Wisconsin Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) Fact Sheet

Linking Data from Three State Agencies to Better Support Wisconsin Families

Using the ECIDS, agency researchers, analysts, and content experts will be able to connect DCF, DHS and DPI data to improve outcomes for Wisconsin children, families, and communities. The ECIDS will ensure that data is kept secure and will preserve each agency's responsibilities for protecting its data.

Between our three departments [the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Health Services (DHS), and Department of Public Instruction (DPI)], we collect a lot of required data about Wisconsin children. But it has been cumbersome to link data across programs and agencies, making it difficult to use data to perform research regarding how the State is serving children and what their outcomes are in the long run.

Our three agencies are making it a joint priority to harness the power of the data we are required to collect to help us better understand our impact on the wellbeing of Wisconsin children. Through a project funded by the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Grant, we are building the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). The ECIDS will link data from our three departments and encourage more frequent and beneficial data analyses for the purpose of improving how we serve Wisconsin's youngest children and their families.

Doing More with Our Data

Our three departments administer many complementary programs and services aimed at helping families and communities provide high quality experiences for young children. To get a better picture of how we are serving Wisconsin's youngest children and how these children fare as they grow through childhood toward adulthood, we need to take advantage of our combined wealth of data.

Because our data collections are segregated, this has been difficult to do. Keeping data safe and secure is critical. This means we must establish agreements between agencies when sharing data to ensure we uphold those standards. We lack a sustainable, repeatable process to make data exchanges easy, so every instance of sharing data across departments is treated as new. The barriers to pooling our information for answering some questions are higher than they need to be.

What ECIDS Does	What ECIDS Doesn't Do
Make the process of sharing data between our agencies easier, faster, and more reliable.	Pool agencies' data together in a centralized data warehouse.
Require adherence to all federal and state privacy laws and regulations.	Abridge agencies and programs ownership of their data or data managers' data security responsibilities.
Enable analysts to use de-identified data to study characteristics and outcomes of groups of participants.	Provide data on individuals needed for day-to-day operations or case management.
Strictly control access to data through agency assigned roles and by requiring data use agreements.	Enable interested individuals to view and use agencies data at will.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

What Does The ECIDS Project Involve?

The current ECIDS Project involves building the technical and policy foundation for the ECIDS, which will promote the analysis of de-identified, cross-departmental data.

Technical Tools

We are building a "Knowledge Base" that will establish and maintain cross-departmental links for client, participant, and student records related to the same individual. Agencies' program data will not be stored in the ECIDS. All that will be centrally stored are data elements needed to match records across agencies, and it will be impermissible to disclose that data to anyone.

Policies and Procedures

We are developing interagency agreements that ensure personally identifiable information will not be disclosed and that data will be shared securely and only under the terms of a data use agreement. At the same time, these agreements will make it easier to share data by streamlining the process of getting a data sharing agreement, standardizing how we match records and exchange data between agencies.

Agency-Specific Work

Supporting the ECIDS are data systems in each of the agencies that will feed the ECIDS. DCF purchased a product called Identity Insight to match children across all of their programs. DCF also created a cross-program data warehouse called LIFT (Longitudinal Information for Family Touchpoints) to provide de-identified research data to internal stakeholders. The Department of Health Services' Division of Public Health (DPH) created a Customer Hub, which contains identification data for children who have come in contact with the DPH, whether by birth, immunization or some other public health activity. This Customer Hub helps facilitate requests for de-identified data to meet approved data requests. DPI already has an extensive data warehouse, WISEdash, which provides de-identified student data for approved research requests.

User Tools

A later phase of the ECIDS Project will focus on building tools that make it easy for agency researchers and analysts to take advantage of the ECIDS. These tools could include a web portal that makes the process of sharing data between departments transparent and efficient.

ECIDS Coverage

During the RTT-ELC-funded project, we plan to link programs and data systems located within the three participating agencies. For more information please visit our Current WI ECIDS Project Information page on our WI ECIDS website: http://dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood/ecids

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