

Building Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making: The Major Outcomes Report

What is the Major Outcomes Report?

The Major Outcomes Report is a performance measurement tool that can be developed for members of Chapin Hall's Center for State Child Welfare Data (<https://fcda.chapinhall.org>). Using data from the state or county's longitudinal file in the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive (FCDA), the report calculates measures of core child welfare system outcomes related to **admissions, permanent exit, duration in foster care, placement stability, and reentry.**

The main benefit of the Major Outcomes Report is that it enables child welfare leaders and managers to **use scientifically rigorous performance measures to identify opportunities for improvement.** It does this by showing how outcomes vary within a child welfare system. Leaders and managers can use this detail to observe:

- How outcomes vary from region to region (or any other administrative unit)
- How local outcomes compare to the state average
- How outcomes vary between important subpopulations (i.e., children of different ages; children with different placement types; etc.)
- How outcomes change over time

Major Outcomes Reports can be updated periodically, in accordance with the member agency's updates to the Multistate FCDA.

How can I use the Major Outcomes Report to support my system?

A defensible Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan is one that supports the following claims with evidence:

- I observe that (this particular outcome needs improvement).
- I think it's because (of this reason).
- So I plan to (do this new thing).
- Which I think will result in (an improvement to the outcome of interest).

The Major Outcomes Report provides evidence needed to support that first observation – namely the observation that there is a problem worth solving. Further, because it tracks change in outcomes over time, The Major Outcomes Report can also provide evidence as to whether outcomes are improving as hoped.

In other words, CQI is a process that demands evidence, and the Major Outcomes Report provides certain types of evidence needed to fuel that process. At the state level, the Major Outcomes Report can be used to track performance over time and among the system's subdivisions. At the local level, managers can use the report to identify outcomes that need improvement in their own administrative units and subpopulations that deserve attention.

Who is included in the sample report I received?

Each Data Center member state/county received a complimentary sample Major Outcomes Report showing outcomes at the state level. These outcomes were calculated by analyzing the data that the state/county contributes to the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive (FCDA).¹

Briefly, when a state or county joins the Data Center, we develop a longitudinal file from the system's foster care records and that file gets contributed to the Multistate FCDA along with the rest of the contributing states and counties. In order to be able to make state to state comparisons, data from all participating jurisdictions are processed according to a common set of rules pertaining to inclusion/exclusion and the coding of core variables. You will find those parameters on the **Preface** tab of your sample report.

Can I customize the Major Outcomes Report for my system?

Yes. States have customized the Major Outcomes in various ways and we would be happy to talk more with you about how to do that. Below are a few common customizations:

Customize the database off of which the report is run. Adjust your file in order to:

- Create physical or legal custody episodes.
- Define demographic and service delivery variables.
- Include Juvenile Justice populations.

Customize the questions asked and answered. The Major Outcomes Report received its name because it reports on a small number of critical performance questions that all child welfare systems must be able to answer. Your system may have different or additional core performance questions, and these can be altered or added.

Customize the analytic populations and strata. As you move through your sample report, you will see that children moving through the foster care system are divided up in different ways in order to observe variation between subpopulations and change over time. For instance, the placement stability indicator is stratified by the child's first placement type; the length of stay indicator is stratified by the child's age at entry. Your department may wish to observe outcomes for different or additional subpopulations.

Where can I find guidance on how to interpret the Major Outcomes Report?

Your complimentary state report was accompanied by an annotated sample containing outcomes from an invented state. In this example, each tab contains notes that indicate how to interpret the findings. In addition, the annotated example graphs selected findings and provides guidance on how those graphs enable comparative statements.

If you have specific questions you'd like to discuss, please reach out to Lily Alpert at lalpert@chapinhall.org.

¹ To learn more about member benefits and the files created for Data Center members, see <https://fcda.chapinhall.org/member-services/member-benefits/>.

How can I learn more about developing the Major Outcomes Report for my system?

To learn more about Data Center membership, developing the Major Outcomes Report for your child welfare system, or any other types of work with the Data Center, contact Lily Alpert at lalpert@chapinhall.org.

Visit the Data Center's website: <https://fcda.chapinhall.org>

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