

**Summary of  
the Workshop on Social Indicators of Child and  
Family Well-being in the Age of Devolution:  
Defining Next Steps  
May 29-30, 1997**

*Organized by  
Child Trends, Inc. and  
The State and Local Data Committee of The Federal Interagency Forum on  
Child and Family Statistics*

*Sponsored by  
The Pew Charitable Trusts*

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*Introduction*

In this age of devolution and reinvention in government, the movement to develop and use social indicators is reinvigorated. As the responsibility for social service delivery shifts from the federal level to increasingly become the domain of the states and as these delivery systems become focused on outcomes, indicators of community, family and child well-being are gaining the limelight. This environment, however, also presents challenges to the thoughtful and accurate uses of social indicators as services become more diverse and the limits to the power of indicators are pushed.

A conference, sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts, was convened by Child Trends, Inc. and the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics on May 29 and 30, 1997 to gain an understanding of selected current state practices involving indicators of child well-being and to identify the necessary next steps that will support and advance these efforts. Through this two-day meeting, four categories of discussion emerged that both provide lessons and inform directions for the future. The first three categories center on the foundations necessary for indicator development: 1) developing a common understanding of the language of indicators and of their use as tools of governance; 2) surveying the policy and data infrastructures that exist or that are possible to support indicator initiatives in the states; and 3) establishing intra- and inter-state communication to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices. The fourth category builds from the prior three by summarizing the suggestions for collaborative work between states, the federal statistical system and the research and foundation communities.

Conference participants included representatives from: 1) state government in California, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, Georgia and Missouri; 2) federal statistical agencies including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Census Bureau, The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); 3) researchers from organizations such as the Institute for Research on Poverty, the National Research Council, the National Governor's Association, the National Center for Children in Poverty, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Harvard Family Research Project, the Urban Institute, the Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change, the Aspen Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families, and the Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Well-being; and, 4) national foundations including the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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### *Developing a Common Understanding of Social Indicators: Selection and Use<sup>1</sup>*

As the use of social indicators increases, there is a growing need to better define what indicators are and how they can be used in a manner that is common across states and between levels of government. The analogy suggested during the workshop was that in this climate of devolution we are moving from an orchestra of indicator development and use conducted by the federal government to a jazz combo with much improvisation occurring at the state and local level.<sup>2</sup> The integral component to this arrangement is a common understanding of the rhythm and momentum in these efforts and a common language for direction and communication.

#### *Defining Indicators and their Uses*

The paper presented by Brett Brown of Child Trends, Inc. and Tom Corbett of the Institute for Research on Poverty, provides a framework for defining a typology of policy-relevant uses of social indicators as follows:

- ▶ *“descriptive*, for the sake of knowledge about society;
- ▶ *monitoring*, to track outcomes which may require policy intervention;
- ▶ *setting goals*, to focus and coordinate activities across agencies and between levels of government toward common and quantifiable ends;
- ▶ *outcomes-based accountability*, to hold managers, agencies, governments, and even whole communities responsible for improving social well-being and for meeting established goals; and,
- ▶ *evaluation*, to determine which programs and policies are effective (or destructive), and why.”<sup>3</sup>

With each level of use, social indicators play an increasing role in examining the direction and assessing the effectiveness of public policy. For this reason, decisions regarding the selection of indicators for each application are particularly important, and can be politically sensitive. Of equal importance is to acknowledge the limits and boundaries of social indicators selected for a particular policy use. For example, an indicator selected for descriptive purposes may not be appropriate for evaluation.

A second paper, presented by Jeff Koshel of the National Research Council, offers an overview of the principal ways that a variety of statistical indicators, including social indicators, are used by the states. It also offers examples of how the various indicators are used at different levels of government. Statistical indicators are used by agencies to manage programs and monitor the progress of their organizations in meeting goals. Different types of statistical indicators include:

- ▶ *Administrative*: Indicators used by agency heads to monitor the efficiency of internal operations.

- ▶ *Capacity*: Normative standards for personnel, equipment, and/or facilities.
- ▶ *Process*: Indicators that describe the change in organizational output that occurred in a specific time period.
- ▶ *Outcome*: Represents a change in the status of a target population.

Two commonly used measurement terms for public policy purposes are social indicators and performance indicators.

