Georgia's Preschool Development Grant

REPORT 2

GEORGIA'S MIXED-DELIVERY SYSTEM AND SYSTEM-LEVEL FINDINGS

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Georgia's Preschool Development Grant | BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

GEORGIA'S MIXED-DELIVERY SYSTEM AND SYSTEM-LEVEL FINDINGS

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: REPORT 2

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Key Terms	Definitions
PDG B-5	Preschool Development Grant, Birth through Five
B-5	Birth through five
CACDS	Cross Agency Child Data System
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CAPS	Childcare and Parent Services, a federal program that subsidizes childcare for low-income parents and caregivers
CCDF	Child Care and Development Fund
DCH	Department of Community Health
DECAL	Department of Early Care and Learning, Bright from the Start
DFCS	Division of Family and Children Services (within the Georgia Department of Human Services)
DHS	Department of Human Services
DLL	Dual-language learners
DOE	Department of Education
DPH	Department of Public Health
Early Intervention Programs	Preschool Special Education, Babies Can't Wait, Children First, Home Visiting
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
EHS	Early Head Start
EHS-CCP	Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships
ELLC	Early learning leadership collaboratives
ELLCO Instruments	Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation instruments
ESSA	Elementary and Secondary School Act (federal)
FCCLH	Family child care learning home
Georgia SEEDS	Georgia Social Emotional Early Development Strategies for Success
Georgia's Pre-K	Georgia's universal Pre-K program funded by the Lottery System of Georgia
GVHP	Georgia Home Visiting Program
HS	Head Start
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
MIECHV Program	Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting Program
Mixed-Delivery System	Infrastructure that recognizes the need for differentiation of services based on individual community needs
Quality Rated	Georgia's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Key Terms	Definitions
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
Vulnerable Populations	Vulnerable and underserved populations, such as those living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, living in foster care, living in rural areas, dual-language learners, and living with disabilities
WIC	Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

INTRODUCTION

In December 2018, Georgia was awarded an initial Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and the US Department of Education. This initial grant provided Georgia with a unique opportunity to strengthen its early childhood care and education (ECCE) system-level framework and better align and further expand critical birth-through-five services and programs. A key component of Georgia's initial PDG B-5 5 was a requirement for states to conduct a system-level Needs Assessment. The goal of the Needs Assessment was to analyze the state's existing mixed-delivery system of programs and services to determine how well Georgia was meeting the needs of families of children ages birth through five. In December 2019, Georgia was awarded a three-year renewal PDG B-5 through December 2023 to continue the activities started with the initial PDG B-5 and to address the gaps identified by the Needs Assessment.

Data collection for Georgia's Needs Assessment was conducted in the summer and fall of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic began as the state's PDG B-5 leadership team was finalizing the results of the Needs Assessment. In addition to delaying publication of the Needs Assessment, the pandemic also delayed the state's ability to finish other projects in the initial grant and begin new projects in the renewal grant. State leaders used the PDG B-5 opportunity to collect additional data and conduct analyses to better understand the pandemic's impact on vital ECCE services.

The findings from Georgia's Needs Assessment are organized in seven distinct parts that highlight key topics. For convenience, these results are published in two forms: as a comprehensive, full report available at http://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/PreschoolDevelopmentGrant.aspx and as seven standalone reports. This is the second of the seven standalone reports.

The Needs Assessment provides a snapshot of Georgia's understanding of its early childhood system. It encompasses the conditions and demographics of the state's birth-through-five population and the types of supports the state provides its youngest children and their families. It also details what is *known* about Georgia's early childhood system and, more importantly, what is *not known.*

This report covers the grant requirements asking states to define their mixed-delivery system, to operationalize key ECCE definitions, and to identify focal populations. This report also includes system-level and overarching findings and themes that emerged from the Needs Assessment data collection. These findings and themes are not specific to any of the topic areas but rather apply to the overall system and thus are included here. They also illustrate a specific "lens" that the state is using in conducting its PDG B-5 work.

