

Project Update: Child Welfare and Health Infrastructure for Linking and Data Analysis of Resources, Effectiveness, and Needs (CHILDREN) Initiative

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This brief describes progress in the Child Welfare and Health Infrastructure for Linking and Data Analysis of Resources, Effectiveness, and Needs (CHILDREN) Initiative, which is entering its second year. At this time, four jurisdictions have been selected for participation in the CHILDREN Initiative and are engaging in feasibility studies to determine readiness for linking data between child welfare and Medicaid for children and caregivers engaged in child welfare systems.

BACKGROUND ON THE CHILDREN INITIATIVE

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) launched the CHILDREN initiative to help public child welfare and Medicaid agencies enhance their data infrastructure to support the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA; [P.L. 115-123](#)), which changed how states and tribes may use funding available through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CHILDREN initiative is being implemented by Mathematica, and supports public child welfare and Medicaid agencies to: (1) improve the delivery and oversight of services, (2) enhance the agencies' ability to monitor program spending, and (3) conduct cross-program research and evaluation of service outcomes. Developing sustainable, integrated data systems with linked child welfare and Medicaid data can advance the care coordination and oversight of Title IV-E prevention services and congregate care services. CHILDREN builds on a previous collaboration between ASPE and the Administration for Children and Families, "Child and Caregiver Outcomes through Linked Data." That project involved a federal partnership with Florida and Kentucky to link child welfare and Medicaid records, producing a [research use data set](#) and other [materials](#) that share lessons learned for similar linking efforts.

SITE SELECTION

Mathematica reached out to eighteen jurisdictions, worked with eleven jurisdictions to determine eligibility and interest, and assessed capacity with seven jurisdictions. After initial assessments and consultation between ASPE and Mathematica, four jurisdictions were invited to participate in the CHILDREN initiative: **District of Columbia, Iowa, Oregon, and Wyoming**. States were selected based on fulfilling key selection criteria including having: approved FFPSA prevention services plans, buy-in from both child welfare and Medicaid agencies, existing infrastructure to support data collection and linkage, and experience using and analyzing data.

NEXT STEPS

Conduct feasibility studies. Mathematica will work with public agencies from the four jurisdictions to determine their readiness and assess their capacity and infrastructure to link and analyze these data. This includes identifying purposes for the linked data, determining infrastructure required to effectively use linked data, as well as what is needed to develop this infrastructure. Following the completion of the feasibility studies, the CHILDREN Initiative will work with selected states to: 1) develop datasets and data systems with linked records, 2) conduct analyses using linked data, and 3) document challenges and lessons learned throughout the process.

To stay up to date on the CHILDREN Initiative, please visit Mathematica's project page [here](#).