

Table 1
Possible Uses and Misuses of Child Outcome Data at Different Levels

Level: National/Federal

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data are not collected	
Purpose: To demonstrate the effectiveness of Part C and Section 619; used to meet the GPRA and PART requirements and other needs for outcome data					
Aggregated across all states and territories	OSEP OMB Congress Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding for program is sustained or increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Resources are directed toward improving outcomes.Technical assistance (TA) and guidance increase; IDEA or regulations change.Funding for programs is eliminated or reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding for programs is reduced or eliminated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid and reliableFocusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only those outcomes for which data are availableUsing the data to hold OSEP and states accountable for more than they can reasonably be expected to deal withMisinterpreting the data (e.g., expecting all children with disabilities to function like typically developing children)
Purpose: To examine the effectiveness of OSEP in administering Part C and Section 619; used in combination with information from other sources to determine whether or not OSEP is effectively administering Parts C and Section 619 (e.g., OSEP reviews its own policies and practices)					
Aggregated across all states and territories	OSEP Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OSEP is given additional resources.OSEP develops new programs.OSEP is given additional autonomy or responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OSEP adapts existing strategies or adopts new strategies for how it supports states in implementing Part C and 619 (e.g., new funding priorities, changes in provision of TA, personnel preparation).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decisions about future investments and strategies are made without knowing whether and where strategies are contributing to good outcomes for children.Effective programs and policies go unrecognized.Ineffective programs and policies continue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid and reliableMaking decisions about outcome data alone, in isolation from other informationFocusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only those outcomes for which data are availableFailing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring

Level: National/Federal Uses (Continued)

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To monitor how states are implementing Part C and Section 619					
Data for each state and territory	OSEP Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">States with effective programs can be nationally recognized.Proven practices in effective states can be documented and disseminated.Effective states can serve as models for other statesUltimately, outcomes for children with disabilities in all states can improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Low-performing states receive focused intervention, develop corrective action plans, or receive sanctions.State improvement strategies are developed and implemented to produce better outcomes.Advocates push for improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OSEP continues to monitor process, rather than results.States achieving good outcomes remain unidentified, as do states achieving poor outcomes.Programs in ineffective states do not improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid or reliableMaking decisions on the basis of outcome data alone, in isolation from other informationFocusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only those outcomes for which data are availableHolding states accountable for more than they can reasonably be expected to deal withFailing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring
Purpose: To monitor the health and well-being of young children with disabilities nationally by determining how young children with disabilities are faring in regard to multiple indicators of health and well-being (probably as compared with typically developing children)					
Aggregated across all states and territories or by state	Advocates All federal agencies concerned with young children with disabilities, including OSEP Interagency groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding for current programs is sustained or increased.Changes in future years can be tracked to ensure that good outcomes are maintained year after year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advocates and federal agencies explore underlying causes for poor outcomes (e.g., poverty, child abuse, lack of insurance).Funding increases to improve the health and well-being of young children with disabilities.New legislation, new programs, and better coordination across federal and state programs are implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No one knows that children with disabilities are faring poorly.Ineffective policies and programs continue.Policies continue to be set in the absence of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failing to recognize the multiple underlying causes for poor outcomes (e.g., trying to hold one program or funding stream accountable)Failing to act on the information

Level: State

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To demonstrate the degree of effectiveness of Part C and Section 619 in response to requests/demands for data from legislatures, governors' offices, and state budget offices					
Aggregated across all localities in the state	Part C lead agency SEA Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">State funding is sustained or increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The state designs strategies to improve the effectiveness of programs.Program funding is eliminated or reduced.The state withdraws from Part C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">State funding for programs is eliminated or reduced.The state withdraws from Part C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before data are shown to be valid or reliableFocusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only on those outcomes for which data are availableHolding the program responsible for more than it can reasonably be expected to deal withMisinterpreting the data (e.g., expecting all children with disabilities to function like typically developing children)
Purpose: To examine state agency effectiveness in administering Parts C or 619; used in combination with information from other sources to determine if the agency is effectively administering Part C or 619 (e.g., the agency reviews its own policies and practices)					
Aggregated across all localities in state	Part C lead agency ICC SEA Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The state agency receives recognition for good work.Funding to the agency is sustained or increased.The agency is given more authority or autonomy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The state agency adapts existing strategies or adopts new strategies for how it supports local entities in implementing Part C and 619 (e.g., new funding priorities, changes in provision of TA, CSPD).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decisions about future strategies are made without knowing whether current state strategies and investments are effective.Effective practices and policies go unrecognized.Ineffective programs and policies continue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid and reliableFocusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only on those outcomes for which data are availableMaking decisions on the basis of outcome data alone, in isolation from other informationFailing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring

Level: State (Continued)