The other six standalone reports cover other aspects of Georgia's Needs Assessment. Report 1 provides an overview of the Needs Assessment process. It explains the methodology around the Needs Assessment and summarizes the key findings. The other reports cover the following topics: family demographics and family engagement (Report 3), data and research (Report 4), access to early childhood programs and services in Georgia (Report 5), the quality of early childhood programs and services in Georgia (Report 6), and the early childhood care and education workforce in Georgia (Report 7). See the appendix for the Needs Assessment Crosswalk, which lists where among the seven reports each requirement of the Needs Assessment is addressed. The findings related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be issued in subsequent reports.

GEORGIA'S MIXED-DELIVERY SYSTEM

Georgia's mixed-delivery system was created and is maintained through a statewide system of federal, state, and local funding streams, policies, and programs. This mixed-delivery early childhood system is supported by a network of advocacy, philanthropic, and programmatic partners. The state has a long history and strong reputation for working collaboratively across state agencies, federal entities, early care and education advocacy groups, early care and education professional organizations, private and corporate foundations, universities, and parent groups to benefit children and families.

Georgia's state agencies administer several programs and services for its ECCE system. Each state agency is led by an executive who is a member of the Georgia Children's Cabinet and who reports directly to the governor. Table 1 identifies participating state agencies and the direct services they provide within Georgia's mixed-delivery system.

Table 1. Georgia's State Agencies Providing Direct Services

State Agency	Description of Agency Programs
Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	Administers the following federal and state programs: Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Georgia's Pre-K Program, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Quality Rated (Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system), child care licensing, subsidized child care (the Childcare and Parent Services, or CAPS, program), child care resource and referral agencies, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities	Oversees programs related to child and adolescent behavioral health, including family support services, a non-entitlement program that brokers disability-specific services
Department of Education (DOE)	Oversees K-12 education, including the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESSA), and oversees Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619, and Title Programs
Department of Human Services	Houses the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), which includes Child Protective Services and the Office of Family Independence. Also responsible for administering Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Department of Public Health (DPH)	Oversees Georgia's public health programs and initiatives including Maternal Child Health; Children 1st; Women, Infant and Children Food and Nutrition Service; IDEA, Part C, Early Intervention, newborn screening, and home visiting
Governor's Office of Student Achievement	Provides policy support to the governor through research, data analysis, and reports on educational programs
Technical College System of Georgia	Supervises Georgia's 22 technical colleges across 85 campuses offering 600 program options, including many for early educators
University System of Georgia	Governing organization for Georgia's 26 public colleges and universities
Department of Community Health (DCH)	Administers Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids®, the State Health Benefit Plan, health care facility regulation, and health information technology

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

Each of the state agencies listed in Table 1 includes a myriad of programs that offer direct early childhood care and education services. Table 2 lists these programs, each program's administrative home, and the program's funding source.

Table 2. Programs within Georgia's Mixed-Delivery System Offering Direct Services of ECCE

