

Colorado Early Childhood Councils Quarterly Report: SFY2011—Second Quarter



SFY2011, Second Quarter (October 1-December 31, 2010)

March 2011

What IS Shared Accountability?

Shared Accountability is not a phrase people hear every day, so it can be a bit difficult to unpack its meaning in the context of early childhood systems development.

As one of the six foundations of the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#) for which local Early Childhood Councils statewide are responsible, *Shared Accountability* can also be thought of as shared **ownership**. In the context of early childhood, it means that all partners in a community who are serving young children and their families are working together to make that system of services easily accessible, available and affordable. It means that early childhood service providers from all four domains (health, mental health, early learning, and family support) are:

- Developing and implementing a common vision and goals for the system;
- Planning across organizations; and
- Coordinating data across the system to track progress.

Easy, right?

Not necessarily. But definitely worth the effort.

Think about a soccer team. A common vision and goals means that all players are trying to achieve the same end result (in this case, scoring goals) for common reasons (e.g., fitness, healthy competition, a sense of achievement). Shared planning means that the players work together — on and off the field; during and preceding games — to figure out exactly how they will win their matches. And coordinating data means that all team members not only know what works when they win (or what doesn't work when they lose), but each meaningfully contributes to that result.

Sharing accountability in early childhood systems building is the same. Partners in the system develop a common vision and goals (e.g., early childhood services in the community are accessible and high quality); they plan for how they will achieve those goals (e.g., changing policy, aligning services, braiding funds); and they

take an active role in implementing and evaluating the success of those efforts (and changing course, when needed).

Like a soccer team, during the second quarter of SFY2011 (October 1-December 31, 2010), each of Colorado's 30 Early Childhood Councils worked with its team of players — leaders from early learning, family support, health, and mental health — to share accountability for the local early childhood systems. Together they worked across agencies, organizations, sectors and issue areas to improve services to young children and their families. And as a team — collaboratively, many took stock of their

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

**SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY 1
EXPLORED**

**COLLABORATION SURVEY 4
RESULTS**

**Visit us on
the web at:**

[www.cde.state.co.us/early/
ECC.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/early/ECC.htm)



Colorado Early Childhood Councils

Shared Accountability is a Team Sport

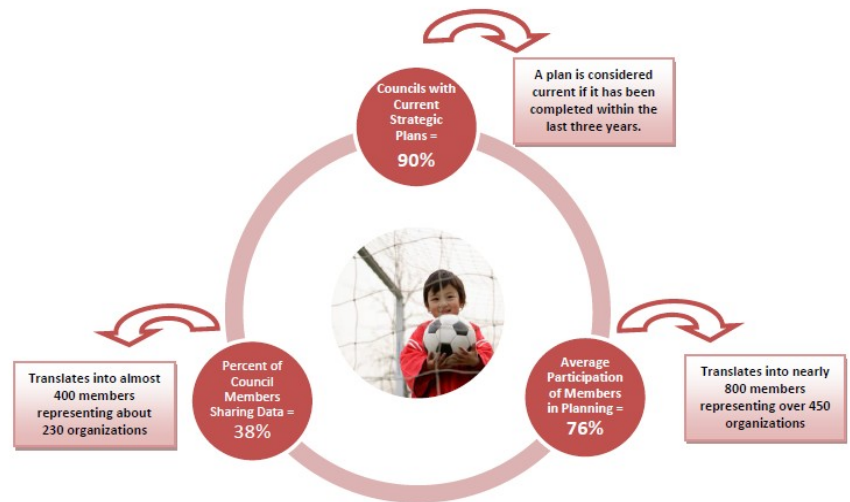
(Continued from page 1)

successes and challenges so they could redirect course.

The graphic to the right shows what this looked like in action for Councils during the second quarter of SFY2011. All but three Councils were working off of strategic plans that were less than three years old, demonstrating a common vision and goals. Over 76 percent of Council members had participated in the crafting of those plans and the specific actions for success outlined in them. This means that approximately 800 early childhood leaders from nearly 450 agencies and organizations across the state agreed on ways they would work together to make high quality early childhood services available and easily accessible to families across the state. This is efficient, effective, elegant government in action!

