Critical Questions About Early Intervention   
and Early Childhood Special Education

# Selecting State-Level Questions Most Relevant to Local Data Use

## Purpose:

This tool includes a subset of the [Critical Questions about Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education](https://dasycenter.org/resources/critical-questions/) that are most relevant to local data use. It is divided into three sections: child and family, practitioner, and programs and services. It can be used to support conversations about local data use and to prioritize critical questions.

## Suggested Directions:

1. Review the following state-level critical questions that are relevant to local data use. Focus on the broad questions in the green boxes (the examples questions help define the scope of the broad questions).
2. Identify and note 2-3 broad questions (those in the green boxes) that are a priority for in your local area.
3. Identify which of these questions you can or cannot answer with your local data.
   1. For the critical questions you cannot answer, the elements needed can be discussed as a potential priority for future data collections.

# Section 1: Child- and Family-Level Questions

| 1.A. Characteristics of Children and Families |  |
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| 1.A.1. What are the characteristics of children and families receiving early intervention or early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)? |  |
| 1.A.1.b. What are the characteristics of children and families currently enrolled in EI/ECSE (e.g., disability, demographics, 1 risk2)? |  |
| 1.A.1.c. How have the characteristics of children and families enrolled in EI/ECSE changed over time (e.g., disability, demographics,1 risk2)? |  |

| 1.B. IDEA Services and Settings |  |
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| 1.B.1. What are the characteristics of the services and supports provided to children/families in early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)? |  |
| 1.B.1.a. What percentage of children in EI/ECSE were planned to have each type of service (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist) according to their Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) within a given time period (e.g., the past month or year)? |  |
| 1.B.1.b. What percentage of children received each type of service within a given time period (e.g., the past month or year)? |  |
| 1.B.1.c. What amount of each type of service (e.g., frequency, intensity, total hours) do children in EI/ECSE receive? |  |
| 1.B.1.d. What is the relationship between the amount of services planned and the amount of services received? |  |

1Demographics include characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and language.

2Risk includes characteristics that place children at risk for developmental delays or disabilities, such as prematurity and abuse or neglect.

| 1.B. IDEA Services and Settings (continued) |  |
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| 1.B.3. What factors help explain differences in the type and amount of services that children and families receive? |  |
| 1.B.3.a. What child characteristics (e.g., disability, age at entry, socioeconomic status [SES]) are related to differences in services and length of time in the program? |  |
| 1.B.3.b. How do the type and amount of services vary by local early intervention services program/school district? |  |
| 1.B.3.c. What program characteristics (e.g., geography, size, service-delivery model, finance/reimbursement methods) are related to differences in services and length of time in program? |  |
| 1.B.4. What characteristics of services are related to better outcomes for children and families? |  |
| 1.B.4.a. What is the relationship between child outcomes and length of time in service? |  |
| 1.B.4.b. What is the relationship between type and quantity of services, service setting, and child outcomes? |  |
| 1.B.5. Are young children receiving IDEA services in settings that are for all children? |  |
| 1.B.5.a. What percentage of children with IFSP/IEPs are receiving IDEA services in settings that are for all children (e.g., state-operated prekindergarten, Head Start)? |  |
| 1.B.5.b. What are the characteristics of children with IFSP/IEPs receiving IDEA services in settings that are for all children (e.g., disability category, race/ethnicity, dual language learner [DLL], age, SES)? |  |
| 1.B.5.c. What percentage of children with IFSP/IEPs are receiving IDEA services in specialized/special education settings? |  |
| 1.B.5.d. What are the characteristics of children with IFSP/IEPs receiving IDEA services in specialized/special education settings (e.g., disability category, race/ethnicity, dual language learner [DLL], age, SES)? |  |
| 1.B.6. What is the relationship between the IDEA service setting and child outcomes? |  |
| 1.B.6.a. How do child outcomes for children who receive IDEA services in settings that are for all children compare with the child outcomes for those who receive IDEA services in other settings? |  |
| 1.B.6.b. What is the relationship between the number of settings in which children receive IDEA services in a given time period (e.g., in a year) and child outcomes? |  |