Program	Description
Child Care Services Administrative Home: DECAL Funding: CCDF and State	DECAL licenses and regulates child care centers, family child care learning homes, and exempt programs that receive CCDF funds. Prior to the pandemic, there were more than 3,000 child care centers and more than 1,400 family child care learning homes in Georgia.
Georgia's Pre-K Program Administrative Home: DECAL Funding: GA Lottery for Education	Georgia's Pre-K Program serves more than 80,000 children each year (approximately 60% of the state's 4-year-old population) and is available in every county of the state. Full-day programs are operated in a variety of settings, including local school systems, private child care facilities, and Head Start programs on a school-year calendar. Additionally, Georgia's Pre-K Summer Transition Program operates a six-week summer program designed for vulnerable populations. The program serves approximately 3,000 children.
Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Administrative Home: DECAL Funding: CCDF	CAPS provides child care subsidies to more than 50,000 low-income children per week. In the last two years, considerable policy revisions have been implemented to better support vulnerable families, including lower family fees, 12-month eligibility, and updated priority groups.
Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, and Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP) Administrative Home: Local grantees (HS, EHS, EHS-CCP), DOE (Migrant), DECAL (EHS-CCP) Funding: Head Start (Administration for Children and Families)	These programs promote school readiness of children ages birth to 5 from low-income families by supporting the development of the whole child. They support children's growth and development in a learning environment through a variety of services, which include early learning, health, and family well-being.
Quality Rated Administrative Home: DECAL Funding: CCDF (administrative), philanthropic (program supports such as bonus packages)	Quality Rated assigns 1, 2, or 3 stars to child care providers based on program characteristics and on-site observations. In 2015, the state established a Quality Rated/CAPS 2020 Goal that all programs participating in CAPS would be Quality Rated by December 31, 2020. Due to the pandemic, this goal has been extended to December 31, 2021. As of November 2020, more than 2,400 programs are currently Quality Rated.
Preschool Special Education Administrative Home: Georgia Department of Education Funding: IDEA	IDEA, Part B, Section 619 funding is utilized to provide critical early education services to children with disabilities ages 3 to 5. In 2017–2018, the program served 18,833 children, or 4.7% of the overall population. Local school systems offer these services through school-based and community-based models.

Program	Description
Babies Can't Wait Program Administrative Home: Georgia Department of Public Health Funding: IDEA	The state uses IDEA, Part C funding to provide critical early education services to children with developmental delays and disabilities from birth through age 2. The annual performance report for federal fiscal year 2018 reported that the program served 0.8% of children ages birth to 1 and 2.5% of children ages birth to 3.
Georgia Home Visiting Program (GVHP) Administrative Home: Georgia Department of Public Health Funding: Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), state funds	This program helps new parents who need consistent, ongoing support during the first years of their child's life and focuses on parents with identified vulnerabilities, including unemployment, late or no prenatal care, and a history of substance abuse. The program requires the use of an evidence-based model. Approved models include Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership, Early Head Start–Home Visiting, and Healthy Families Georgia.

Georgia's Needs Assessment specifically focused on the above programs because they offer direct early childhood care and education services. However, the Needs Assessment identified several other programs that support meeting the needs of young children and their families deemed most vulnerable and underserved. Table 3 lists these programs.

Table 3. Additional Services for Vulnerable and Underserved Populations

Program or Partnership	Description
Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)	DFCS offers multiple programs supporting family independence and well-being including TANF, emergency energy and food assistance, WIC, and SNAP. These services are vital for reducing food insecurity and increasing access to nutritious meals for lower-income children and families. The Office of Prevention and Family Support, within DFCS, partners with community-based organizations committed to reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect by targeting at-risk families with evidence-based prevention and early intervention techniques to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.
Maternal and Child Health programs	The Department of Public Health (DPH) offers maternal and child health programs. Children 1st is the single point of entry for all DPH child health services and programs for children birth to 5 years old. Programs include: Babies Can't Wait (IDEA, Part C), Children's Medical Services, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, and 1st Care (high-risk infant follow-up). Children's Medical Services supports families caring for children with special health care needs ages birth to 21 years old.
Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition	This network of stakeholders in early care, food, farming, and nutrition helps to coalesce resources, support farm to early care and education, and create a dialogue for building statewide programming.
Georgia SEEDS	Infant early childhood mental health services are delivered through Georgia SEEDS (Social Emotional Early Development Strategies). The prevention-based framework employs evidence-based practices to prevent early childhood suspension and expulsion by providing training and coaching to teachers and administrators to increase their skill in nurturing children's social-emotional competence and support children with challenging behavior within early learning programs. DECAL has a network of inclusion and behavior support specialists statewide.