At the same time, Councils report that only about a third of their members shared data — a key element in determining what actions of the plan are effective and which need to be revisited, revised or removed.

Why is that? Why are Councils having trouble



Shared accountability means identifying a common vision, planning collaboratively and across agencies to achieve that vision, and tracking wins and losses to redirect efforts in the future.

securing data to assess their success or the need for change? The answer to this is multi-faceted, beginning first with limited funding and capacity to invest heavily in data coordination between agencies and diverse organizations.

This is an issue that is not just local. Currently, there are major efforts being undertaken at the state level to facilitate cross-domain data coordination, including work by the Governor's Office of Information Technology, the Colorado Department of Education's Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant, and by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission. These efforts are interrelated in many ways and should, ultimately, result in an ability to much more easily, reliably and affordably

coordinate data about children and families across domains and across the state.

In the meantime, many Councils can and are engaging in work with the partners at their tables to encourage data collaboration that will inform the process of shared accountability — identifying common visions, planning and implementing actions to realize those visions, and cooperatively taking stock of successes and opportunities for change.

At present, local data efforts take many different forms. Most Councils (90 percent) actively collect some data themselves or through agreement with their partners. Eighty-three percent of Councils collect program data and nearly as many collect data about

(Continued on page 3)

“WE TOOK TIME TO REEVALUATE WHERE WE WERE IN OUR STRATEGIC PLAN AND HAVE REALLY MADE HEADWAY WITH NOTICEABLE STEPS AND INCREASED ENGAGEMENT. NOW WE ARE COMMUNICATING OUR PURPOSE TO PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS AND WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SERVICE ACROSS AGENCIES.”

TELLER/PARK EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL



SFY2011, Second Quarter (October 1-December 31, 2010)

Shared Accountability — Data Opportunities

(Continued from page 2)

early childhood service providers. Far fewer (43 percent each) collect data about children or about the early childhood system itself (see Figure 1).

Councils that are collecting data have fairly limited capacity to do so at the moment. Effective data collection and analysis is expensive and requires very specific training and tools.

As of December 31, 2010, twelve of the 30 Councils across the state were either not collecting data or were only able to utilize low-tech and/or sporadic data collection techniques (e.g., Excel spreadsheets, online survey tools, paper tracking).

Eighteen Councils reported that they use either the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) database and/or a separate formalized database

system (e.g., Access) for tracking data (Figure 2). Fourteen of these Councils use the NACCRRA database, nine of which actually function as their region's Child Care Resource and Referral agency. Only four Councils currently have their own dedicated Council databases.

In order to complete the cycle of *shared accountability*, Councils need to be able to coordinate and analyze data across domains. Their partners and members need to be able to safely and reliably share relevant data. And the Councils themselves need the tools and skill sets to collect and make sense of that data. Currently, resources for data collection, housing, coordination and analysis are very limited.

What can Councils do now on limited funding to improve data sharing and coordination? Start with developing [data sharing](#)

Council Data Collection Tools
As of Second Quarter, SFY2011

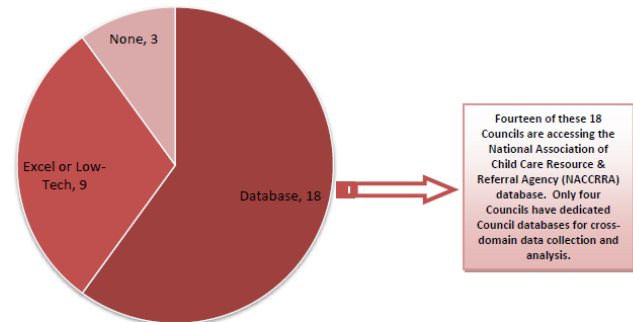


Figure 2

agreements and protocols among members. A [data inventory and mapping](#) can also help Councils to identify which partners already collect data that could be regularly shared in order to track and assess progress toward the shared goals outlined in the Council's strategic plan. And even [formalized sharing of success stories](#) can be an effective way to gather qualitative data on systems development.

Data collection systems do not have to be complex or fancy. [Excel spreadsheets or Access databases](#) can work for many purposes. And, if needed, Councils can draw upon the [data skills of members](#) or a [data-analysis committee](#) to collaboratively review collected data and make sense of it .

