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SRCD Federal Policy Fellow Professional Portfolio Abstracts: Marissa Abbott, Ph.D.

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Introduction: This portfolio provides an overview of the work completed at ASPE during my 2021-2022 Fellowship year. Portfolio entries include research activities related to the ASPE child welfare portfolio, and well-being assessment across human services programs, that have the potential to inform policy.

Portfolio Entry 1: Program Integrity and Effectiveness Through Data and Analysis for the Family First Prevention Services Act

Project Overview:

Background: Program Integrity and Effectiveness through Data and Analysis (PIEDA) aims to enhance the capacity to share and link data between public child welfare and Medicaid agencies on issues at the nexus of the two systems. PIEDA intends to sustainably improve the data infrastructure of public agencies to increase their ability to analyze challenges experienced by families involved in child welfare systems. Enhancing data infrastructure may help public agencies improve their oversight of prevention services and health system interventions for children and families in, or at risk of being in, the foster care system in alignment with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA; See Portfolio Entry 2 for more information).

Goal(s): To conduct feasibility studies to determine state or tribes' readiness and infrastructure to develop data systems with linked records from Medicaid and public child welfare agencies, and detail steps to improve readiness. To develop datasets and data systems with linked records from Medicaid and public child welfare agencies for children and parents and caregivers involved in both systems. To use linked records to 1) Increase analytic opportunities to help better understand and improve child welfare operations, services, outcomes, and health services delivered to children and parents in the child welfare system; and 2) Develop, pilot, and implement models to support oversight of prevention and congregate care services. To document lessons learned on linking data across the agencies and project more generally.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Reviewed deliverables from the planning contract with The MITRE Corporation
- Drafted a Sources Sought Notice with colleagues related to the PIEDA solicitation
- Contributed to the statement of work for PIEDA and helped with onboarding for the contractor, Mathematica
- Drafted an ASPE brief on the background for this project
- Co-facilitated weekly project planning meetings and managed administrative tasks
- Presented to ASPE leadership and Children's Bureau (CB) staff in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) about project goals and plans.

Activity Focus Keywords: Administrative Data; Cross-Agency Collaboration; Data Management System; Document Review; Presentation; RFP Development
Policy Area Keywords: Child Maltreatment; Child Welfare; Medicaid
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Federal and state policy connections; How data informs decision-making ; Conducting research that's useful to policy and practice

Portfolio Entry 2: Summary of Approved Title IV-E Prevention Plans

Project Overview:

Background: In 2018, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA; Public Law 115-123) modified how states and tribes may use Social Security Administration Title IV-E funds that historically paid for foster care and permanency programs. FFPSA authorized new optional funding for states and tribes to provide time-limited, evidence-based, preventive services related to behavioral health, substance use, and in-home parent skills-based training to families involved in the child welfare system. In alignment with FFPSA, states and tribes submit prevention plans for behavioral health, substance use, and other in-home services to the Children's Bureau (CB) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for approval. In the prevention plans, states and tribes include information about candidacy definitions to receive services, planned services, and evaluation and continuous quality improvement efforts.

Goal(s): To summarize the candidacy definitions, proposed service array, and evaluation details discussed in the approved Title IV-E prevention services plans for states and tribes.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Reviewed approved Title IV-E prevention services plans and collated information into a summary table for internal review
- Presented an overview of results to the ASPE child welfare team
- Used the information from the summary table to inform a qualitative project exploring state data collection and evaluation efforts related to proposed prevention services (See Portfolio Entry 3 for more information)

Activity Focus Keywords: Disseminate Findings; Document Review; Literature Review
Policy Area Keywords: Child Maltreatment; Child Welfare; Prevention
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Federal and state policy connections

Portfolio Entry 3: Insight into States' Family First Prevention Services Data and Evaluation Plans for Title IV-E Prevention Services

Project Overview:

Background: Related to the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA; See Portfolio Entries 1 and 2 for more information about this policy), states and tribes submit five-year prevention plans that include evaluation, continuous quality improvement, and child safety monitoring details related to their proposed Title IV-E prevention services. In addition, and alignment with the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, states or tribes may request an evaluation waiver for programs designated as a well-supported practice. Across the approved prevention plans, there is variety in the evaluation and continuous quality improvement details reported. However, it remains unclear what data states intend to collect to support evaluation beyond what is submitted to the Children's Bureau (CB) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Goal(s): In relation to the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA; See Portfolio Entries 1 and 2 for more information about this policy), states and tribes submit five-year prevention plans that include evaluation, continuous quality improvement, and child safety monitoring details related to their proposed Title IV-E prevention services. In addition, and alignment with the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, states or tribes may request an evaluation waiver for programs designated as a well-supported practice. Across the approved prevention plans, there is variety in the evaluation and continuous quality improvement details reported. However, it remains unclear what data states intend to collect to support evaluation beyond what is submitted to the Children's Bureau (CB) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Contributions of Fellow:

- Drafted a project background and objectives one-pager to share with CB
- Presented the rough project plan to CB to solicit feedback
- Developed a key informant interview guide for qualitative interviews
- Conducted qualitative interviews with data and evaluation staff in eight states
- Transcribed interviews and completed thematic analysis
- Presented findings to the ASPE child welfare team and child welfare staff at CB

Activity Focus Keywords: Conduct Interviews; Cross-Agency Collaboration; Data Analysis; Data Collection; Disseminate Findings; Evaluation; Presentation; Transcribe Qualitative Data
Policy Area Keywords: Child Maltreatment; Child Welfare
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Federal and state policy connections; How data informs decision-making; What information policymakers need; Processes to connect research to policy and practice; Conducting research that's useful to policy and practice

Portfolio Entry 4: Exploring Well-being Assessment Across Domestic Violence and Child Support Programs

Project Overview:

Background: ASPE's Office of Human Services Policy (HSP) aims to understand how human services programs assess well-being. More specifically, HSP is interested in exploring how domestic violence prevention and intervention and child support programs broadly conceptualize and measure well-being for program participants and how well-being assessments focus on equity or lack thereof. There is no universally agreed-upon definition of well-being. This project aims to better understand what programs consider to be definitions and measurement indicators of well-being for their program participants. Well-being can be reflected in programmatic outcomes or ascertained through other assessments throughout participants' involvement in their program.

Goal(s): To conduct key informant interviews and case studies with federal, state, and local domestic violence and child support programs to understand how they conceptualize and measure well-being for program participants to answer the following research questions. To highlight exemplary domestic violence and child support programs at the state or local level.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Wrote initial project plan in collaboration with HSP staff and Mathematica
- Collaborated with the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
- Managed the contract for this external research project in collaboration with HSP staff
- Reviewed draft and final deliverables (for internal audiences only)

Activity Focus Keywords: Cross-Agency Collaboration; Document Review
Policy Area Keywords: Domestic Violence; Child Support; Well-Being
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Federal and state policy connections; Incorporating a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens

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