KEY TERMS

PDG B-5 grantees are required to provide definitions for the following key terms related to each state's mixed-delivery system: quality early childhood care and education, early childhood care and education availability, vulnerable children, underserved children, and children in rural areas. Defining these terms in the context of Georgia's PDG B-5 operationalizes them and helps promote consistency in how data are analyzed and interpreted. The following sections detail how each of the terms is defined and operationalized in Georgia's PDG B-5 work.

QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

"Quality early childhood care and education" refers to early childhood care and education programs that meet rigorous standards for enriching children's experiences through (1) nurturing interactions with teachers, and (2) well-organized and engaging routines, activities, lessons, and materials. Quality early childhood care and education programs also require classroom environments with highly skilled and trained teachers, structured curricula, desirable child-to-teacher ratios, and supplemental services designed to meet child and family needs.[1]

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION AVAILABILITY

"Early childhood care and education availability" is a measure of the supply, desired and licensed capacity, enrollment, and vacancy levels of ECCE programs in a specified geographic area. ECCE availability, along with family awareness of ECCE availability, is considered to determine reasonable effort when assessing access. ECCE availability and the total number of ECCE programs allow for evaluation of program-level and child-level availability.[2]

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

"Vulnerable children" are children at risk for not meeting developmental milestones or school readiness benchmarks. In the context of Georgia's PDG B-5 work, the state has classified the following populations in its definition: children living in poverty, dual language learners, children with disabilities, children in foster care and protective services, and children experiencing homelessness (see Table 4).

UNDERSERVED CHILDREN

"Underserved children" are children and families whose needs are not met by available services or who are not able to access existing services that meet their needs. Children with disabilities, children living in poverty, and infant and toddlers are all considered underserved.

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1 Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., Burchinal, M., Early, D. M., & Howes, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child Development*, 79(3), 732–749. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01154.x

2 Friese, S., Lin, V. K., Forry, N., & Tout, K. (2017). *Defining and measuring access to high-quality early care and education (ECE): A guidebook for policymakers and researchers*. Research Brief, OPRE 2017-08. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.

CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS

"Children in rural areas" are children, including those from migrant families, who live in a county with a population of less than 50,000 or in an area designated as rural based on a military installation exclusion clause as indicated by Georgia's Rural Hospital Organization Assistance Act of 2017 and used by the State Office of Rural Health in the Department of Community Health.[3] In Georgia, 120 (out of 159) counties are classified as rural areas (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Rural Counties in Georgia
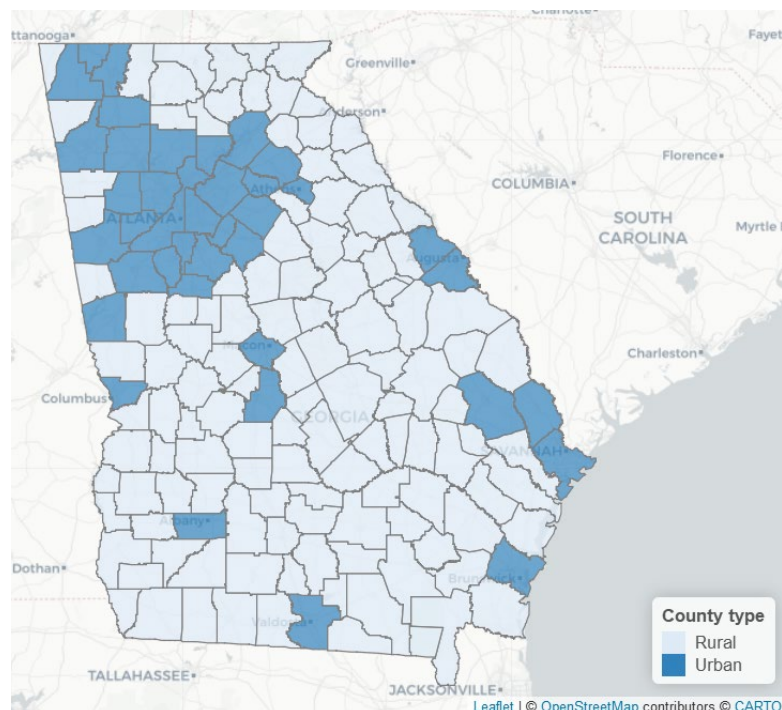
FOCAL POPULATIONS

