Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Toolkit for Building System Capacity to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare: Data Collection Planning Worksheet

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Data Collection Planning Worksheet[1]

Purpose

Collecting data allows agencies to determine how well new strategies are performing, and whether they need to make additional changes. This document provides ideas for collecting and tracking data to support continuous quality improvement of father and paternal relative engagement. Agencies should select metrics that make sense for their context.

Instructions

Defining measures

The first step in developing a data collection plan is to define measures to use when evaluating tests of change. Measures should align with the agency's purpose, mission, and values. Consider beginning with measures where there are known potential opportunities for improvement. In choosing measures, consider how the data can be used to evaluate equity in practice with fathers and paternal relatives. For example, if race or ethnicity data is collected, teams can better understand if there are differences in service use or outcomes for fathers of color. The below table illustrates sample measures to consider when measuring the success of their fatherhood engagement practices.

Sample measures for engaging fathers and paternal relatives

1. **Initial request to identify the father:** Percentage of investigations where there was a request to identify the father at the first point of contact.

2. **At least one attempt to reach out to additional agencies or sources:** Percentage of completed investigations in which investigators contact additional agencies or sources to locate the father when the father had not already been identified

3. **Notifying the father of placement:** Percentage of new placements in which the father was notified the child/sibling group was being placed into foster care

4. **Documented reason for father not being a viable placement option**: Percentage of new placements with documented reasons why fathers are not a viable placement or permanency option for children placed in foster care

5. **Invitation to the family improvement team meeting:** Percentage of family improvement team meetings where an invitation was extended to fathers and/or paternal relatives

6. **Needs documented in case plans:** Percentage of case plans created that include documentation of a father's or paternal relative's unique needs

7. **Perception of needs met:** Percentage of fathers or paternal relatives who thought the services they received met their unique needs (as documented in case plans)

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[1] The data collection planning worksheet was developed by the FCL Project Team.

For the full toolkit, please visit https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/toolkit/toolkit-building-system-capacity-engage-fathers-and-paternal-relatives-child-welfare.

Once your improvement team identifies the measures of interest, the next step is to define which data to collect. Each measure will include a denominator (who is being sampled), a numerator (a subset of the sample to measure), an outcome (for example, number or percentage of families), and the measure period (how often the measure is reported). The following list is a sample of measure elements that describe how to define one measure for identifying a father.

Sample measure elements

- **Measure:** Initial request to identify the father

- **Measure description**: Percentage of investigations in which there was a request to identify the father at the first point of contact

- **Numerator**: Number of investigations initiated during the month in which the investigator asked about father's identity at the first point of contact

- **Denominator**: Total number of investigations initiated during the month

- **Measure period**: Monthly

- **Measure notes**: Define "new investigations" and "first point of contact"

Improvement teams will use measure elements like these to help set goals that support the project's aims. For instance, your team's goal might be to improve the percentage of fathers identified at the first point of contact by 10 percent over the next three months.

Data collection plan

The data collection plan outlines the steps, sequence, and resources required to collect data to support continuous quality improvement. As you develop the data collection plan, include representatives from the appropriate departments (including partner organizations, when applicable). Consider the following when developing the data collection plan:

- **What data will you need to help you know whether change is resulting in improvement?** Define measures that support the specific needs and priorities of the agency as they relate to engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

- **How will you collect the data?** Define the approach to take when collecting data (such as a standard report, survey, interview or focus group) and what tools you will need. Evaluate which data your site is already collecting. In some cases, the data collection process will need to be created; in other cases, you will be able to use data that already exist. When collecting data, it is also important to consider family structure—for example, how to account for families with more than one father.

- **Who will collect the data?** Decide who is responsible for collecting each data element needed for the measure. In some cases, more than one person will collect data for the same measure. Consider how collaboration will occur to obtain complete data.

- **What is the source of the data?** Consider which data sources your improvement team will need to access to collect data. Some data sources may be available outside the agency. Select data sources that make the collection process minimally burdensome. For example, whenever possible, try to select a process that uses an existing system instead of tracking data outside of an existing system.

- **How often will you review the data?** Each measure should have a defined measure period. Consider how often the improvement team will collect and review data to meet these measure periods. Some

measures might be collected and reviewed monthly (such as the number of visits with a father or paternal relative, or how many fathers were identified for new cases). Other measures might be collected quarterly or annually (such as in surveys or focus groups asking about a father's or paternal relative's experience).

- **Who will see the data?** Identify who is interested in seeing the agency's progress over time. Consider how to share outcomes with key collaborators and community partners, and how to ensure privacy of data.

- **Why include race and ethnicity in data collection?** One way to promote racial equity is to consider how outcomes vary with youth and families' race and ethnicity. Track race and ethnicity for measures, whenever possible, to evaluate whether practice changes appear to have different impacts on families of different races or ethnic backgrounds and identify opportunities for improving processes. Use the categories aligned with standard child welfare data collection practices to ensure consistency in reporting when comparing data with other sites.

The issue brief, Promising Strategies for Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting Data on Father and Paternal Relative Engagement in Child Welfare (which can be found on the FCL webpage) also highlights examples of how other child welfare agencies defined and tracked measures to support their father and paternal relative engagement programs.

Data Collection Planning Worksheet

Measure	Data type (numeric; open-ended; etc.)	How will we collect the data?	Who will collect the data?	New or existing	Where the data will come from?	What resources do we need?

Data Collection Planning Worksheet (Example)

Measure	Data type (numeric, open-ended, etc.)	How will we collect the data	Who will collect the data?	New or existing	Where will the data come from?	What resources do we need?
Initial request to identify the father	Discrete	Add information from the agency Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) during intake and any time throughout the process if the dad's name is missing	Screener, intake worker, manager	Existing	Report from CCWIS	• Report from CCWIS • Time and staff to run reports • Time and staff to evaluate reports
At least one attempt to outreach to additional agencies or sources to identify dads	Open-ended	Manual case reviews monthly	Quality improvement team	Existing	Case reviews	• Time, space, and staff to conduct case reviews • Tracking tool to document findings