

# Early Childhood Integrated Data System: Strategic Implementation Plan, 2020-2023

## Introduction

The Access to More Resources for Children and Families (AMR) Work Group articulated an overarching Objective essential to the long-term success of all efforts to affect systemic change in the early childhood sector; namely, the creation of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). After significant deliberation, the work group members referred this Objective and associated Actions to the Early Learning Board (ELB) and Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) because those two entities represent the locus for systemic change through the collaborative efforts of the partners they convene. Both the ELB and EOEL agreed to accept responsibility to support development of this Implementation Plan and move things forward.

## Background on Early Childhood Integrated Data System

No needs assessment review was prepared for the ECIDS as the idea was spontaneously generated by the AMR Work Group. However, the breadth of information sought through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (to include funding for a needs assessment) attests to Hawai'i's profound need for improved data collection, analysis, and sharing to generate well-informed policies, target resources effectively, and document impact over time. If such a database existed, Hawai'i's early childhood sector would be actively drawing on it to set out and pursue an agenda for transforming early care and education statewide.

For a number of years, Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education actively facilitated the Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC), and convened a very diverse group of early childhood sector stakeholders to discuss and prioritize research and evaluation needs and questions (see <http://hawaiidxp.org/research/questions>), as well as to develop Hawai'i's own early childhood integrated data system. In this context, Hawai'i P-20 engaged in a proof-of-concept effort linking Department of Health Early Intervention Section records to Department of Education records to produce longitudinal outcomes. Hawai'i P-20 was also designated as the manager of the Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership (DXP)<sup>1</sup> which collectively governs Hawai'i's P-20 Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The SLDS is codified in Hawai'i Revised Statutes § 27-7.

While ECDC made progress on prioritizing policy and research questions which helped to identify required data elements, no statewide plan of action has been generated for developing an ECIDS. During the development of the Strategic Implementation Plans (June-December 2019), a series of informal conversations occurred among AMR Work Group members, consultants, and EOEL staff members with leaders representing organizations, including Hawai'i P-20, which might serve as an appropriate host for the ECIDS. Given Hawai'i P-20's expertise in linking and analyzing state agency records across the education-to-workforce pipeline,

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<sup>1</sup> The Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership is a partnership of State of Hawai'i agencies that have agreed to share and use data to inform positive change and to support continuous improvement of programs and services at all levels of statewide education and workforce training.

discussions with Hawai'i P-20 exploring the feasibility of expanding the SLDS were recommended. Unfortunately, based on information gathered by the AMR Work Group, without sufficient, sustained funding, and an assurance of engagement from key state agencies, no immediate host could be identified and forward progress has stalled. Many have concluded that legislative action is required to establish both the mandate and the necessary funding.

### **Hawai'i PDG Birth to Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment 2020**

*The complete report can be found at: <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Hawaii-Early-Childhood-Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-and-Using-Risk-and-Reach-Data-supplement-to-ICFs-comprehensive-NA.pdf>*

This needs assessment notes that leaders in the early childhood sector are aware of the need to share data at a system level in order to better understand the needs of children, their families, and the impact of early care and education programs and services on child outcomes. Some of these leaders feel they are “swimming” in early childhood data, but lack the analytical capacity to transform the data into insights about the children being served, the programs providing the services, and the allocation of resources to address priorities and gaps. In addition, compiling the data on broad indicators of child risk and program reach is exceedingly difficult because this information exists in silos within multiple state agencies, among private providers, and in the philanthropic sector. State agency leaders and legislators need to be aware that analytic capacity is a separate issue from the “brick and mortar” of an integrated data system.

The 2020 needs assessment identifies several critical information gaps remaining in the data on birth through five. They include:

1. Unduplicated individual- and system-level information on children in early childhood programs and services, including early intervention, family support, and/or financial support.
2. Systematic tracking of early care and education programs that are conducting developmental screenings in relation to developmental milestones, and mechanisms for a warm hand-off for children/families who require support services.
3. Universal indicators of early care and education program quality are not available as previous pilots of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) were not adopted. Current quality assessments rely on programs' national accreditation, public prekindergarten, or Head Start standards as indicators of high-quality services.
4. Systematic tracking at kindergarten entry of children who have been served by a high-quality early care and education program does not exist, and neither are there procedures in place for following the outcomes they have achieved, especially for those children identified as vulnerable or at high risk.