In addition to defining and operationalizing key terms, the grant required states to identify "focal populations." Specifically, these are populations with a greater likelihood of being classified as vulnerable and/or underserved. Table 4 identifies and defines the populations that Georgia ECCE leaders identified in its grant as being "focal populations." These are the populations of children and/or families that the state will prioritize in its PDG B-5 projects.

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[3] State Office of Rural Health│ Georgia Department of Community Health

Table 4. Populations Identified as Vulnerable and Underserved

Population	Definition
Children Living in Poverty	Children living in poverty are defined as children residing in households at the poverty (<100% FPL) and low-income (100%–199% FPL) levels
Dual Language Learners	Children whose home language is a language other than English
Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities	Children identified with developmental delays or disability. Children screened for or receiving services through IDEA, Part C and Part B, Section 619
Children in Foster Care and Protective Services	Children in foster care placement and children who remain in their home but with an active protective services case
Children Experiencing Homelessness	Homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act; additional information about the McKinney-Vento Act available at https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento/
Infants and Toddlers	Children ages birth to 36 months. A 2016 economic impact study of Georgia's ECCE industry found that only 15% of infants and 22% of toddlers are receiving formal early education.[a] Additionally, a 2008 study of ECCE program quality found that two-thirds of infant and toddler classrooms are of low quality.[b] Current analyses regarding the availability of infant and toddler care indicate that some areas of the state have little or no access to high-quality infant and toddler care.
Children and Families in Rural Areas	Georgia has a significant rural population that often has limited access to high-quality ECCE and therefore is more likely to be underserved. Specifically, 120 (75%) of Georgia's 159 counties are classified as rural.[c] Approximately 132,005 (20%) children 0–4 years of age live in rural counties in Georgia.

Note: FPL = federal poverty line
[a] Georgia State University: Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, & University of Georgia: Carl Vinson Institute of Government. (2016). *Economic impact of the early care and education industry in Georgia.* http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/EconImpactReport.pdf
[b] Maxwell, K. L., Early, D. M., Bryant, D., Kraus, S., Hume, K., & Crawford, G. (2009, December). *Georgia study of early care and education: Child care center findings.* University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute. http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/ChildCare_Report.pdf
[c] State Office of Rural Health│ Georgia Department of Health

As part of the data collection for the Needs Assessment, stakeholders were asked if they "agreed" or "disagreed" with the populations of children and families that the state identified as being a "focal population." This was asked on a PDG B-5 feedback survey conducted in September and October of 2019 (see Report 1). Respondents to the survey overwhelmingly agreed (86.2%) that Georgia's identified focal populations are the appropriate populations. Stakeholders who indicated that Table 4 does not focus on the appropriate populations (13.8%) were asked to identify additional populations of interest, resulting in recommendations to also

prioritize children experiencing food insecurity, children needing care outside of school hours, and children with behavioral concerns.

Stakeholders were also asked to indicate which population they believed to have the greatest need for support. Approximately 82% of stakeholders responded that children living in poverty have the greatest need for support. Other stakeholders agreed that children experiencing homelessness (44.6%), children with disabilities (43.1%), and infants and toddlers (41.5%) demonstrate a great need for support.

SYSTEM-LEVEL FINDINGS

Reports 3 to 7 of the Georgia's Needs Assessment detail findings related to specific topics. However, several key themes emerged that transcend those specific topics.

