



How Child Advocates Can Work With State Governments To Advocate For Open Data

Welcome to the webinar!



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http://neighborhoodindicators.org/childopendata

METROPOLITAN HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES POLICY CENTER



Harnessing the Power of Open Data for Children and Families

Kathryn L.S. Pettit and Rob Pitingolo

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Child advocacy organizations, such as members of the KIDS COUNT network, have proven the value of using data to advocate for policies and programs to improve the lives of children and families. These organizations use data to educate policymakers and the public about how children are faring in their communities. They understand the importance of high-quality information for policy and decisionmaking. And in the past decade, many state governments have embraced the open data movement. Their data portals promote government transparency and increase data access for a wide range of users inside and outside government.

At the request of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which funds the KIDS COUNT network, the authors conducted research to explore how these state data efforts could bring greater benefits to local communities. Interviews with child advocates and open data providers confirmed the opportunity for child advocacy organizations and state governments to leverage open data to improve the lives of children and families. But accomplishing this goal will require new practices on both sides.

This brief first describes the current state of practice for child advocates using data and for state governments publishing open data. It then provides suggestions for what it would take from both sides



Five Steps States Can Take to Advance Child Well-Being through Open Data

Greater access to data can improve the lives of children and families

Kathryn L.S. Pettit and Rob Pitingolo

Every state publishes data through an open data portal, but **the types of data that are made public varies** from state to state.

State governments across the country have embraced the open data movement through data portals that promote transparency and put greater information in the hands of many users. But publishing data is not enough. State governments should engage users and encourage more effective use of open data.

In particular, greater access to child and family data can help stakeholders advocate

Child advocacy organizations and state governments should **work together to leverage open data** for child and family well-being.

Child advocates can **promote open data on children and families** by assessing their own data needs, building relationships with data managers, and advocating for releasing new data and open data.



Five Steps Child Advocates Can Take to Expand Access to State Data

Harnessing open data to improve the lives of children and families

Kathryn L.S. Pettit and Rob Pitingolo

Every state publishes open data through a portal—data that anyone can **freely use, reuse, and redistribute**.

Child advocacy organizations have proven the value of using data to improve the lives of children and families. Data allow stakeholders to understand the complex challenges facing children and families and to uncover emerging issues. Data may show, for example, that the number of children receiving social services is falling even when the child poverty rate is rising.

Child advocacy organizations and state governments should **work together to leverage open data** for child and family well-being.

Although data sharing and use have advanced over the past few years, communities can do more. Interviews with child advocates and open data providers confirmed the opportunity for both groups to work together and better leverage open data. But accomplishing this goal will require new practices on both sides.

Here are five actionable steps child and family advocates can take to expand access to state data to advance their missions. (See our brief or our companion fact sheet for steps state governments can take.)

Child advocates can **promote open data on children and families** by assessing their own data needs.

1. CREATE A DATA WISH LIST

Special thanks

- Carole Cochran, University of South Dakota
- Sarah Hughes, Colorado Children's Campaign
- Deborah Stein, Partnership for America's Children
- Kristie Tingle, Center for Public Policy Priorities in Texas
- Katya Abazajian, the Sunlight Foundation
- Jessica Carsten, Tyler Technologies (Socrata)
- Tyler Kleycamp, State of Connecticut
- Michelle Riordan-Nold, Connecticut Data Collaborative

Poll

Child advocacy organizations and state governments can work together to better leverage open data to improve the lives of children and families.



Questions for You

- Are there barriers to taking the steps we recommend?
- What questions could data help you answer?
- What would be #1 on your data wish list?
- What data do you have that you wish was more detailed or granular?
- What threats to data are there in your state?

Current State of Practice

State of practice for child advocates

- Advocates know the value of data for making the case
- Advocates acquire data through personal relationships with agency staff or agency websites



