

**Data Analytics and Insights (DAI) Workgroup Meeting
Meeting 9
February 26th, 2026, 1:00 am -2:30 PM CST**

<https://carriestewart-569.my.webex.com/carriestewart-569.my/j.php?MTID=md7cbddb0b126e2c44c8b772fd5be9a31>

In attendance:

Workgroup members: Hannah Miro, Erin Acosta, Wendy Mamola, Alicia Lynch-Deatherage, Rochelle Golliday, Angela Ballard, Janice Moenster, Kelsey Bakken, Felicia Gray, Meg Helder, Edie Washington

State Team Members and Consultants: Christina Krasov (Illinois Department of Early Childhood); Aressa Coley (Afton Partners), Beza Bulega (Afton Partners), Crystal Roman (Afton Partners), Kristen Garcia (Afton Partners); Dale Richards (Child Trends), Carlise King (Child Trends)

Members of the public: 20

Minutes

1. Welcome & Community Builder

Aressa Coley (Afton Partners) welcomed the group and the public to the February meeting and expressed hope that participants enjoyed their weekends. Aressa outlined the meeting's goals and agenda.

Goals

- ✓ Identify the essential components of an effective, equity-centered early childhood data governance structure
- ✓ Explore early childhood data governance structures and models across other states

Agenda

1. Welcome & Community Builder
2. Reflections from the January Meeting
3. Child Trends: Exploring Early Childhood Data Governance Models
4. Public Comment, Next Steps & Close

Aressa revisited the Data Analytics and Insights (DAI) commitment statement, which serves as the North Star for the Illinois Department of Early Childhood's Data Analytics and Insights

function. She stated that the function aims to promote a more equitable system that meets the needs of all children and families by sharing actionable data directly with families so they can more easily and equitably access the services they need to thrive, and by sharing data with providers and administrators to support continuous improvement in their support of children and families.

Aressa also reviewed the group's community agreements, which include prioritizing parent and provider experiences, seeking to understand and remain curious, and staying informed of learnings from other workgroups within the transition process. She noted the importance of continuing to build knowledge through research and national best practices, with support from Child Trends. She emphasized that the workgroup's goal is to co-design recommendations with families, providers, and other system implementers who will either be impacted by the recommendations or responsible for implementing them.

To begin the discussion, Aressa invited participants to share the first word or phrase that comes to mind when they hear the term **data governance**.

Several workgroup members shared reflections. One workgroup member described data governance as decentralized, noting that many individuals contribute data through their lived experiences and share responsibility for how data is used and shared. Another workgroup member described data governance as the set of rules governing data collection.

Additional workgroup members referenced themes such as **accountability, process, standardization, collaboration, coordination, transparency, and frameworks that create structure**.

Aressa encouraged participants to keep these ideas in mind throughout the discussion and consider whether their perspectives evolve as the group continues exploring data governance concepts.

Aressa reviewed the workgroup's overall timeline. She explained that Phase I focused on identifying priority data metrics and outcomes needed for the Department's day-one readiness. Phase II, the current phase, focuses on informing a sustainable data governance infrastructure that supports equitable decision-making over time.

She described Phase II as a bridge between the equity-centered recommendations developed during Phase One and the governance structures, processes, and norms needed to sustain meaningful engagement in the future.

Aressa outlined the goals for Phase II, which include:

- Ensuring that data governance structures ground data decisions in lived experiences and build trust
- Clarifying roles, authority, and accountability within governance structures
- Supporting ongoing stakeholder engagement

- Aligning with IDEC's broader organizational and leadership structure

She also outlined key objectives for the phase:

- Developing a shared understanding of data governance
- Refining guiding principles that will serve as values and guardrails for recommendations
- Exploring and evaluating different data governance models
- Reviewing stakeholder engagement findings from Child Trends interviews
- Synthesizing these discussions into a set of recommendations for IDEC

Aressa noted that in January, the workgroup began shaping guiding principles for equity-centered data governance and that the current meeting would focus on reviewing examples of different governance models. Future meetings will evaluate those models using the guiding principles developed by the workgroup.

