Recommendations for selecting and implementing an early childhood care and education state governance structure [1]

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Source: American Institutes for Research
Format: Fact sheet
Publication Date: 1 Feb 2021

AVAILABILITY
Access online [PDF] [2]

Excerpted from overview

The purpose of this brief is to provide a set of recommendations for state leaders who may be examining or reconsidering their state's early childhood care and education (ECCE) mixeddelivery governance structure. These recommendations arise from work that American Institutes for Research (AIR) did with Illinois as part of the Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) initiative.

As a result of a commitment to improve the ECCE mixed-delivery system in the United States, several states received a federal PDG B-5 renewal (PDG B-5R) award from the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education in 2020. The overall purpose of the grant is to help states improve the effectiveness of their ECCE mixed-delivery systems by executing several activities. The PDG B-5 awards are intended to support states' efforts to better integrate their ECCE programs, helping to address a critical challenge in what has come to be known as the "patchwork" system. In the United States, ECCE programs have been rooted in multiple systems of care (e.g., education, health services, human services, social services), often on behalf of similar populations of young children and their families (Demma, 2010; Illgen, Stebbins, Barnett, & Fahey, 2011; Kamerman, 2006).

Unfortunately, the mixture of disparate programs within ECCE systems has resulted in fragmented funding, services, and efforts to track data on the impact of the services (Demma, 2010; Kagan & Gomez, 2015; Kamerman, 2006; Regenstein & Lipper, 2013; Regenstein, 2020). Federal, state, and local administrators have long recognized the complexities and inefficiencies of operating separate governance systems. In the last decade, several states have integrated or collaborated across ECCE administrative systems to provide a more cohesive set of programs and services for children and families (Demma, 2010; Early Childhood Data Collaborative, 2011; Illgen et al., 2011). As ECCE programs expand and new services are initiated, concerns have increased about how to organize and administer the collection of programs to maximize efficiency, coordination, and equitable distribution of resources. State administrators responsible for overseeing and coordinating ECCE programs are seeking information to guide their decisions on best state ECCE governance structures. Yet, it is important to recognize that system change is a process (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Hall, 2013; Metz et al., 2015) that is not simple, quick, or easy for states to do.

The five recommendations presented in this brief for considering a state's ECCE governance structure arise from information that AIR gathered from a review of administrative, fiscal, and governance documents; interviews with national experts; and an examination of multiple existing state governance models. This brief starts with a review of the major types of ECCE governance structures and the strengths and weaknesses of each model. We then offer five recommendations and implementation factors to help states consider, adopt, and implement new ECCE governance structures.

Region: United States [3]
Tags: infrastructure [4]
system [5]