State of practice for state governments

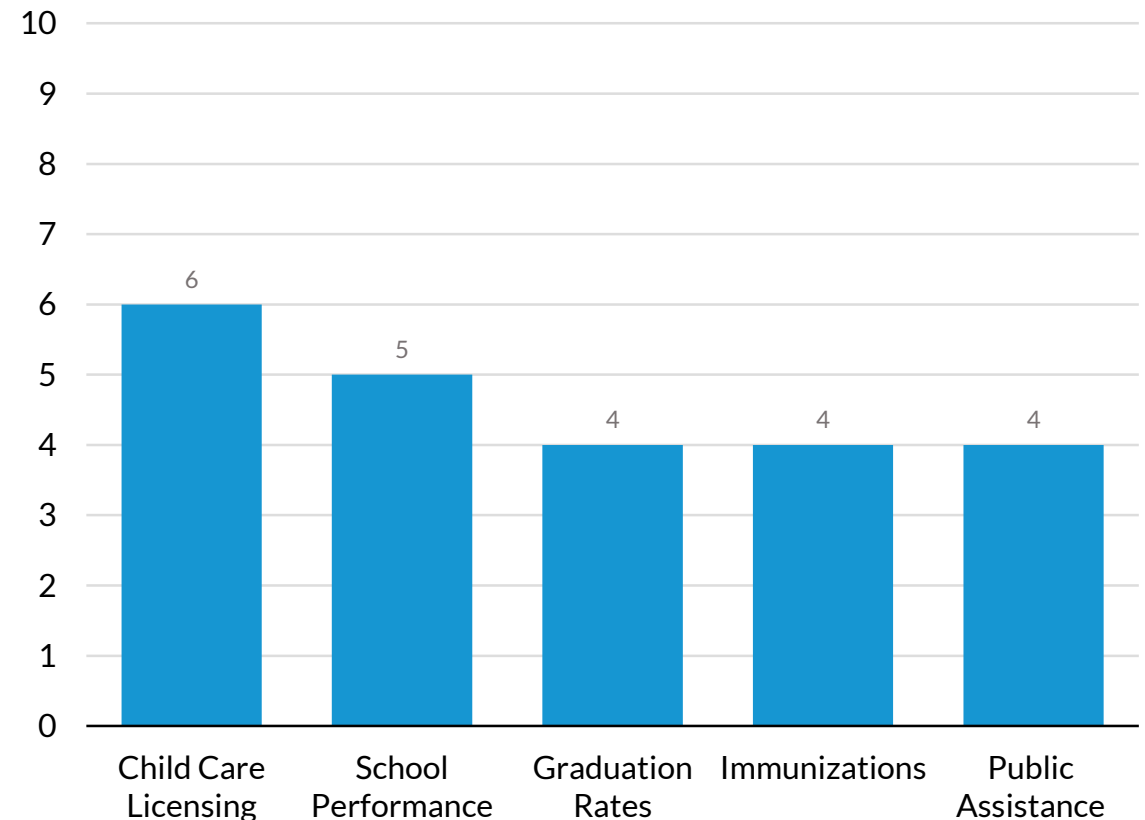
- Open data: data that anyone can freely use and share
- Agencies generally decide which data to publish
- States moving to internal use of data and analytics



Current content of state data portals

- Urban analyzed open data portals from 10 states
- No data sets are universal across states (today)
- Most common data on topics: child care, schools, health & public assistance

Most Common Data Sets



CONNECTing Children and Families to Care

- CT sought to improve children's behavioral health services after Sandy Hook
- State CDO facilitated a Data Integration workgroup
- Goal was to create an open, accessible, transparent, public data system
- Cataloged and tracked the publishing of 36+ datasets



Why improving the state of practice matters

- Data advances the missions of organizations by allowing them to answer important questions
- Protecting data against threats allows the field to thrive now and into the future
- Wider access elevates the importance of central issues



