

**Children's Bureau Child Welfare Evaluation Virtual Summit Series 2013-2014:
Getting It Done: Partnering to Overcome Concerns About Data Sharing
Transcript**

[Introduction Graphic – Children's Bureau Logo]

[Introduction Graphic – Child Welfare Evaluation Virtual Summit Series]

[01:00:22 Music – Simple downtempo groove]

[Graphic Text – Getting It Done: Partnering to Overcome Concerns About Data Sharing.]

[Graphic – Hand appears against white background and begins to illustrate a family as the narrator begins.]

Female Narrator: [01:00:32] In child welfare, accountability and effectiveness are expected. As administrators, we are being asked more and more often to monitor our performance, evaluate our outcomes and justify why our programs should continue to be funded. [Graphic – Drawings of three administrators appear on screen next to family.] We are also being asked to partner with other agencies and systems that serve the same children and families to evaluate services and outcomes together.

[Graphic – Drawings of external partners appear next to administration team. Image fades as narrator continues.]

[Graphic – Drawing of a group of people fades in, including administrators and partners. The group is looking stressful and overworked.]

[01:00:52] Many child welfare administrators know they need data from a variety of sources, but knowing where and how to get it can be a challenge. Sometimes this can feel like an impossible undertaking and it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

[Graphic – Group of people fade to only a single person, looking overwhelmed.]

Female Narrator: [01:01:05] I know I needed to determine whether our program is working, but I really don't know what information I need, let alone who has it or how to get it. [Graphic – Image of a door labeled "Program Evaluation." Red brick wall begins to be built up blocking access to the door.] I don't know if we're even allowed to share our data or if others can share their data with us. And our information is so old we would probably have to build a whole new data collection system. [Graphic – Text on three completed sections of brick wall reads – Unclear Data Needs, Privacy Concerns, and Technology and Resource Barriers.] We can't afford that now. Can my agency really do all this?

[Graphic – Image reverses and reveals a diagram showing the flow of information during program evaluation.]

Female Narrator: [01:01:30] Despite feeling overwhelmed at times and uncertain about where to start, many child welfare agencies are finding ways to access and share the data they need. How are they getting it done? We'll talk about a few misperceptions and myths that sometimes deter us from sharing data and how practical steps can be taken to overcome them. [Graphic – Image fades to a hallway, with three doors, and an administrator walking towards them.] Let's examine a few of the most common barriers to data sharing more closely.

[Graphic – Rough sketch of door marked with a dotted line drawing, text reads – Data Needs.]

Female Narrator: [01:01:52] I really don't know what information I need, let alone who has it or how to get it.

[Graphic – Sketch of door resolves into a drawing of the door to an office, text reads – Myth #1, "It's best to ask for everything."]

Female Narrator: [01:01:58] Sometimes when we're uncertain about what data we really need, we assume that it's best to ask for everything. The truth is you don't need it all. In fact, you may only need a small amount of data for your analyses.

[Graphic – Door to office opens, and clutter is removed to reveal an efficient office workspace.]

[01:02:09] By creating a process to identify those data elements we need right away, we can repeat the same process in the future if more information is necessary. [Graphic – Drawing of a man holding keys and smiling outside the door of an apartment.] Let's say we need to evaluate the effectiveness of an independent living program for youth aging out of foster care that our agency has designed in collaboration with the local housing agency and the local school district.

[Graphic – Hand illustrates the flow of data collection diagram from earlier larger and in more detail.]

[01:02:32] Each agency collects data about its own services and each needs data from the other to know if the program is achieving the outcomes we are looking for. [Graphic – Hand draws student wearing cap and gown, holding diploma.] In this case, we want to know whether or not the program improved educational outcomes like high school graduation and housing outcomes like reduced homelessness.

[Graphic – Graduate image zooms out to be positioned as a photo on a whiteboard presentation held by administrators and partners reviewing data around a conference table.]

[01:02:50] Our first step is to bring together program, evaluation and IT staff from the housing, education and child welfare agencies. While it can take time to build trust, partners in joint projects usually recognize the mutual benefits of sharing information and will make efforts to work together.

