

# Developing Federal Data to Portray the Whole Child in Context

International Society for Child  
Indicators  
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# Our Mission

Child Trends *seeks to* improve outcomes for children by providing research and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children:

- Programs that serve children and families
- Policy makers
- Foundations and philanthropists
- The media

# What We Do

- Track & analyze trends and identify emerging issues
- Evaluate programs and policies
- Provide data-driven, evidence-based guidance on policy and practice
- Design, field, and analyze surveys
- Design and conduct qualitative studies
- Summarize, synthesize and communicate research literature
- Help inform the nation's research agenda for children

# Child Trends' Expertise

Our researchers work in a wide range of issues and areas:

- Early childhood development
- Youth development
- Education
- Health and mental health
- Child welfare
- Fertility
- Family structure
- Fatherhood
- Marriage
- Indicators
- Evaluation
- Qualitative studies

# Organization of Presentation

- Interagency governance structure to produce annual monitoring report
- Structural barriers to measuring the whole child in context
- Role of private sector in developing data for federal collections
- Suggestions for expansion of data collections to present the whole child in context

# Coordinating Data Collection and Dissemination across Federal Agencies

- Forum on Child and Family Statistics
  - Heads of 22 agencies that either collect data or create policy for children and families
  - Funding for the Forum is through voluntary agency contributions; appropriated funds needed for stability
  - Staffed by a staff director position, and committees
  - Planning committee, Reporting Committee, Research Committee, others as needed

# Whole Child Perspective

- ***America's Children*** combines data across agencies on indicators considered key to monitoring well-being. Originally-25, now 40+
- Indicators as well as data needs for new indicators, are identified for each domain
- Agencies coordinate on selection of indicators, data, and writing of report
- Annual Joint release of report-rare in U.S.

# Barriers to Whole Child Perspective

- No one agency for children, but policy and data for children within each agencies
- Funding and staffing vary by agency, and thus resources that can be dedicated
- Time allocated for coordination inadequate; on top of agency responsibilities
- Lack of coordination of expertise across surveys
- No ownership in dissemination



# Role of Private Sector

- Proposing indicators through research on relationships of indicators to outcomes
- Delving deeply into specific areas(families)
- Item development and testing (positive indicators)
- workshops on measurement issues (couples)
- Conceptual frameworks to generate indicators

## Individuals

Physical health,  
development, &  
safety

Social/emotional  
development and  
behavior

Cognitive  
development &  
education

Spiritual  
Development

## Relationships

Family

Peers

School

Community

Macrosystems

## Context

Family

Peers

School

Community

Macrosystems

# Individual level child well-being data needs:

## Physical development and safety:

- Safety: seatbelts, healthy habits, sleep
- Sexual identity and behaviors

## Social/emotional development:

- Positive mental health
- Social/emotional/cultural intelligence
- Prosocial behaviors
- Self-regulation
- Agency and identity

# Individual level: continued

## Cognitive Development and Education

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills—problem solving, communication, etc.

## Spiritual Development

- Moral character
- Sense of purpose
- Connectedness

# Developmental Stage Data Gaps

- Early childhood:
  - Social and emotional and cognitive skills
- Middle childhood : K-5
  - Play, curiosity
- Early adolescence/middle school:
  - Well-being in middle schools
- Late adolescence/high school
  - Non-academic competencies
- Young adults
  - Life skills