She also stated that Child Trends will conduct stakeholder interviews in the spring and bring the findings back to the workgroup to inform the final recommendations.

Aressa shared that the workgroup's Phase II recommendations memo, submitted to IDEC in December, has been fully reviewed by IDEC leadership, including Secretary Ramos, Christina Krasov, and other members of the leadership team. She reported that the recommendations received positive feedback and were also presented at the Transition Advisory Committee meeting.

Aressa noted that the memo has been posted on the [IDEC website](#) and thanked the workgroup for their contributions, acknowledging the depth and thoughtfulness of the recommendations developed during Phase II.

2. Reflections from January Meeting

Aressa provided a recap of themes from the January meeting before transitioning the discussion to Child Trends.

She reviewed the **four data governance categories** discussed previously:

- Data priorities, which focus on what data is collected and which outcomes are measured.
- Access and sharing, which address who can view data, how data is shared, and who determines what information is made public.
- Data interpretation, which considers who or what processes are responsible for translating data and determining what it means for communities and stakeholders.

- Accountability and feedback, which include mechanisms for challenging or correcting inaccurate data and processes for sharing feedback with communities.

Aressa noted that workgroup discussions highlighted several challenges within the current data structures and their impacts on families, providers, and the broader early childhood system. She shared that a key takeaway from the discussion was that these four components of data governance are highly interconnected and must function together to support equity, trust, and transparency. She stated that if one area is weaker or stronger than others, the integrity of the overall system can be affected.

Aressa summarized several themes that emerged across the four data governance categories.

Data priorities:

Workgroup members emphasized that data priorities should be guided by clear purpose and intentionality around equity and access. They noted that current data priorities are often influenced by competing needs of different stakeholders, such as funders, legislators, or program requirements. Members discussed the need for a more streamlined approach to data collection, communication, and interpretation, as well as clearer guidance on how data should be used. They also noted that clear processes can help foster trust and allow families to share information without concern about how their data may be used.

Access and sharing:

Workgroup members discussed the balance between making data publicly available and protecting privacy and consent. Members noted that once data is publicly shared, communities may lose control over how that data is interpreted or used. They also highlighted challenges caused by systems that do not communicate with one another, which can increase administrative burden for families and providers. Members emphasized the importance of timely and clear data-sharing agreements and the need to distinguish between processes for sharing aggregated data and those for sharing individual-level data.

Data interpretation:

Workgroup members discussed how data interpretation can be subjective and may introduce bias. They emphasized the need for clear structures and processes to support consistent interpretation and reduce the risk of misinterpretation. Members also highlighted the importance of iterative review processes, cultural responsiveness, language accessibility, and ensuring that interpretation structures consider both state-level and regional or local contexts.

Accountability and feedback:

Workgroup members emphasized the importance of feedback loops that include diverse community perspectives. They noted that families and providers should have opportunities to review, correct, or provide context for data to prevent harm or misinterpretation. Members also emphasized that accountability structures should be growth-oriented and asset-based rather than

punitive, and that dedicated infrastructure, including funding, staffing, and time, would be necessary to support these feedback and accountability mechanisms.

Examples of Existing Practices

Aressa also highlighted examples of existing data governance processes identified by workgroup members as demonstrating strong accessibility, inclusivity, or family-centered approaches. These examples included:

- The Illinois Report Card, which was noted as a user-friendly and accessible tool for sharing information on state and district progress.
- The City of Chicago's internal data request review process, which incorporates considerations related to inclusivity and representation.
- The Early Intervention family survey review process, which include structured feedback loops that inform follow-up actions and help identify representation gaps.
- The Rockford Early Development Instrument (EDI) process, which was noted for strong community feedback and accountability mechanisms.

Aressa noted that the workgroup will continue exploring these and other models during upcoming meetings.

She then transitioned the discussion to Child Trends to continue the presentation and deepen the group's understanding of data governance models.

3. Child Trends: Exploring Early Childhood Data Governance Models

Dale Richards from Child Trends introduced the next portion of the meeting and noted that the presentation would provide an overview of data governance concepts and structures. Dale explained that the goal of the presentation was to introduce several examples and frameworks and to allow time for discussion and feedback from the workgroup.