- **Ultimately: better outcomes for kids!**

Expanding Advocacy for Data: Steps for Child and Family Advocates

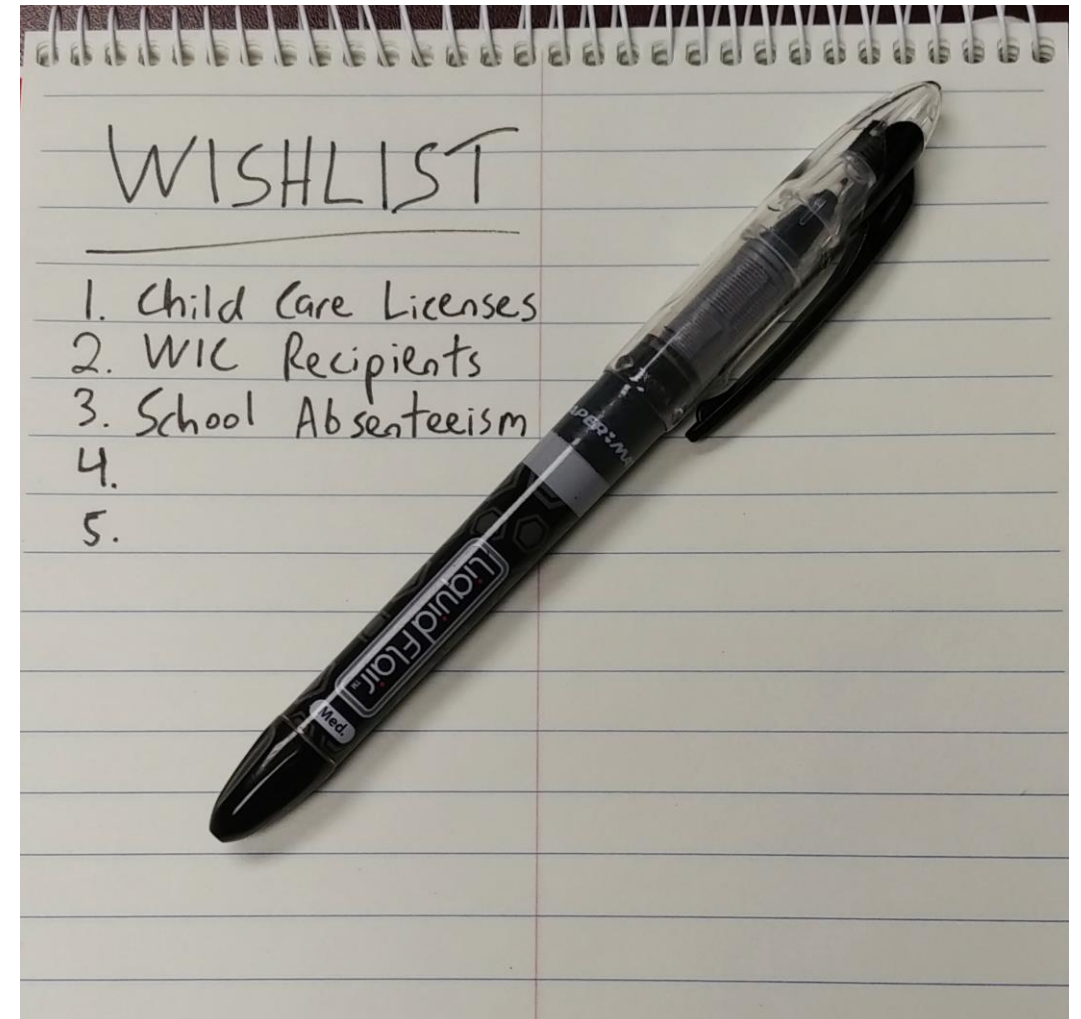
Poll

*I frame conversations around the questions you have,
and then think how I can work with agencies to get
the data you need.*

-Tyler Kleykamp, Connecticut Chief Data Officer

Step 1. Create a Data Wish List

- Lead with questions
- Include data already collected, as well as “long shot” wishes
- Look at data in hand to see if different cuts would add value
- Visit the state’s open data portal for ideas



Step 2. Connect with State Data Managers

- Consult the agency data experts you already know
- Seek out “chief data officer”- use the open data portal to find the right people
- Ask for a call to share your priorities and data needs



Step 3. Advocate for New Data Releases

- Lowest hanging fruit are data collected but not published
- Some data exist, but need to be summarized to protect privacy
- You may need to advocate for data that are not collected



Step 4. Push for Expanded Access to Currently Shared Data

- Informal access to data often works but has downsides
- Expanded access improves efficiency and timeliness
- Wider access elevates the importance of the issue for new audiences, such as civic technologists




Step 5. Identify and Respond to Threats to Data Access

- Data without obvious value can get cut
- Perceived concerns about privacy are on the rise
- Advocates can use their authority to show that data can be released responsibly



Five Steps for State Governments

1. Engage with state child & family agency staff
2. Promote open data to improve child well-being
3. Learn about the needs of users interested in child & family issues
4. Enhance the data and portal to meet the needs of child and family advocates
5. Conduct and publish a data inventory



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Child advocacy organizations and state governments should [work together to leverage open data](#) for child and family well-being.

[Child advocates can promote open](#)

State governments across the country have embraced the open data movement through data portals that promote transparency and put greater information in the hands of many users. But publishing data is not enough. State governments should engage users and encourage more effective use of open data.

In particular, greater access to child and family data can help stakeholders advocate for kids and improve their lives. Interviews with child advocates and open data providers confirmed the opportunity for both groups to work together and better leverage open data. But accomplishing this goal will require new practices on both sides.

Here are five actionable steps state governments can take to accelerate the use of data for improving child and family well-being. (See our brief or our companion fact sheet for steps child advocates can take.)

Commentary



Deborah Stein

Network Director for the
Partnership for America's
Children

External Resources

- [NCOC's Civic Tech Initiatives: Tools and Learnings from a Civic Data Challenge Case Study](#)
- [Sunlight Foundation Guide to Tactical Data Engagement](#)
- [What Works Guide to Data Inventories](#)

Website: www.neighborhoodindicators.org/childopendata

- Harnessing the Power of Open Data for Children and Families (brief)
- Five Steps States Can Take to Advance Child Well-Being through Open Data (fact sheet)
- Five Steps Child Advocates Can Take to Expand Access to State Data (fact sheet)
- List & Scan of State Open Data Portals (spreadsheet)

Questions for You

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Thank You!

Additional questions?

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