**Notes on emerging issues in reporting local child outcomes data**

* REPORTING COMPARES LOCAL DATA TO TARGETS THAT MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. Variable levels of confidence exist about whether or not the target that locals are expected to reach is appropriate. Targets were often set with relatively little, and sometimes incomplete, historical data of varied quality. In some cases, there is limited clarity about the process used by stakeholders or others to identify a target based on the past data in hand.
* REPORTING USES A SINGLE STATEWIDE TARGET FOR ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN THERE IS LOTS OF VARIATION ACROSS LOCAL AREAS. When local areas vary considerably in the populations they serve and in their past child outcomes data numbers, use of one statewide target may be ineffective in helping programs strive for improvement. In some programs, the number may seem out of reach; in others, the target may be lower than their previous data.

* ENHANCING DATA QUALITY MAY INCREASE OR DECREASE LOCAL NUMBERS. LOCAL SITES MAY BE RELUCTANT TO IMPLEMENT DATA QUALITY CHANGES IF THEY SHIFT NUMBERS AWAY FROM STATE TARGETS. Targets may be unduly influenced by a small number of districts/LEAs in part because they are a big proportion of the state population (and not necessarily because they have the highest quality). As a result, some local sites that appear to have higher quality data based on a variety of indicators have numbers that are farther away from the targets (perhaps even trending in the opposite direction) than places with lower quality data.
* LOCAL REPORTING IS CONFUSING OR EVEN MISLEADING WHEN BASELINES, TARGETS, AND APPROACHES ARE CHANGING. Targets were set using one outcomes measurement approach, but as the system changes to a different approach the meaning of numbers in local reporting is confusing and highly variable across years. The fluctuation observed in baselines, targets, and data will be even greater and more extended since it takes 3 full years of a new system to have information on a complete cohort of children.
* LOCAL REPORTING NUMBERS INCLUDE CHILDREN WHO EXITED THERE, BUT MAY HAVE BEEN SERVED ELSEWHERE TOO. Children’s progress is reported with their program at exit, even if the child was served by several programs. This can be concerning in an accountability system, especially in smaller programs where including a couple children with limited progress may shift the numbers in a sizeable way.
* DISTRUST EXISTS ABOUT THE ACCURACY OF LOCAL OUTCOMES DATA REPORTED, ESPECIALLY IF PART C AND PART B PRESCHOOL USE A SHARED DATA POINT OR THERE ARE PROCESS DIFFERENCES AT PROGRAM ENTRY VERSUS EXIT. Programs may have uncertainty or distrust that the numbers used for accountability reporting are accurate. Concerns may be exacerbated if the program has limited involvement with data collection at one data point because of cross-system sharing and/or if there are differences in who conducts outcomes data collection at entry versus exit.
* LOCAL REPORTING IS NOT VERY MEANINGFUL BECAUSE MANY PLACES HAVE SMALL NUMBERS. Numbers in many sites cannot be reported because there are so few children in each district/LEA that it would violate confidentiality to report the information. This undermines the usefulness of local reporting and stakeholder access to information about programs.
* THERE IS CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT THE REPORTING NUMBERS MEAN, CREATING CONCERN THAT LOCAL PROGRAMS, STAKEHOLDERS, AND/OR THE MEDIA WILL INTERPRET DATA INCORRECTLY. There can be considerable confusion or misunderstanding about the outcomes, the progress categories, and the summary statements by those who see the local reporting information, especially if they do not have appropriate background context for the numbers.