First, a common theme or takeaway that emerged in the Needs Assessment data collection and discussions was that Georgia's focus on "all children" has created challenges in implementing services for specific populations. In other words, Georgia's B-5 mixed-delivery system has been intentionally built and marketed as being for "all children," which has led to socio-economically diverse "buy-in" on early childhood programs. That is a strength of the system; however, it also creates challenges in providing services to specific populations that may need more supports. Relatedly, stakeholders who participated in the Needs Assessment noted that the PDG B-5 provides a system-level opportunity to better align and coordinate services for vulnerable children and their families across agencies at both the state and community levels.

A second theme that emerged in the Needs Assessment is related to aligning programs and services. For example, the Georgia Children's Cabinet is perceived as a strength for the B-5 system. The Cabinet has a diverse membership and represents a collective voice for the needs of children across the state. Additionally, having multiple programs housed at the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and the Georgia Department of Public Health supports aligning programs and services and sharing resources related to policy, governance, and finance.

A third theme is that even with the strong alignment of programs and services in the state, challenges related to communication and data systems still exist. Georgia's PDG B-5 provides additional opportunities to strengthen this alignment and address the communication and data challenges.

Finally, the Needs Assessment provided an opportunity to examine strengths related to data and the data system. This fourth theme, that the state has data systems that support collaboration and streamlined services for children and families, highlights the work that Georgia has done with its Cross-Agency Child Data System (CACDS) and its integrated

eligibility system (Gateway). The former provides opportunities for agencies to collaborate on data and research and to identify gaps in its use of program services. The latter is an opportunity to align B-5 program data with data from TANF and SNAP.

CONCLUSION

This report details key foundational elements of Georgia's PDG B-5 work, including how the state has defined and operationalized key terms and the focal populations identified in the state's grant application. The report also details overarching findings and themes that have proven foundational in that they highlight a specific "lens" that state leaders have adopted in this system-building work. This "lens" includes building on Georgia's "all children" approach to support specific populations, continuing to strengthen interprogram alignments that provide a collaborative catalyst for better supporting children and families, and building on the state's investments in data and data systems.

APPENDIX. NEEDS ASSESSMENT CROSSWALK

Needs Assessment Domain	Corresponding Section
Definitions: quality early childhood care and education (ECCE), ECCE availability, vulnerable or underserved children, children in rural areas, ECCE system as a whole	Report 2: Key Terms; Georgia's Mixed Delivery System
Focal Populations for the Grant: vulnerable or underserved children in your state/territory, and children who live in rural areas in your state/territory	Report 2: Focal Populations, Table 4
Quality and Availability: current quality and availability of ECCE, including availability for vulnerable or underserved children and children in rural areas	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 5: all sections Report 6: all sections
Children Being Served and Awaiting Service: data available and/or plan for identifying the unduplicated number of children being served in existing programs and unduplicated number of children awaiting services in existing programs	Report 4: Introduction; Georgia's Cross-Agency Child Level Data System; Unduplicated Counts of Children
Gaps in data on quality and availability of programming and supports for children and families	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table.2 Report 2: System Level Findings
Gaps in data or research to support collaboration between programs/services and maximize parental choice	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System Level Findings
Measurable indicators of progress that align with the state/territory's vision and desired outcomes for the project	Report 4: Introduction; Measurable Indicators of Progress
Issues involving early childhood care and education facilities	Report 6: Findings from Administrative Data Analyses
Barriers to the funding and provision of high-quality early childhood care and education services and supports and opportunities for more efficient use of resources	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System Level Findings

Needs Assessment Domain	Corresponding Section
Transition supports and gaps	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 3: Findings Related to Family Engagement Report 5: Transitions and Access
System integration and interagency collaboration	Report 1: Summary of Findings, Table 2 Report 2: System Level Findings

Stakeholder Input	Corresponding Section
Parents/family members or guardians	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Child care providers from different settings (e.g., center-based, Head Start, home-based)	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Child care providers from different parts of the state including rural areas and areas with diverse populations	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Other early childhood service providers	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
State/local early childhood advisory council(s) or other collaborative governance entity	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1
Key partner agencies	Report 1: Process and Methods, Table 1

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