- ▶ *Social indicators* include outcome indicators that track the well-being of Americans. They may also include process indicators demonstrated through empirical research to be associated with a desired outcome.
- ▶ *Performance indicators* can consist of all types of statistical indicators and are designed to reveal the amount of progress made by an organization within a specific time period.

These terms help define and clarify the role of various indicators collected and used by state governments. There is still a need, however, to focus on how states can use indicators wisely, particularly when applying them to sophisticated management purposes.

#### *Selection of Indicators*

State administrators conveyed that the process of indicator selection can, in and of itself, be daunting. When Oregon, Minnesota, and Florida each began their own versions of a statewide benchmarking system they were faced with creating a set of benchmarks from a myriad list of possible indicators. Workshop participants expressed an interest in receiving input and guidance from the scholarly community in developing a quality set of indicators, from devising selection criteria to providing options based on research or even to the level of prescribing a list of indicators for specified topic areas.<sup>4</sup>

In selecting indicators for specific purposes, states encounter decisions of cost and quality as well as the consideration of tradeoffs between the two. In some sense, the requisite accuracy of the data depends on the use to which they will be applied. Indicators can often be measured and reported at a lower cost when they are less precise - i.e. they have broader confidence intervals. A slightly lower level of precision may be acceptable for monitoring purposes, but accuracy gains in importance as a state moves up the scale of uses toward goals-setting, accountability and evaluation. This aspect of indicator selection can also introduce administrative issues and bureaucratic politics into the equation. For example, accuracy is vitally important if program administrators and staff are to be held accountable for outcomes. Administrators want to feel that they have some control over changes in an indicator to be comfortable with an outcome-based system. In this way, they may not want to be judged, for example, by the overall teen pregnancy rate in the state as a whole, but by some interim measures more directly related to their own activities. This situation explains the current reliance on and comfort level with

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operational level (or process) indicators as conveyed by Karen Stanford, Executive Director of the Florida Commission on Government Accountability to the People (GAP), and presents challenges for a move toward outcome indicators in performance management.

### *Research Needs*

Tiers of indicators were suggested as one way to help refine a list of indicators. By creating tiers of indicators, as recommended by David Murphey of the Vermont Agency of Human Services, states can focus on a core of 10-20 primary indicators. Additional indicators would then fan out from this core into supporting measures for specific agencies or sub-state units of government. The research community is needed to assist in creating this hierarchy of measures.

A great deal of discussion centered around the cautions against using indicators to assess specific policy impacts and clarifying the distinctions between monitoring outcomes and conducting program evaluations. Evelyn Ganzglass, of the National Governor's Association, made the point that broad social indicators are unlikely to change significantly as the result of any one program and are, therefore, limited in their utility for program evaluation purposes. Outcome indicators can be very good management tools, but changes in such indicators do not imply the same conclusions as the results of a formal program evaluation. Moving into evaluation introduces causal relationships between the intervention and the effect. As the highest level of use in the hierarchy of social indicators, evaluation requires the greatest accuracy and the most sophistication in application. Jeff Koshel of the National Research Council advised that until a firm understanding of the relationship between an intervention and an outcome is achieved it is important to tread lightly and maintain a clear distinction between outcome-based accountability and evaluation language.

Interim measures can help maintain the distinctions between the uses of indicators. As described by Jono Hildner of the Department of Human Services in Clackamas County, Oregon, social indicators can serve as mechanisms to cause heads to turn, to get people to take notice, but they rarely change quickly. Interim measures that change more readily and indicate a potential change in the longer term outcome are therefore needed. Connie Revell of the Oregon Option explained that these measures would serve as "lights at the end of the tunnel" to keep program administrators, staff and the public motivated in the short term to continue the momentum toward longer-term goals. Research is needed to inform the development of interim measures that can be linked with identified outcomes.

The research community has the greatest role to play in helping states make progress in the accurate selection and use of indicators by extending research into the areas described. Such efforts will further build the common understandings necessary in the current environment that has generated diversity among state initiatives.