Overview of Data Governance

Dale described data governance as the structure that establishes and maintains policies, processes, and standards for managing and safeguarding data. These structures may operate across one or multiple organizations and help guide decisions about how data are used and managed.

Dale noted that data governance is often associated with privacy and security policies, but it also includes broader elements such as collaboration, consensus-building, participation, financing, and stakeholder engagement. Dale emphasized that data governance should be understood as both a structure and an ongoing process, requiring effective communication, transparency, and collaboration among stakeholders.

Dale also clarified that data governance is not solely a technical or IT function. Instead, it involves coordination among those who manage data systems, those who collect or contribute data, and those responsible for oversight and decision-making.

Typical responsibilities of data governance entities may include:

- Determining what data and information are needed
- Establishing processes for maintaining and integrating data
- Managing interoperability between systems
- Addressing appropriate data use, privacy, confidentiality, and security
- Promoting transparency and effective data use

Initial Steps for Developing a Data Governance Body

Dale outlined several common steps for developing a data governance structure. The first step is to identify the purpose of the governance entity before determining its structure. Dale noted that understanding the purpose helps ensure that the structure aligns with the system's goals.

After defining the purpose, organizations typically:

- Determine the data governance structure
- Identify individuals to participate in the data governance entity and workgroups
- Define the roles and responsibilities of the data governance members and guiding principles
- Develop decision-making procedures (this can include a data governance manual)

Dale explained that these steps support the creation of a governance structure that can later guide decisions around data priorities, access, sharing, interpretation, and correction.

Dale also noted that these steps are about forming or developing the governance body, rather than implementing it (e.g., setting data priorities, decisions on access and sharing of data, data interpretation, accountability and feedback, etc.).

Role of the Workgroup in Phase Two

Dale stated that the workgroup will play an important role in informing the data governance infrastructure for IDEC. The workgroup's previous work, particularly the development of guiding principles, will help define the values and guardrails for the governance structure.

Dale explained that the workgroup will:

- Review examples of data governance models

- Assess those models through an equity lens
- Provide recommendations for how stakeholder engagement and transparency should be incorporated into the governance structure

Dale noted that governance structures may include councils, advisory groups, or workgroups, and that these structures can vary depending on how organizations incorporate stakeholder input.

Defining the Purpose of a Data Governance Entity

Dale emphasized the importance of clarifying the purpose of a data governance entity before determining its structure. Several potential purposes were presented as examples to guide discussion.

These examples included:

- To oversee all/most IDEC data
- Data protection- to develop policies for how to securely collect, transfer, store, and analyze data
- To create guidelines for maintaining data quality, accountability, and feedback
- To establish a decision-making process for data management and system operation
- To develop processes for data access, including making data interoperable and/or data sharing, and establishing data transparency when possible

Dale noted that some policies may already exist through contracts or data-sharing agreements, while others may still need to be defined as part of the governance process.

Workgroup Discussion

Dale invited workgroup members to reflect on the examples presented and consider how they align with the guiding principles developed by the group.

Dale asked workgroup members to consider:

- Which purposes should be prioritized for IDEC's data governance structure
- Whether any additional purposes should be included
- How the workgroup's guiding principles should inform the purpose and operation of the governance structure

Dale then paused the presentation and invited workgroup members to share reflections.

A workgroup member noted that many of the purposes presented appeared equally important, making it difficult to prioritize among them. The member commented that the question itself was challenging because each purpose addressed a different critical aspect of governance.

Another workgroup member asked for clarification on whether the previously developed guiding principles would be incorporated into the governance structure's purpose or whether additional elements should be added. Dale clarified that the guiding principles would inform the purpose and that the discussion was intended to identify whether any important elements were missing.

A workgroup member suggested that data timeliness should be considered in the context of data governance. The member noted that data is often available from different fiscal years and may not always reflect the most current information. The member suggested that improving access to timely data could help support more effective decision-making.