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To monitor how local entities are implementing Part C or 619					
Data for each locality	Part C agency SEA advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding to local entities with good outcomes is sustained or increased.Local programs are recognized as model systems.Effective practices are documented and disseminated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The state develops general strategies to produce better outcomes.The state takes action to improve programs in localities that show poor outcomes.Advocates push for changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The state continues to monitor process rather than results.Communities achieving good outcomes remain unidentified, as do communities achieving poor outcomes.Programs in ineffective communities do not improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid or reliableMaking decisions on the basis of outcome data alone, in isolation from other informationFocusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only those outcomes for which data are availableHolding local agencies accountable for more than they can reasonably be expected to deal withFailing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring
Purpose: To monitor the health and well-being of young children with disabilities in the state by determining how these children are faring in regard to multiple indicators of health and well-being (probably as compared with typically developing children)					
Aggregated across local jurisdictions or by locality	Advocates All state agencies concerned with young children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding for current programs is sustained or increased.Changes in future years can be tracked to ensure that good outcomes are maintained year after year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advocates and state agencies explore underlying causes for poor outcomes (e.g., poverty, child abuse, lack of insurance).New legislation, new programs, better coordination, and more funding to improve the health and well-being of young children with disabilities result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No one knows that children with disabilities are faring poorly.Ineffective policies and programs continue.Policies continue to be set in the absence of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failing to recognize the multiple underlying causes for poor outcomes (e.g., trying to hold one program or funding stream accountable)Failing to act on the information

Level: Local (Communities, LEAs, etc.)

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To examine the effectiveness of the local agency in administering early intervention or preschool special education; used in combination with information from other sources to determine if the agency is effectively administering early intervention and preschool special education services (i.e., the local agency reviews its own policies and practices)					
Aggregated across all programs/schools	Local administrators LICC Advocates Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local agency receives recognition for good work.• The local agency knows to continue current policies and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local agency adapts existing strategies or adopts new strategies for supporting programs in providing Part C and 619 (e.g., in-service training, new program options, coordination with other programs or agencies).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions about future directions are made without knowing whether and where programs are effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid and reliable• Making decisions on the basis of outcome data alone, in isolation from other information• Focusing on a narrow set of outcomes or only those outcomes for which data are available• Failing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring
Purpose: To monitor how effectively programs/schools are providing early intervention or preschool special education					
Data for each program/school	Local administrators LICC Advocates Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding to programs with good outcomes is sustained or increased.• Programs are recognized as model systems.• Effective practices are documented and disseminated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local administrator develops strategies to produce better outcomes in programs with poor outcomes.• Advocates push for changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrators continue to monitor programs in regard to process rather than results or do not ask questions about effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid or reliable;• Making decisions on the basis of outcome data alone, in isolation from other information• Holding programs accountable for more than they can reasonably be expected to deal with• Failing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring• Adjusting strategies on the basis of invalid data

Level: Local (Communities, LEAs, etc.) (Continued)

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Possible misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To monitor the health and well-being of young children with disabilities in the locality by determining how these children are faring in regard to multiple indicators of health and well-being (probably as compared with typically developing children)					
Data for the locality (LEA, county)	Advocates Local agencies concerned with young children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding for current programs is sustained or increased.Changes in future years can be tracked to ensure that good outcomes are maintained year after year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advocates and agencies explore underlying causes for poor outcomes (e.g., poverty, child abuse, lack of insurance).New programs, better coordination, and targeted funding to improve the health and well-being of young children with disabilities result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No one knows that children with disabilities are faring poorly.Ineffective policies and programs continue; policies continue to be set in the absence of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failing to recognize the multiple underlying causes for poor outcomes (e.g., trying to hold one program or funding stream accountable)Failing to act on the information

Level: Program/School Uses

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Possible misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To monitor how effectively the program/school is providing early intervention or preschool special education; used in combination with information from other sources to determine if the program/school is doing an effective job of providing early intervention and/or preschool special education services					
Data for all children participating in the program	Program director Policy board Program staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public and families have evidence that the program is doing a good job.The program knows to continue current practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The program adjusts current practices or adopts new practices for early intervention or preschool special education (e.g., in-service training, new program options, coordination with other programs or agencies).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decisions about the future directions are made without knowing whether and where current practices are effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions before the data are shown to be valid and reliableMaking decisions on the basis of outcome data alone, in isolation from other informationFailing to explore why poor outcomes are occurring;Adjusting strategies on the basis of invalid data
Purpose: To identify groups of children or families for whom the program is less effective than it should be; used in combination with other sources to determine whether or not the program is doing the best job it can do for all of the children/families it is serving					
Data for each child/family participating in the program	Program director Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The program knows to continue current practices with some, most, or all children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program staff discuss alternative approaches that might be more effective.The program convenes an IFSP or IEP meeting to explore alternatives for those with poor outcomes.New interventions are tried.New resources are explored.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Current practices continue or decisions about changes are made in the absence of data on the effectiveness of what is currently being provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making decisions on the basis of invalid or unreliable dataMaking decisions on the basis of a single assessmentBlaming the family for poor outcomesFailing to alter an approach that is not producing good outcomes

Level: Child/Family

Level of Data	Used by	What happens if . . .			Possible misuses of the data
		Data show good outcomes	Data show poor outcomes	Data not collected	
Purpose: To examine the effectiveness of the approach/intervention being provided by examining data on child progress frequently to determine whether or not the child is making as much progress as expected.					
Data for an individual child/family	Service providers working with the child and family Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intervention continues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intervention is altered in some way.New intervention is tried.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Current practices continue.Decisions about changes in intervention approach are made in the absence of data about the effectiveness of what is currently being provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Using data to lower expectations for child performanceUsing assessment data in isolation from other informationUsing data to exclude children from opportunities, rather than modifying activities so they can be included NOTE: All invalid practices associated with using assessment data for individual children apply here.