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*Infrastructures to Support Indicator Initiatives in the States<sup>5</sup>*

A question posed by Tom Corbett, Institute for Research on Poverty, was whether the ultimate uses of indicators serve as the catalyst for construction of a state's data system or whether the available data from a state's system determines the uses to which indicators are applied. Based on the experiences of the states represented at the conference, this question is similar to that of the chicken or the egg. In essence, no one prescribed method emerged for building a data infrastructure within each state to support indicator-based initiatives. Rather, the six states that presented their frameworks - Oregon, Florida, Vermont, California, Minnesota and Massachusetts - have developed in different ways and through varied catalysts. In Oregon, Minnesota and Florida, comprehensive statewide benchmarking programs serve a coordinating function in summarizing and publicizing state data initiatives. Benchmarking in each of these states began from the top (the governor), but involved input from the bottom-up (from citizens, civic groups, and local governments) in establishing goals and selecting indicators. Indicator development and the data infrastructure in these states has been further shaped and enhanced based on the end use of the data for goal-setting.

The absence of statewide goal-setting initiatives in Massachusetts and California has not hampered their efforts in data development and the use of indicators, but has led to an agency-by-agency approach. In each of these two states, an agency leader in building the state's data infrastructure has emerged. A county-administered social welfare system exists in California that creates great variation in location, quality and automation of data across counties as explained by Barbara West Snow, University of California Data Archive & Technical Assistance (UC DATA). Driven by an interest in tracking and evaluating welfare changes, the California Department of Social Services Research Branch joined with UC DATA to integrate these varied administrative records and to supplement this information with survey data. California's advanced work in building its social welfare data systems is not concentrated specifically on social indicator development, however, the system can serve as a fruitful source of social indicator data.

Similarly, Deborah Klein Walker conveyed that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has gradually built a data infrastructure that is now supported by a staff of 30 employees and a budget of \$1 million. The Massachusetts Community Health Information Profile (MassCHIP) is the cornerstone of the department's work in making high-quality social indicator data available to all interested users.<sup>6</sup> These efforts in Massachusetts have been guided by the Department of Public Health's commitment to its mandate from the federal government through the Maternal and Child Health Block grant to serve as a point of accountability within state government for all children and families.

The State of Vermont has taken a mixed approach, with the uses of social indicators and the development of data taking place concurrently, as outlined by David Murphey, Senior Policy

Analyst at the Agency of Human Services. Through the Framework for Collaboration, a State Team for Children and 12 Regional Teams have developed to concentrate on integrated, family-focused approaches to service provision. Part of this effort includes the development and use of regional social indicators in goals-setting, measuring service system performance and making budgetary decisions. This initiative and the data infrastructure to support it are growing together to develop multiple tiers of social indicators for use at the state and local level.

It can be argued that the use of indicators drove system development in the first set of states, while the data infrastructure was the primary concern in California and Massachusetts. Regardless of what emphasis came first - the supply of or the demand for data - common among all six states was the feedback process and the continuing growth in momentum to increase data accessibility and use. In other words, as the demand for data increases (for example, for county level data on a measure currently reported only at the state-level, or for the compilation of a variety of measures across topic areas to use for service delivery planning), infrastructures and, in turn, data accessibility increases, and then demand increases again and so on.<sup>7</sup> This feedback process is largely driven by the vertical communication within the state from state-level agencies down to communities and vice versa. For example, Linda Kohl, Director of Minnesota Planning, explained how the Minnesota Milestones initiative was launched first at the state level and focused on state-level indicators. As the initiative gained momentum, demand grew for data at the county level and the Children's Services Report Card was developed and instituted into the state data infrastructure. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health had developed health status indicators for Community Health Network Areas and then trained each area on use of the data for planning. As the networks became more familiar and comfortable with using the information, demand for increased data accessibility grew and the department began the development of the MassCHIP electronic data access system.

The states are at varying degrees of sophistication in both their data infrastructures and their uses of indicators, however, there is consensus that all can use both technical and financial assistance to build upon their systems. Data accessibility is an issue for each state although in different forms. In Vermont, their annual descriptive report on the Social Health Status of Vermonters requires the Agency of Human Services to hand gather and integrate data from multiple state agencies each year. In this way, Vermont is still seeking an avenue to take the step toward data warehousing, meaning the capacity to collect, store and retrieve data on a long-term and on-going basis. Massachusetts and Minnesota both have extensive and growing electronic data access systems that employ data warehousing technology but have not, as yet, overcome the next hurdle in data accessibility, that of linking micro-data across different systems. For example, both MassCHIP and the DATANET system in Minnesota store multiple data sets for relatively easy access. But, while these data sets are located together within a larger system, they do not communicate with each other to allow custom reports for example, by recipient characteristics or geographic area, without extensive programming. California is the most advanced along the road

toward data warehousing and micro-data linking and has experiences and lessons that would prove beneficial to other states.