In response to these information gaps, the needs assessment report recommends the following:

1. Establish a single child identifier to be used by all providers in all types of settings, public and private. (Note: Hawai'i P-20, which has extensive experience with identity matching, has found that a single child identifier is not necessary. Based on other

national efforts, it is likely that the single child identifier will become a Personal Identifiable Information number, as confidential as a Social Security Number. Currently, Hawai'i P-20 has a well-established process in place for matching records across state agencies without the proposed identification number.)

2. Reintroduce a universal kindergarten-entry assessment to secure individualized information on children's needs, as well as system-level indicators on how well children are being prepared for kindergarten.
3. Institute a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that establishes universal indicators of program quality.
4. Develop a dashboard of measurable indicators on child need and program reach in the domains of Family and Economic Stability, Health and Wellbeing, and School Readiness, including mechanisms to update the indicators on a regular basis and share the information within the early childhood sector.
5. Resume collaborative efforts to establish a comprehensive database for systemic information, building on the data governance charter previously completed.

### **Looking to the Future: Building the infrastructure of an ECIDS in Hawai'i**

The pathway forward to building an ECIDS to serve early childhood sector leaders and decision-makers remains murky. Several significant barriers must be overcome. As this issue has crystallized through the development of the *Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024* and the Strategic Implementation Plans, it has become apparent that the Early Learning Board (ELB), along with support from the Executive Office on Early Learning, must convene its members on this topic and develop a Strategic Implementation Plan that specifically addresses the development of an ECIDS. In December 2019, the ELB agreed to take on this responsibility.

Building the infrastructure of an ECIDS in Hawai'i must address the:

- Barriers generated by differing legal opinions of laws governing data sharing that have effectively blocked the development of interagency agreements to share data and assess critical outcomes.
- Lack of understanding and trust among state agencies on the role of DXP data governance and associated processes that protect individual records, privacy, and security to safeguard records and individuals' rights.
- Concerns about what kinds of data need to be shared in order to inform policy and practice.
- Securing of subject matter experts to explain data elements, formats, and business rules governing the data to be shared.

The information that follows below is a rudimentary outline which serves as a representation of the conversations that led to a call for the development of an ECIDS Strategic Implementation Plan and as a starting point for that planning conversation.

## ECIDS Strategic Implementation Plan Under Development in 2020/2021

While no Strategic Implementation Plan was developed for an ECIDS during the 2019 planning efforts, some ideas and structure emerged that can be used by the ELB and EOEL as a foundation for developing the plan in 2020.

### Key Priority for Collective Action

*Drawn from the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024, italics refer to the Building Block (1-5), Key Strategy (A-D), and Priority (i-viii):*

Establish a system to gather, analyze, and share data on program quality and child outcomes to support programs with their efforts toward continuous improvement and to inform effective policymaking. *(BB5, B)*

Pilot a decentralized model of data-sharing to answer early childhood policy-related questions, and link to existing P-20 longitudinal data system for cross-sector data-sharing on key early childhood milestones and indicators. *(BB5, iii)*

### Objective 1: Secure a viable home for Hawai'i's Early Childhood Integrated Data System.

#### Proposed actions **MAY** include:

1. Explore viable models like the Hawai'i Health Information Exchange and Data Exchange Partnership for application in the early childhood sector.
  - If either model is deemed appropriate, initiate efforts to establish an independent entity.
2. Assess the need for a legislative mandate and funding to establish and maintain an early childhood integrated data system, and if such need is found, generate and implement plans to secure the mandate and funding.
3. Develop and implement a communication plan to share information generated by the ECIDS.

### Note on Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements

All actions within this Strategic Implementation Plan under development seem consistent with existing federal, state, and local regulations. Within this preliminary outline, policy and regulatory barriers to building an integrated data system are identified (pg. 3).

This publication was made possible by Grant Number #90TP0043-01-00 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



