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SRCD State Policy Fellow Professional Portfolio Abstracts: Eleanor Fisk

2021-2022 SRCD State Pre-Doctoral Policy Fellow at the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

AUTHOR

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Introduction: My Fellowship placement was within the Research, Planning, and Technology (RPT) division of the OEC. Throughout my Fellowship, I worked on several projects related to managing and publishing OEC data and supporting different agency divisions with their data collection and management needs. This work was in support of RPT division goals of using data to describe the work being done across the agency, in a way that is accessible and understandable for a variety of audiences, including policymakers; as well as increasing agency-wide awareness and understanding of how to collect and use data.

Portfolio Entry 1: Data Request Summary

Project Overview:

Background: The OEC receives many requests for data and information from advocates, community agencies, reporters, legislators, and researchers. Many of these requests come in through the RPT division, which manages the compilation of data in response to requests.

Goal(s): To 1) document these requests as they come into the agency, 2) summarize the data requests based on the OEC program(s) they are related to and other relevant details (e.g., geography, timeframe), and 3) ultimately, create a publicly available, non-personally identifiable resource that includes up-to-date facts about OEC programs, which would address frequently asked questions and include commonly requested data.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Created a Data Request Form that is linked on the OEC website
- Created a tracker to record high-level details of data requests that come in, if additional consultation with other agency divisions is needed, and the current status of each request
- Drafted two slide decks summarizing the data requests that came into the OEC (one for the first half of state fiscal year 2022 and one specific to the legislative session)

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Analysis; Data Collection; Data Visualization; Presentation ; Survey Design
Policy Area Keywords: N/A
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: How data informs decision-making; What information policymakers need

Portfolio Entry 2: At-A-Glance

Project Overview:

Background: Every year since the agency's inception, the OEC has published At-A-Glance factsheets that provide an overview of the children and families served across the OEC's different programs (e.g., early care and education, early intervention, home visiting).

Goal(s): To provide a publicly available, easy-to-read snapshot of the reach of the OEC and its programs.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Aligned data published in the At-A-Glance with data requested for other reports (e.g., legislatively mandated OEC reports, NIEER State of Preschool, local advocacy reports) to understand if there was duplicative information
- Identified sources for, collected, and managed data from across the OEC for the At-A-Glance
- Created graphical representations of the text information published in the At-A-Glance
- Analyzed longitudinal trends in program participation from historical At-A-Glance reports

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Analysis; Data Collection; Data Visualization Disseminate Findings; Written Report
Policy Area Keywords: Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG); Child Care Development Fund (CCDF); Child Care Subsidy; Contracted Slots; Early Intervention; Head Start; IDEA Part C Services; State-Funded Preschool; Workforce
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: Effective communication between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers

Portfolio Entry 3: Posting OEC Data to Connecticut Open Data

Project Overview:

Background: The state of Connecticut has a Chief Data Officer, whose office manages Connecticut Open Data, a website where state agencies can publish data to be publicly available. As part of the RPT division's goal of making more agency data available, several OEC datasets have been/are in the process of being published to Connecticut Open Data.

Goal(s): To 1) have publicly available data to direct requestors to, and 2) produce more data visualizations and data stories to help describe the OEC's work.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Attend meetings and training to learn more about Connecticut Open Data (benefits of posting data, how to publish data, data visualization options)
- Curated, wrote metadata for, and published two OEC datasets: CT OEC Licensing Data; and State-Funded Early Care and Education Capacity and Utilization Data

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Management System; Data Visualization; Disseminate Findings
Policy Area Keywords: Contracted Slots; State-Funded Preschool
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: How data informs decision-making; Processes to connect research to policy and practice

Portfolio Entry 4: Quality Improvement Service Navigation Form and Tracker

Project Overview:

Background: As part of their efforts to develop a Quality Improvement System (QIS), the OEC is offering Service Navigation. Through this initiative, early care and education (ECE) providers are able to connect with OEC Service Navigators, who can help direct providers to tools and resources to help them reach their program goals. The QIS division is interested in tracking the use of Service Navigation.

Goal(s): To track the use of Service Navigation by ECE providers across the state of Connecticut.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Adapted the Service Navigation communication script into a Microsoft Form where Service Navigators can record providers' information and needs
- Integrated the Form with a Microsoft List that serves as a tracker of all Service Navigation instances and can be sorted and/or filtered by status (in progress vs. complete), region of the state (west, north central, south central, east), and/or program (e.g., to see if one program has contacted Service Navigation multiple times)
- Demonstrated and tested the Form and List with the Service Navigation team and revised incorporating their feedback

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Collection; Survey Design
Policy Area Keywords: Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
Knowledge & Skills Keywords: How data informs decision-making

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