Improving Data, Improving Outcomes

FORESIGHT LAW+POLICY

Early Childhood
Governance and Data:
Who's Making Which Decisions,
and How Are They Making Them?

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The big questions for today

- When it comes to early childhood policy and state-level administration:

  o Who is making the decisions?

  o What information are they using to make those decisions?

One way to think about it

- What matters most is positive interactions between adults and children.

- When state government is paying for those interactions, it wants to maximize their number and duration.
  - o Sometimes professionals work directly with kids – other times with family members, to help them improve their interactions.

- Who decides how to do that and what information they use matters enormously!

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Governance

- Starting with governance:

  o What are the options and opportunities?

  o How can you get involved?

Data Systems

For each state:

- What is the state's vision for data use?

- How is the state producing data to support that vision?

- What analytic capacity does the state have to make meaning of the numbers?

- Is the state ready to act on what it learns?

- In all of these areas, thinking about how leaders in early childhood special education and early intervention can have an impact.

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Governance: Authority and its Distribution

- Governance is about authority
- Historically authority is organized by subject matter, not age group
- Children birth to five have a wide range of needs, meaning many agencies end up serving them
- As states have increased their attention to early care and education, they have rethought their governance of early childhood
- Goal of governance changes is to provide better service to children and families

Values in Governance

- Coordination – governance should connect different programs
- Alignment – provide coherence across system-wide tasks
- Sustainability – should be durable through political and administrative change
- Efficiency – should allocate resources wisely
- Accountability – should be accountable to key stakeholders

Models of Governance

- Coordinated across agencies

- Consolidated within an agency

- Creation of a new agency

Coordinated Governance

- The status quo in most states

- How much coordination there actually is varies

- Governor's office can play a leadership role

Values that Lead to Consolidation or Creation

- Elevated leadership

- Greater accountability

- Improved coherence
  - Data systems are a part of this!

Consolidated Governance

- Move multiple functions into an existing agency – generally education or human services (which are very different)
- Generally preschool and child care – can also include Early Intervention, Head Start collaboration, home visiting, and more
- How does it fit in larger agency, practically and culturally?
- Is consolidation a step toward creation?

Creation of a New Agency

- Have to define its function

- How does a small new agency thrive in a state's political landscape?

Cross-cutting Issues

- State advisory councils

- Regional governance

- Public-private partnerships

- Changing practice, not just arrangements – managing the transition

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What does this mean for Part B and Part C?

- Part B is going to be in the state education agency
  - How does that impact the conversation about consolidation?
- How does larger agency context affect Part C?
  - What do you want out of governance?
  - How can you go about getting what you want?
  - How can you adapt to any change once it's underway?
    - People will want you to be successful …
    - …but you're going to have to advocate for yourself.

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Governance: Be on the lookout!

- Governance conversations are sometimes about a solution in search of a problem.
- Is this an executive-led or legislative-led conversation?
- If you have strong feelings about the problem or the solution, make them known.
- If you can't make them known, what partnerships do you have on the outside?

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Data Systems: What is the state's vision?

- Does the state know what questions it's trying to answer?
  - What questions do you want to answer that require data from multiple agencies?
    - Long-term outcomes
    - Current services
    - What else?
  - Frame for the this conversation: What are the key decisions we're making that we might make better if we had better information?

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Data Systems: What is the state's vision?

- If the state doesn't know what questions it wants to answer, how is it going to go about identifying those questions?
  - What opportunities are there for engagement?
  - How can you get involved?
  - Who else do you need to have involved?

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Is there data to answer key questions?

- Often an existing interagency structure – Longitudinal Data System

- How does early childhood fit in that structure?

- How do special education and Part C fit in that structure?
  o Is the Part C agency involved?

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What analytic capacity does the state have?

- What analytic capacity does the state have to make sense of the numbers?

- How much sits within state government?

- How much sits outside of state government, and what is its relationship to state government?
  - o Who's controlling the narrative?

- How much research capacity is there for the questions that require it?

- What capacity do you need and want, and where do you want it to sit?

Will data lead to change?

- Is anybody going to actually do anything differently?

- If so, what would that have to look like?
  o Who is going to lead it?
  o What will be your role?

- Without this part, what difference does any of it make for kids?

Key Takeaways

- These issues combine complex policy dynamics: Executive/Legislative, Interagency, Intra-agency
- How can people work together?
  o What is their mandate from their boss?
  o How much bandwidth do they really have?
- Think about the system you want in 10 years
  o When is year two?

Thank you!

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