How Child Advocates Can Work With State Governments To Advocate For Open Data
Welcome to the webinar!

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Harnessing the Power of Open Data for Children and Families

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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 to bring the two together.

http://neighborhoodindicators.org/childopendata

About this research
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- Carole Cochran, University of South Dakota
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- Jessica Carsten, Tyler Technologies (Socrata)
- Tyler Kleycamp, State of Connecticut
- Michelle Riordan-Nold, Connecticut Data Collaborative
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
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
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)
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Thank You!

Additional questions?
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