| 1.D. Child and Family Outcomes |  |
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| 1.D.1. What are the outcomes for children and families participating in early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)? |  |
| 1.D.1.a. How many children exiting EI/ECSE showed greater than expected growth (summary statement 1) and exited within age expectations (summary statement 2)? How do the patterns compare across child outcomes? |  |
| 1.D.1.c. What outcomes do families achieve during their time in EI/ESCE (e.g., helping their child develop and learn, being able to advocate for their rights)? |  |
| 1.D.1.d. How have child and family outcomes changed over time, and how do the trends compare across outcomes (for the state and local programs)? |  |
| 1.D.2. What factors are related to better outcomes for children and families participating in early intervention or early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)? |  |
| 1.D.2.a. How do child and family outcomes differ by child and family characteristics (e.g., disability, demographics, and risk)? |  |
| 1.D.2.b. What is the relationship between family outcomes and child outcomes? |  |
| 1.D.2.c. How do outcomes for children and families differ by characteristics of IDEA services received (e.g., length of time in service, type and quantity of service, service setting, service-delivery model, and quality of services)? |  |

# Section 2: Practitioner-Level Questions

| 2.A. Practitioner Characteristics |  |
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| 2.A.1. What are the characteristics of practitioners working in early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)? |  |
| 2.A.1.a. What are the demographic characteristics of EI/ECSE practitioners (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity/race, language[s] spoken)? |  |
| 2.A.1.b. What are the levels of education and years of experience of EI/ECSE practitioners? |  |
| 2.A.1.c. How many EI/ECSE practitioners have specific types of credentials/licenses (e.g., EIS, preschool, special education, licensed therapist)? |  |
| 2.A.1.d. What is the turnover rate among EI/ECSE practitioners (by year, state, or local program)? |  |
| 2.A.1.e. What percentage of those working with children with IFSP/IEPs and their families entered the field with the academic preparation and/or experience for working with young children and families? |  |
| 2.A.3. What ongoing professional development do early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) practitioners receive? |  |
| 2.A.3.a. What professional development activities do EI/ECSE service providers/teachers participate in during employment? |  |
| 2.A.3.b. How much professional development (e.g., hours, continuing education units [CEUs]) did EI/ECSE practitioners receive over a given time period (e.g., in a year, over a 5-year period) by role and profession? |  |
| 2.A.3.c. How much professional development specific to EI/ECSE did EI/ECSE practitioners receive over a given time period (e.g., in a year, over a 5-year period) by role and profession? |  |

# Section 3: Local Early Intervention Services (EIS) Program- and Local Educational Agency (LEA)-Level Questions

| 3.A. EIS Program/LEA Characteristics |  |
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| 3.A.1. What are the characteristics of local early intervention services programs and local educational agencies? |  |
| 3.A.1.b. What are the characteristics of EIS programs/LEAs in the state (e.g., number of children served, number of providers in program, average funding per child)? |  |
| 3.A.1.d. What is the EI/ECSE practitioner to child ratio for each EIS program/LEA overall? By type of profession/role? |  |

| 3.B. EIS Program/LEA Performance |  |
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| 3.B.1. How well are local early intervention services programs and local educational agencies supporting children and families? |  |
| 3.B.1.a. How do child and family outcomes compare across EIS programs/LEAs? Are some EIS programs/LEAs meaningfully (e.g., statistically) different from the state? |  |

| 3.C. Funding and Expenditures |  |
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| 3.C.1. What is the cost of providing early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) services to children and families? |  |
| 3.C.1.a. What major funding streams and allocations support children participating in EI/ECSE (e.g., federal, state, local)? |  |
| 3.C.1.c. What is the cost to each local EIS program/LEA to provide EI/ECSE services? |  |
| 3.C.1.d. What is the average cost per child for EI/ECSE services statewide? For each EIS program/LEA? |  |
| 3.C.1.e. What are some of the factors (e.g., demographics of population, geography) that are related to differences across EIS programs/LEAs in the average cost per child? |  |