A workgroup member also noted the importance of incorporating broader contextual data, including social determinants affecting children and families. The member observed that while program or outcome data is often available, additional contextual information could help better understand factors affecting child development and family stability.

Aressa shared a comment from the chat noting the importance of ensuring flexibility in the data governance structure as data systems and technology continue to evolve.

A public attendee suggested that data governance structures should be adaptable to future changes and capable of aligning with external systems, including state and federal data structures. The attendee noted that technology and governance needs evolve quickly, and the structure should be designed with this flexibility in mind.

Dale acknowledged the comment and agreed that governance structures should be broad and adaptable enough to respond to technological changes and evolving data needs.

A workgroup member emphasized the importance of building a resilient governance infrastructure that can sustain data practices over time. The member noted that the goal is to establish a durable structure that supports the guiding principles and remains functional even as policies, leadership, or external conditions change.

Another workgroup member highlighted the importance of carefully determining when and how to share data. The member noted that while data transparency is valuable, governance processes should also ensure that only necessary information is shared and that data requests are reviewed to confirm that access is appropriate and beneficial.

Dale acknowledged that balancing transparency and data protection is an ongoing challenge in data governance. Dale noted that governance bodies often must balance the goal of making data accessible for improvement and decision-making with the need to ensure that data is shared responsibly and securely.

Dale thanked participants for their feedback and noted that these perspectives would inform future discussions on governance structures. Dale then transitioned the presentation to the next portion of the discussion, which would introduce examples of different data governance structures.

Dale continued the Child Trends presentation by introducing examples of data governance structures and noting that there is no single “right” structure. Dale emphasized that governance should be designed to meet IDEC’s needs and should be efficient, transparent, and equitable in its purpose, role, and processes.

Common Governance Structure Components

Dale described a commonly used (though not required) hierarchical structure, often shown as a pyramid. In this model:

- A top-level policy or executive group sets policies and makes final decisions.
- A data management group supports day-to-day operations and implementation.
- Data stewards and IT staff support program-level data oversight and technical functions.

Dale noted that issues and decisions may be escalated upward for decision-making and then communicated downward for implementation. Dale emphasized that governance does not need to be hierarchical, but it must include processes for decision-making and implementation.

Dale described participatory governance as an approach that emphasizes shared decision-making and deliberate engagement with people who contribute to or are represented in the data. Dale noted that this is often implemented through advisory committees or workgroups and can include bidirectional engagement, including data sharing and community input. Dale stated that participatory governance aligns with the priorities and guiding principles previously discussed by the workgroup and IDEC, particularly regarding representation and power-sharing.

Examples of Governance Models

Dale shared several examples of governance structures used in other contexts to illustrate different approaches:

- **Cross-agency state model:** An example structure included a governing body and a research and data committee, with an executive committee holding legal and financial authority. Dale noted that a coordinator or lead role is often included to manage coordination across groups and ensure ongoing communication and engagement. Dale also noted that IT may support implementation and security policies but does not necessarily lead to governance.
- **Model with public representation and advisory boards:** Dale described an example where a governing board includes both public and non-public members and provides direction and oversight. This model also included advisory boards composed of public members focused on topics such as data tools, public-facing priorities, data request reviews, and community engagement. Dale noted that these advisory boards can support continuous improvement and strengthen feedback loops with data users.

- **Agency-centered governance model:** Dale described an example where executive leadership has final authority, program administrators contribute program and community knowledge, and data and IT staff provide technical and data quality expertise. Dale also described the role of advisory groups to provide recommendations on data collection, reporting, and adherence to guiding principles, with ongoing two-way communication between advisory groups and governance bodies.
- **Chicago early childhood integrated data system model:** Dale described an example with an executive committee organized into two tiers, including governance and stakeholder participation, and a technical administrator supporting system administration. Dale noted that this model also includes workgroups to support areas such as stakeholder engagement, communications, research agenda, and technical operations.

Dale noted that governance structures also require decisions about who should be represented, including decision-makers, implementers, and data contributors. Dale also referenced considerations for engaging decentralized programs and services and described potential approaches such as local representation or subcommittees.