It is in this area of infrastructure development that the role of the federal government was most clearly conveyed. The general feeling was that the federal government could support the creation of data infrastructures by combining funding streams for data development and allowing for more flexibility in the way that different agencies must report similar information. Federal agencies could also serve as disseminators of best practices within the states and refine models developed in different states in order to more readily share the technology with others.

### *Communication of Ideas and Practices*

#### *Intra-State Communication*

The ability to build a state data infrastructure and make use of social indicators can largely be determined by politicians and the public and is, therefore, critically tied with intra-state, that is, within-state, communication. State participants relayed that the keys to garnering support for social indicator work are to remove the politics while igniting greater public participation. These may at first sound contradictory, but they do in fact work toward complementary purposes.

Removing the politics means removing the blame. Politicians, and agency administrators, may be hesitant to initiate large scale data collection and use if there is a threat that such information will be used against them. There are two ways to alleviate these concerns. The first is by making high quality data available in a user-friendly way without any “spin.” This approach has been particularly successful for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The second approach is by presenting an indicator-based initiative, such as goal-setting, in the language of joint accountability between the state and local governments and communities. Workshop participants conveyed that the recent changes in social programs in this nation, in part, result from the belief that government cannot solve all the problems on its own. Maximizing upon the benefits to this philosophy enables state governments to report social trends and make a case that all sectors are responsible and must take action toward improvements. Oregon serves as the model of success in using this approach as evidenced through the staying power of the Oregon Benchmarks initiative over three gubernatorial administrations.

As summarized by Brett Brown, Child Trends, Inc., a common belief among the state participants in the workshop was that indicators can function as tools for supporting democracy. Citizens will respond to a coherent vision, particularly when they are involved in developing that vision as was the experience in both Oregon and Minnesota. Social indicator initiatives (monitoring, goal-setting) can get citizens thinking and acting about what they want from their government and where they envision their community, or state, in the future. In this way, uses of



indicators can either be initiated or expanded through public support. For example, in Vermont, the interest of many community-based and statewide non-profit organizations in the KIDS COUNT project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation helped break the ground and provide an incentive for increased state government action on reporting social indicators.

While communication throughout the state government level and with the public is increasing, there is still much work to be done in the area of state to local government communication. Devolution and reinvention have put state governments in the position of monitoring the performance of city and county governments at the same time they are now being asked to provide technical assistance on indicator development to these same areas. As witnessed through the Ensuring Student Success project, Shelly Hara of the Council of Chief State School Officers conveys that this is often a confusing and conflicting role and an area that states need assistance in developing. This conflict also poses an implementation issue for the use of social indicators in determining the balance between prescription and experimentation. On the one hand, some states want to encourage local innovations and use of indicators, yet on the other hand, there may be lessons already learned at the state level that are not necessary to repeat in multiple fashion at the local level. As highlighted by David Murphey (VT), there is a need to temper the urge to encourage experimentation at the local level so as not to misguide communities into following unproductive paths. Variation at the local level also presents the same challenges to comparability as variation at the state level. The combination of devolution and reinvention are, indeed, providing greater flexibility to lower levels of government, but the tradeoff comes in the layers of data that may be rendered incomparable beyond a specified regional level.

#### Inter-State Communication

The sharing of best practices among states for social indicator development, measurement, and use was identified by state participants as a key goal. State administrators freely admit and, reciprocally encourage, the use of other's practices regarding data infrastructures and initiatives, though this occurs on a mostly informal and ad-hoc basis. Participants felt there was a healthy exchange occurring, however, it is limited to a handful of states such as those represented at this workshop. Representatives relayed the need for a formal mechanism to share both best practices and lessons learned to prevent a constant cycle of reinventing the wheel. A forum or network between the states could facilitate this communication. Communication between the states can be as simple as an electronic network or can involve a more formal structure along the lines of the WELPAN model.<sup>8</sup> The objective of any communication route created is to maximize horizontal communication between the states to share ideas and conduct common problem solving, and to have the more advanced states serve as mentors to the others.