[01:03:07] Most child and family serving systems are under more pressure than ever to exchange information so that they can be more efficient and better assess needs and improve services. And many federally supported projects are contingent upon collaboration in order to receive funding.

[Graphic – Two computers appear on conference table, image zooms in on screen and text reads – Evaluation Questions, Program Ideas, and Influencing Factors.]

[01:03:23] Once the key players are at the table, our next step is to identify the data elements we actually need, keeping in mind that not everything needs to be shared. What data we need depends on our evaluation questions and our ideas about how the program works and which factors could influence outcomes.

[Graphic – Hand illustrates examples of each desired outcome as the narrator continues. Then, the hand writes data relevant to each factor of the program, as if filling out paperwork.]

[01:03:39] For example, if the desired outcomes of our program are high school completion, stable housing and self-sufficiency, we'll likely need a combination of demographic, school, housing and child welfare information, as well as information about the youth's participation in independent living classes, employment training and other services.

[Graphic – Image zooms away from individual computer screen and shows two computers side by side, being used to cross reference data and reports.]

[01:03:59] Then we'll determine who has which data element, where it's housed and whether each element can be identified with an individual child or family case. It's important to discuss common identifiers that are being collected by all agencies like name, date of birth and gender.

[01:04:17] In order for agencies to share data about individual cases, a unique identifier or a combination of common identifiers used by all agencies must be matched. In some cases, agencies may need to adjust their data collection to make sure they are recording common identifiers in the same way.

[Graphic – The data on the two computers is reconciled with common values, to make each data set consistent.]

[01:04:35] The partnering agencies must also identify information that is only collected by one agency, but needed by the others and determine if this information needs to be person specific or shared aggregately. By working together, we can identify what data is really needed, who has the data and which data needs to be shared.

[01:04:52] Keep in mind that different information may be needed at different times during the program and some may not be needed at all. [Graphic – Image returns to the

rough sketch of doors in a hallway, now with one door filled in with detailed drawing.]

Let's move on to another common area of concern.

[Graphic – Second door as rough sketch , text reads – Privacy]

Female Narrator: [01:05:05] I don't know if we're even allowed to share data or if others can share their data with us.

Female Narrator: [01:05:11] Sometimes it feels like in order to preserve the confidentiality of clients, we can't share anything. [Graphic – Image of door resolves into detailed drawing and shows partners sharing data within.] But the truth is that while privacy is protected under a variety of laws, you can share confidential information under specific circumstances and with the appropriate legal, technical and procedural protections in place.

[Graphic – Administrator hidden behind a stack of legal books and regulations.]

[01:05:30] First and foremost, it's important to understand the law. We can't let ourselves or let others hide behind statutes to avoid sharing data. The Social Security Act, CAPTA, FERPA and HPPA, all have provisions that protect privacy and restrict the use of data, but all allow for the exchange of data for certain purposes.

[Graphic – Hand illustrates the HPPA / FERPA example as narrator continues.]

[01:05:50] For example, HPPA allows the sharing of personal health information for treatment, payment and healthcare operations and recent changes to FERPA make it easier for schools to release a child's education records to child welfare agencies.

[01:06:06] But we need more than statute to ensure that we can legally and easily share information. [Graphic – Hand illustrates bird's eye view of conference table with partners on either side cooperating.] We'll have to establish trust and negotiate terms of agreement between all the data sharing partners. Data sharing agreements should be sealed with formal Memoranda of Understanding.

[Graphic – Close up of "Memoranda of Understanding," with two signatures. Text on document repeats each point as the narrator continues.]

[01:06:23] And our negotiations should be clear about what is being shared by each agency. Outline any restrictions on the use of shared data. Include safeguards against unauthorized access and disclosure of information, specify the roles and responsibilities of each partnering agency and ensure that the agency's confidentiality requirements are enforced.

[Graphic – Hand illustrates technical issues related to data transfer and distribution.]