Creativity and persistence will be the key ingredients to closing the *shared accountability* loop.

“WE HAVE JUST BEGUN TO DEVELOP A DATABASE WHERE EACH COUNTY CAN INSERT INFORMATION ON SPECIFIC PROGRAMS, GRANT OUTCOMES, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES.”

RURAL RESORT REGION — WESTERN DIVISION

Types of Data Collected by EC Councils
As of Second Quarter, SFY2011

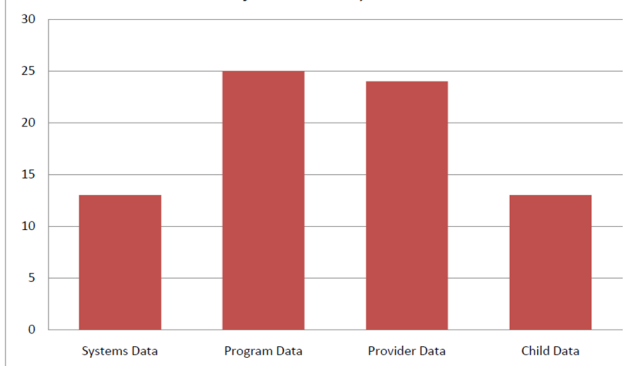


Figure 1

Survey Results Demonstrate Strong Collaborations

KEY SUBSCALES COVERED BY SURVEY QUESTIONS

- **STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY:** whether processes seem fair
- **AUTHENTICITY:** a measure of openness and sincerity
- **EQUITY:** relating to the distribution of outcomes
- **TREATMENT:** each members' feelings of dignity and respect from the group

Members of all 30 Early Childhood Councils across the state participated in an annual collaboration survey in the fall of 2010. The survey, created by Professors Darrin Hicks and Carl Larson of the University of Denver, has been used successfully in their past research to assess the health and strength of collaborations such as the Nurse Family Partnership and Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

The intent of the survey for the Councils initiative was to give Councils:

- Individualized reports that provide specific information about each Council's own scores, along with an explanation of how to interpret the results; and
- Related training and technical assistance on how to interpret and use the results of the survey to facilitate future Council collaboration.

The survey will be conducted annually so that Councils will be able to see and respond to changes in collaboration over time.

At the state level, aggregate data will be analyzed to describe collaboration across all Councils, both as a point-in-time picture and longitudinally. This information can help inform future technical assistance for Councils and will also assist the state in communicating funding and policy needs to local and state-level stakeholders.

The survey looked at several key areas that tend to impact the strength and effectiveness of a collaboration. These are highlighted in the box to the left.

The survey also examined Council members' perceptions of the context, structure and results of the collaboration, as well as looking at issues of trust, willingness to compromise, and process credibility issues.

On average, Councils statewide scored well on almost all subscales. Respondents praised the extent to which their Councils represent multiple domains, support teamwork and partnerships, promote leadership and facilitate communication across entities.

The only score that consistently fell into an area warranting further attention by most Councils was on one of the authenticity questions: "Often decisions are made in advance and simply confirmed by the process."

A review of the results by Dr. Hicks identified four common themes for further potential Council growth and development:

- Council Logistics
- Trust
- Stagnation
- Role Clarity

A complete discussion of these themes and opportunities for addressing them is being developed by Professor Hicks and will be available on the CDE website in the near future. In addition, recent regional meetings have included opportunities to explore these themes as well.

Nearly seven hundred individuals across the state responded to the survey. Forty-three percent of respondents represented the early learning domain, while family support (18%), health (13%), mental health (12%) and other community representation (14%) made up the rest.

Colorado's Early Childhood Councils integrate services delivered through a comprehensive early childhood system that includes quality care and education, family support, health and mental health programs. Authorizing legislation calls on the Councils "To develop and ultimately implement a comprehensive system of early childhood services to ensure the school readiness of children five years of age or younger." (HB 07-1062)

The Early Childhood Councils program is funded by Child Care Development Block Grant/Child Care Development Funds and is administered at the state level by a partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education.