

What's new at the Data Center?

Increasingly, child welfare systems recognize that improving outcomes for children and families means making policy and practice decisions based on scientifically rigorous evidence. As public and private agencies endeavor to build capacity for evidence-based decision making, the Data Center continues to innovate and shape our services to meet their needs. Read below to learn more about some of the major ways we are working to support systems around the country.

Performance measurement. Using administrative data wisely starts by asking and answering the right questions. In states and counties nationwide, we're helping agencies to craft those questions, produce the answers, and apply the resulting evidence to decisions in the field. This analytic support takes numerous forms including reports out of the [FCDA web tool](#), customized workbooks, and Baseline-Target-Actual reports that help jurisdictions monitor progress toward performance goals. We have also recently expanded our work to include measuring child protection outcomes (e.g., referrals, investigations, and substantiations).

Time Use studies. Based on a model from the University of Loughborough in the UK, multi-method time use studies go beyond creating metrics of caseload and workload to reveal patterns in how child welfare staff spend their work days. The results help agencies understand how their staff allocate time between direct work with and on behalf of families and administrative activities, as well as how those allocations vary between different types of cases. Fiscal analysis is paired with the time use findings to give agencies a picture of the costs associated with various aspects of casework.

Performance Based Contracting. Our performance based contracting work continues in [Tennessee](#), San Francisco, Mississippi, and Texas. In these projects, we use advanced analytics to help states measure contract agency performance, set risk-adjusted baseline and target goals for outcomes at the provider level, and implement fiscal strategies designed to incentivize improved outcomes for children and families.

Education and Training. Now in its tenth year, our [Advanced Analytics for Child Welfare Administration](#) course continues to be our most popular educational program, teaching child welfare managers the fundamentals of performance measurement and evidence-based decision making. In the past year, alone, we conducted a national class as well as iterations in Illinois, California, and Pennsylvania. Through the Northern California Training Academy, we helped develop a CQI series for managers as well as a set of [online modules](#) for self-paced learning. Additionally, we have expanded our educational offerings to include a new program, EDGE: Evidence Driven Growth and Excellence. This long-term, cohort-based course uses classroom learning, interactive assignments, and self-directed group projects to strengthen managers' skills in generating evidence from administrative data and using that evidence to promote change inform efforts to improve outcomes for children in foster care.

Support to states operating under court ordered settlement agreements. The Data Center provides support to several states toward their exit from court ordered settlement agreements. In all of these contexts, we use best practices in performance measurement to help states monitor the effects of their system reform efforts. In Oklahoma, we serve as the court ordered data expert. In Tennessee, we are working with the state to develop an Accountability Center that will take the place of the court monitor once the state exits from their consent decree. In Georgia, we serve as a member of the court appointed Monitoring and Technical Assistance Team that reports to the parties and federal court on the state's progress towards exit from the federal lawsuit. We have also provided support related to settlements in New Jersey and Mississippi.

To learn how these efforts can help your agency or to inquire about other ways to collaborate with the Data Center, contact Lily Alpert at lalpert@chapinhall.org.