- In July 2017, Iowa's application was selected for competitive funding to be ***one of only 10 sites*** across the country to join the AISP TA. This TA will involve an 18-month planning process to build our infrastructure plan for an Iowa IDS.
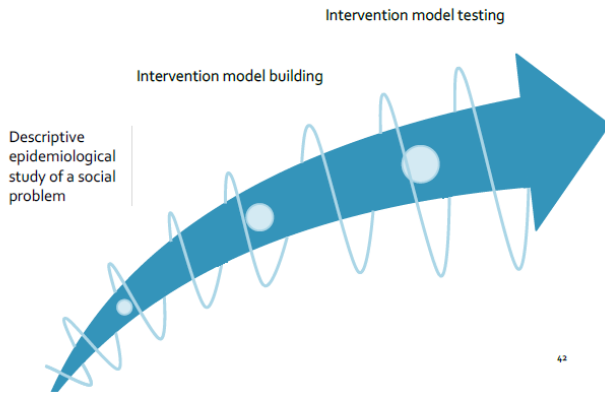
18-month Work Plan for the AISP Training and Technical Assistance program:

- October 3-5ᵗʰ, 2017. AISP will host the first of three training seminar in Chicago with leadership teams from all 10 selected sites and support from AISP experts and leaders within existing fully-developed IDS sites. Training will focus on key components of IDS infrastructure including governance, legal and ethical agreements, data management and analytics, and sustainability.

- In consultation with leadership from across departments, the IDS Taskforce will develop a plan to build the core components of an IDS infrastructure.

- In consultation with leadership from across departments and other IDS developing sites with similar foci in early childhood, the IDS Taskforce will pursue fundraising to demonstrate the value of IDS through targeted data integration pilot project(s). The purpose of the pilot(s) will be to not only test our capacity to implement key IDS components, but also to identify priority analytic questions that can be answered with available data from across systems.

Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy: An Integrated Data System Approach[a]

The purpose of an IDS is to support *cycles of inquiry* to inform decision-making about important social problems. It is not a "one-shot" research project. Through an iterative and logical process, the results of inquiries shape and refine interventions over time to maximize effectiveness.
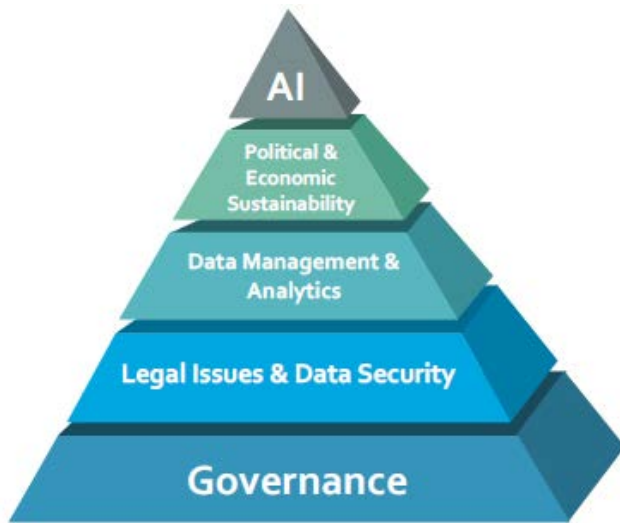

First, large population-based <u>descriptive studies</u> help us better understand the nature of the problem.

<u>Predictive analytics</u> are then used to identify factors associated with positive outcomes that can be incorporated into enhanced interventions.

Once interventions are built or enhanced, <u>tests of the effectiveness of interventions</u> are conducted to inform further refinement.

To actualize the potential of IDS to generate *Actionable Intelligence* through repeated cycles of inquiry, our team is carefully considering how to incorporate key concepts of an IDS approach into an Iowa plan. This plan will consider best-practices collected by AISP network sites that have been operating fully-functioning IDS to support improved social policy decision-making for many years. The core components of the infrastructure of the IDS approach are hierarchical, represented by a stratified pyramid:

<u>Sustainability Plan</u>- attention to communications about the costs of BOTH unaddressed social problems and the interventions designed to reduce them

<u>Data Management/Analytics</u>- selecting relevant and high quality data elements, integrating across datasets, and analyzing data using scientifically rigorous approaches

<u>Legal/Data Security</u>- deliberate procedures to protect confidentiality while supporting ethical use of data (maximum benefit + minimum risk)

<u>Governance</u> –leadership that includes appointed individuals to initiate and oversee the inquiry process and all IDS operations

The IDS approach is an iterative process of problem solving that requires time and resources to produce *Actionable Intelligence*. As such, communications among stakeholders and executive leaders must attend to the tangible benefits to demonstrate efficient use of taxpayer dollars. In the coming months our IDS Taskforce will be considering the benefits reaped by other IDS sites as we develop our IDS plan that we believe will improve our decision-making capacity on behalf of Iowa's youngest children and their families.