Dale invited workgroup members to share reactions to the models presented and to discuss how governance structures can support equity-centered priorities, including:

- What are your reactions/thoughts about these data governance models, examining them through an equity lens?
- How can IDEC ensure that a data governance structure (including perhaps advisory groups, data review board, etc.) allows for:
 - Ongoing stakeholder input to surface equity dynamics, gaps, and priorities; two-way communication for communities to raise concerns

Both Workgroup members and public attendees went into breakouts to discuss the questions.

As everyone rejoined the Webinar, both Aressa and Beza Bulega (Afton Partners) gave a high-level summary of their group's insights.

Beza shared highlights from the breakout discussion. Participants discussed the balance between having a single governance body that includes multiple perspectives and creating separate groups where families and providers could participate more comfortably. Participants noted that when many perspectives are combined into a single group, family and provider voices may be overshadowed. At the same time, having multiple groups could create opportunities for representation while allowing cross-representation to help bridge conversations across groups.

Participants also discussed the importance of accessible language within governance structures. Beza noted that the early childhood field uses significant jargon and acronyms, which can make it difficult for parents and community members to engage fully. Participants emphasized the need

for accessible language, interpretation services, and translation to ensure meaningful participation.

Beza also summarized reflections related to the second discussion question. Participants discussed the importance of having appropriate checks and balances within governance structures while avoiding overly complex models that could slow decision-making. Some participants noted that several models appeared visually complex and might require significant coordination and communication across groups. Participants discussed the need to balance representation with efficiency to avoid delaying data requests and decision-making processes.

Aressa summarized reflections from another breakout group. She noted that several workgroup members were still processing the different governance structures presented and appreciated seeing a variety of possible models. Participants expressed interest in understanding how governance models might address potential inequities and noted that future discussions may involve narrowing down the options.

Aressa also shared that participants asked questions about existing requirements or boundaries for data governance, including whether federal or state rules influence how governance structures must operate. During the discussion, workgroup members explored how current data governance processes operate in Illinois and how data-sharing agreements are used across agencies.

Dale thanked the group for their engagement and noted that the discussion had provided valuable input on next steps in the process. Dale explained that the next phase of work will involve synthesizing feedback from the workgroup alongside input from additional stakeholders, including IDEC data staff.

Dale stated that Child Trends will use this information to develop potential scenarios or options for IDEC's data governance structure. These options will be shared with the workgroup for review and discussion in a future meeting.

Dale also noted that once a governance structure is established, additional steps typically follow, such as defining roles and responsibilities, establishing decision-making procedures, and documenting governance processes. These processes may include considerations such as meeting schedules, decision documentation, and compliance with federal, state, and local requirements.

Dale concluded by thanking the workgroup for their participation and contributions to the discussion.

4. Public comment

Aressa opened the public comment period and invited members of the public to provide verbal comments. No verbal comments were offered.

Aressa noted that members of the public could continue to submit comments or questions through the [public Padlet](#) after the meeting. She also shared two comments that had been submitted earlier during the meeting.

One public attendee described data governance as the reasons and methods for collecting and protecting data. The attendee also suggested that consent forms across IDEC programs should use consistent language that families can easily understand.

Another public attendee agreed and emphasized that consent forms should avoid excessive jargon so that families clearly understand how their data may be used across the early childhood system.

5. Next Steps and Close

Aressa reviewed upcoming meeting topics and next steps for the workgroup.

She shared that during the March meeting, the workgroup will continue discussing potential components of data governance models. She noted that several workgroup members had previously identified existing Illinois processes that work well, and the group will explore those examples further to determine how they may inform future recommendations. The group will also begin discussing how the guiding principles can be used to systematically assess the strengths, risks, and trade-offs of different governance models.

Aressa explained that the April meeting will focus on reflecting on findings from Child Trends' stakeholder engagement interviews. The workgroup will help interpret those findings and consider how they should inform the group's recommendations.

She noted that the next workgroup meeting will take place on **March 26th 1-2:00 pm CT**.

Crystal shared a [survey link](#) in the chat for workgroup members and the public to provide feedback.