[01:06:45] We should also address technical issues such as how the data will be transmitted, encrypted, secured, stored and accessed. Once a data sharing agreement or MOU is signed, then it's time for us to set up protocols and clear rules about who

gets what types of data, how and when they can access it and what types of training are needed to make the most of it.

[Graphic – Hand illustrates a full team, working around a conference table.]

[01:07:05] If our program legal and IT staff have all been involved, trained, and understand the agreed upon limitations and permissions of sharing data, we should feel confident in our ability to share data and to request data from others. [Graphic – Image returns to the sketch hallway, now with only one door remaining undetailed.] Now that we have the policies and protections in place, it's time to revisit concerns about technology.

[Graphic –Sketch of third door, text reads - Technology.]

Female Narrator: [01:07:23] Our information system is so old we probably have to build a whole new data collection system.

[Graphic – Door number 3 resolved into detailed image, text on door reads – “We probably have to build a whole new system.”]

Female Narrator: [01:07:30] When our current information system doesn't seem capable of meeting our data needs, it can sometimes cause us to throw up our hands. But starting over from scratch and creating a new system is often only one of several options available.

[Graphic – Woman using projector conducts an assessment of technology sitting at a long table. Members of the team join the table as narrator continues.]

[01:07:45] Let's not assume that we need an entirely new system to do the job without doing a thorough assessment first. This means working with our IT staff and involving them from the beginning. In some cases, a new system may be the more economical and efficient choice, but often an older system will still be able to support our needs. Old dogs can learn new tricks and our old system may be capable of new tricks too and it may not be all that hard to do.

[Graphic – Image flips to show each IT member suggesting options for how to use the old system in new ways.]

[01:08:11] Our IT staff can propose a variety of options taking into account the existing systems capacity, cost and the staff burden of additional data entry. We might hear some of the following suggestions for data sharing between the child welfare agency, housing authority and school district.

[Graphic – Male IT worker suggests a data warehouse and shows a diagram of how it would work.]

Male Narrator: [01:08:28] One option might be to create a separate integrated data warehouse where all of the partnering agencies could dump their data files. Then the data could be merged behind the scenes.

[Graphic – Female IT worker suggests a standardized data exchange and shows a diagram of how it would work.]

Female Narrator: [01:08:38] We could also create a standardized data exchange between the systems so that certain data elements would be defined and used the same way by all of the systems.

[Graphic – Other Male IT worker suggests adding new elements of data to the existing system and shows a diagram of how it would work.]

Male Narrator: [01:08:48] Or we could upgrade our existing child welfare data system to allow housing and education data to be imported.

[Graphic – Image shows conference table with administrators and IT staff mapping out how to overcome challenges without discarding old technologies.]

Female Narrator: [01:08:53] By not limiting ourselves to slashing and rebuilding anew and consulting with our IT experts, we can explore our options, make more informed decisions and create a collaborative process that may result in less drastic approaches and maybe even less stress. While it can seem overwhelming, the truth is that we don't

need everything. [Music – slow but uplifting guitar.] [Graphic – Shows administrator moving through a now fully detailed hallway with confidence.] Data can be shared while protecting privacy and creating a new system isn't the only answer. So to answer the question:

Female Narrator: [01:09:23] Can our agency really do all of this?

[Graphic – Door at the end of the hallway, now open, reads – Program Effectiveness. As the narrator continues, “YES!” appears on the door.]

Female Narrator: [01:09:25] The answer is yes. The processes of identifying the data we need, setting up data sharing agreements with appropriate protections and investigating our data exchange options are all doable when we are willing to try and bring all of the right people to the table. [Graphic – Team around conference table wraps it up and as partners and administrators look confident.] Data sharing is not an impossible feat and we are all up to the challenge.

[On screen text- Special thanks – Tammy White, Dian Carroll, Dori Sneddon, Brian Deakins, Children's Bureau.]

[On screen text – This video was created by Pal-Tech, Inc. under contract No. HHSP23337003T funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its content does not necessarily reflect the official views of the Children's Bureau.]

[Graphic – Child welfare evaluation virtual summit series.]

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