Many participants appreciate the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with their colleagues in other states, but often lack the time to locate these individuals through the maze of state governments. Sara McLanahan, Princeton University, voiced the feeling shared by all that a

formal network that would ferret out the “indicator-focused” administrators and statisticians in state governments would provide a necessary service in advancing the movement. The organizations represented during the afternoon session of May 29th facilitate inter-state communication on indicators in many useful ways but are often targeted to specific populations (e.g. the National Governor’s Association), or focused around certain topical areas (e.g. the Results-Based Accountability Project of the Harvard Family Research Project and the Ensuring Student Success through Collaboration project of the Council of Chief State School Officers). A niche that remains to be filled is a general indicator development network that provides both inter-state communication and inter-governmental communication between the state and federal level.

The bottom line in this area is the need for a greater level of peer assistance between state counterparts and from federal officials to share and expand on the many ideas that already exist as well as to develop new approaches together.

***An Action Agenda: Collaboration between the States, the Federal Statistical System and the Research and Foundation Communities***

Participants in the workshop generally agreed that states need to exhibit a commitment to indicator development and use through funding and institutionalization of systems. Research can guide the selection and use of indicators and the federal system can help build the infrastructure and smooth implementation issues.

***The State Role***

States will follow many paths in developing their data systems to produce social indicators. There is no magic formula to ensure the success of these efforts, however, there are some basic and universal guides that can inform their progress. These fall under the categories of training, funding and collaboration.

▶ ***Training***

Coinciding with the expansion of data collection and dissemination systems, state program administrators must provide the training to build the knowledge and capacity of end-users. Without training, data can be either intimidating or misused, or both, which opens the door for criticism, political maneuvering, or, simply but importantly, misinterpretation.

- ▶ *Funding*  
State administrators need to resist the pressure to under-invest in data development. Often data infrastructure and development projects are embedded within office budgets and are not common even within one department, much less government-wide. The disadvantage to this method of budgeting is that funding listed as data development becomes a tempting target in budget-cutting times. Data development is not a luxury to be savored only in healthy economic times. Rather, it is a necessity that should be higher on the priority list as action that the state cannot afford to bypass.
  
- ▶ *Collaboration*  
While states need to commit their own resources toward their data infrastructures, they can be strategic by capitalizing on existing data development opportunities from the federal government, among research organizations, or foundations. For example, in Massachusetts, the Department of Public Health built its resources from a combination of federal funding through the Maternal and Child Health block grant, private resources from the Annie E. Casey foundation for their role in the KIDS COUNT project, and departmental funds. The federal statistical system offers a number of existing (and developing) opportunities for state involvement in surveys and surveillance systems, many of which were reviewed during the workshop.

### *The Federal Role*

Workshop participants consistently echoed the view that the federal government and the federal statistical system should serve as a catalytic leader in data development and funding for efforts in the states. This leadership should be focused on issues common to states, and on cross-state coordination.

The most evident cross-state issue is that of data comparability. The tradeoff inherent in devolution is that between flexibility and accountability. Variation among the states will occur not just with program implementation but with data collection unless some incentive is provided from the national level to produce comparable data. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a good example of such a federal incentive in that partial funding is provided for states to participate, and participation yields social indicator data that is comparable across the states.<sup>9</sup> The federal statistical agencies can also assist in cross-pollination among the states by supporting the dissemination of successful systems. For example, the MassCHIP project has created a data system “shell” that with a federal contribution to work out some finer details could be made available at relatively little expense to other states. In this way, the federal government can help support states in reaching a critical mass in particular areas of their data infrastructure - i.e. raise all (or most states) up to the next level.

Common state issues include:

- ▶ *Building capacities for survey data;*  
State representatives are appreciative of federal level efforts that move beyond building national-level data with state assistance to incorporate state and local area data for use within the states. The upcoming State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey (SLAITS) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the existing Youth Risk Behavior Survey are examples of these reciprocal benefit initiatives as they serve to build state data capacities while also providing data for both federal and state purposes.
  
- ▶ *Developing and testing data gathering modules on specific “hot” topics such as multiple risk / protective factors;*  
Each state does not have the ability to conceptualize and develop new measures to the same extent as that of the federal government. State representatives believed that there are economies of scale in the federal government assuming development of measures of common interest across the states. Such efforts may include the initial design and testing of a comprehensive survey that could then be adapted for state and local use.
  