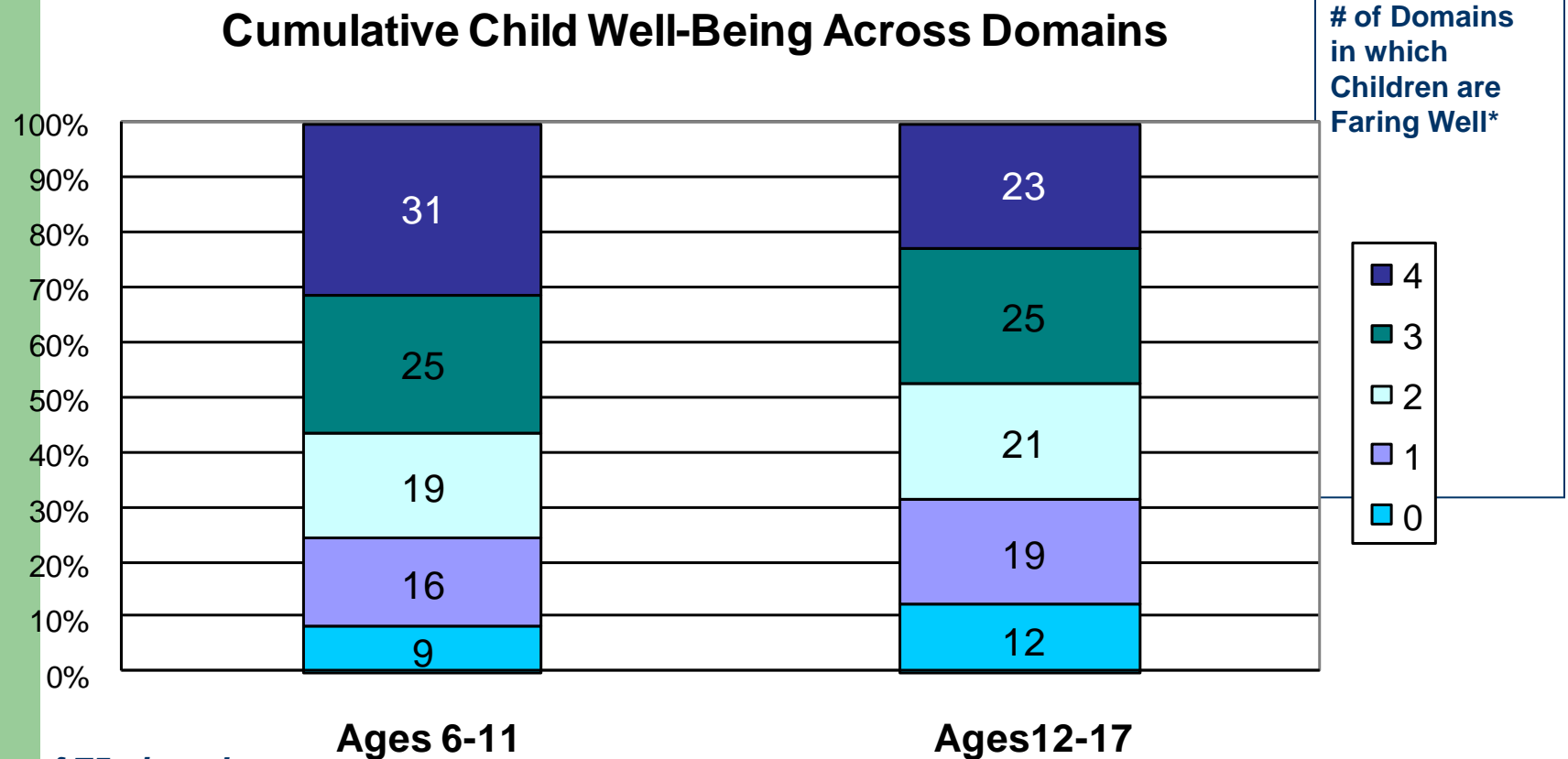
# Relationship Quality Data Needs

- Family: sibling relationships
- Peer: supportive peer relationships
- School: student relations with staff
- Community: positive relations with unrelated adults
- Macrosystem: relationships to social media

# Contextual Data Needs

- Family: individual centered data systems impair our ability to describe family unit; consistent detailed family structure, employment and mental health status of ***parents, not HH head***
- Peer: positive peer groups
- School: school climate
- Community: community institutions serving youth and access to programs
- Macrosystems: priorities for investments

# Micro data present a picture of the actual outcomes experienced by individual children





# Comprehensive National Survey of Child Well-Being for Nation

- What is the problem?
  - No one survey provides microdata for all domains and age groups as well as contexts and relationships
  - Measurement and policy/ program needs mismatch
- Why is it important?
  - Need to measure whole child
  - Test relationships of individual, contextual and relationship measures to each other and their influence on outcomes
- What can be done?
  - Fund a periodic survey that fills current gaps in the knowledge base and collaborate across agencies
  - Include periodic youth survey

# Internationally Comparable Data

- Need international survey across domains, and for relationships and contexts using comparable measures
- Currently cobble together data from various surveys focusing on health, education, and conducted in various years on diff. samples
- Social and emotional well-being data a particular gap
- See our UNICEF paper for suggested starting place for new data collection

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