- ▶ *Linking administrative data.*  
In many states, neither the funding nor the expertise exist to conduct extensive data linking projects. A suggestion emerged that more flexible federal funding streams - along the lines of a data development “block grant” - could assist states in directing funding toward cross-agency data linking efforts. In addition, common definitions for reporting purposes to different federal agencies would ease the ability to share data across state agencies as well.

### *The Role of Research*

Assistance from the research community is needed most visibly in the selection, use, and development of indicators. The two research needs that are most immediate from the perspective of state administrators, as presented earlier, are to help them refine their list of indicators for selected purposes and to help clarify how social indicators relate to each other causally.

In addition, state representatives shared common questions around such issues as the following:

- ▶ clarifying specific indicators to assess school readiness;
- ▶ developing positive child, youth, and community indicators, (states want to report more than just bad news, particularly as the demand for indicators flows to the community level);
- ▶ distinguishing community characteristics that affect children;
- ▶ identifying predictors of behavior / characteristics at age five that can indicate potential problems in adolescence.

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### *The Role of Foundations*

With devolution creating less emphasis on federal policy-setting, the importance of states and localities in serving as laboratories for experimentation increases. Necessary to the success of this policy environment is the capacity to draw out the salient issues that arise from the diversity in approaches to service delivery and policy application. Foundations can play an integral role in this process. Funding from foundations can: 1) assist states and localities in developing innovative service reforms that make use of social indicators in planning and evaluation; 2) enable states to glean lessons from local experiences and to build their own capacities for data development; and, 3) support the research efforts necessary to advance selection criteria for indicators and to develop interim measures for use in the states. Foundation funding can also help launch a network or forum that facilitates inter-state communication and collaboration.

Foundations can, and have, also taken the lead role in the development and application of social indicators of child well-being. Successful examples of foundation initiatives that have sparked state action include the KIDS COUNT project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that served as the catalyst for further indicator development and dissemination in Vermont and Massachusetts, and the Children's Initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts that provided the impetus for the family service collaboratives model in Minnesota and, in turn, the creation of the Children's Services Report Card.

### *Conclusion*

The movement to make use of and place importance on social indicators is growing roots throughout all levels of government. These roots will only become stronger with the continued pressures of government accountability and greater state and local control. The resulting discussions of this workshop offer tangible suggestions as to how the interested parties can work together in ensuring that indicators are used effectively, accurately and productively in the years ahead.

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**Endnotes**

1. Refer to conference papers for a more detailed background of these topics: Brown, B. and Corbett, T. (1997). *Social Indicators and Public Policy in the Age of Devolution*. Institute for Research on Poverty Special Report Series, SR71; and, Koshel, J. (1997). *Indicators as Tools for Managing and Evaluating Programs at the National, State & Local Levels of Government - Practical and Theoretical Issues*. (To be released as part of the Institute for Research on Poverty Special Report Series.)
2. Matt Stagner, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services used this analogy in his summary remarks at the end of the conference.
3. Brown, B. and Corbett, T. (1997). *Social Indicators and Public Policy in the Age of Devolution*. Institute for Research on Poverty Special Report Series, SR71.
4. For additional information on indicator selection, refer to: Moore, K.A. (1994). *Criteria for indicators of child well-being*. Institute for Research on Poverty Special Report Series, SR60A. 2-18.
5. Refer to conference paper for detailed descriptions of the statistical systems that support indicators of child well-being in the six selected states: Brown, B., Kirby, G. and Botsko, C. (1997). *Social Indicators of Child and Family Well-Being: A Profile of Six State Systems*. (To be released as part of the Institute for Research on Poverty Special Report Series.)
6. MassCHIP is an information service developed by the Department of Public Health that provides state and community level data from 18 data sets covering vital statistics, communicable disease, sociodemographics, MDPH program utilization and other focused health areas. The system was completed for internal departmental use in January, 1997 and in March, 1997 was made available on-line to public users.
7. This same feedback cycle is also possible when starting with the supply - or infrastructure - side of the equation.
8. WELPAN is the Midwest Welfare Peer Assistance Network comprised of state welfare administrators and facilitated by the Institute for Research on Poverty and the Family Impact Seminar.
9. Laura Kann explained the CDC philosophy for the YRBS that it is much more valuable to states to institutionalize the survey within their own system. As a result, comparability across states comes in time as the capacity for administering the survey is developed within each state and the quality and generalizability of the data increases. In 1995, two-thirds of the states had weighted, generalizable data but this number is likely to increase for the 1997 administration.