

# Understanding Early Childhood Data: A Family's Guide



## Mission



As a parent/family, you share information about your child with schools, child care programs, and health care providers. This guide is here to help you understand what data is being collected, why it matters, how the data is used, and how your child's privacy is protected.

Our mission is to empower you with the knowledge and tools to understand and protect your child's data. We want to explain key data concepts in simple terms, connect you with helpful local resources, and support you in making informed decisions for your child's early learning and care.

## 1. What is Early Childhood Data?

Early childhood data are pieces of information collected about young children, from birth through 8, and their experiences as they grow and learn.

Such data helps:

- You understand your child's development
- Your child's health providers track your child's growth and well-being
- Teachers and caregivers support your child's learning
- Schools and programs improve services for children like yours
- Communities plan resources that support children and families



***Data can be collected by child-care programs, schools, health-care centers, and through family surveys conducted by research institutions and universities, as well as through state- and national-level data systems.***

## 2. What Types of Data are Collected?

Data is collected to help understand children's early experiences. These are the types of early childhood data that may be collected.



**a. Basic demographic data:** age, sex, race/ethnicity, disability status, etc.

- *Data can be used for monitoring who is being served, who is missing out, and how services can be improved*



**b. Health data:** birth outcomes, immunizations, growth checks, vision/hearing or mental health screenings, access to health care, etc.

- *Data can be used for early identification and intervention, and for monitoring your child's health*



**c. Learning data:** grade, school/program (Head Start, Pre-K, home visiting), early reading or maths skills, attendance and enrollment history, early learning outcomes (kindergarten readiness, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) growth scores, etc.

- *Data can be used for monitoring child development and readiness, identifying gaps, and tracking outcomes over time*



**d. Family/household data:** family income, education, participation in Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), languages spoken, housing stability, family engagement, etc.

- *Data can be used for monitoring well-being indicators, coordinating services, and determining eligibility for public programs*

### 3. How Can Families Access Data? Where is it Stored?

- **How can families access their child's data?**

- Parents have the right to know how to see their child's information. You may want to ask if your child's program offers secure parent portals, sends reports home, or shares information during meetings with teachers, schools, or health-care providers.



- **Where is my child's data stored?**

- It is important to ask where your child's information is kept and how it is protected. Data may be stored in secure computer systems, such as school or program databases or health record systems. You can also ask how these systems keep information safe and private.



- **How long is my child's data kept?**

- You can ask how long their child's information is stored. Some data is kept only as long as required by law or policy, while other records may be kept longer to help understand a child's progress over time. Information that is no longer needed should be safely deleted or securely archived.



- **Who can see my child's data?**

- You can ask who is allowed to access your child's information. Typically, this includes parents or legal guardians, teachers or staff who work directly with your child, health professionals providing care, and authorized administrators. It is important to make sure access is limited to people who truly need the information.



***NOTE: Identifiable data cannot be collected without your consent. Only data specific to your child's involvement/participation in the program can be collected. No personal information can be used for law enforcement purposes or shared outside the program without your permission.***

## 4. How is Data Kept Confidential?

There are several ways programs work to keep your child's information private and secure. As a parent, it is encouraged to ask questions about these protections.

- **Password-protected systems**

- You can ask if your child's records are protected by private passwords. Authorized staff should use secure logins to access children's data, and information should be stored in encrypted or secure systems.



- **Limited access granted based on staff roles**

- You can ask who is allowed to see your child's information. In many cases, only teachers or staff who work directly with your child can access learning or program-related data.



- **Privacy laws that protect children's information**

- It is important to ask how privacy laws are followed. Laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) help protect children's health and education information from being shared without permission.



- **Ongoing staff training on data security**

- You can also ask if staff receive regular training on privacy and data security. At the state and local levels, many schools and programs require staff to complete annual training to help keep information safe.



## 5. How to Feel Confident About Data?

It is important for parents to feel confident about how their child's information is collected and used. Here are some ways you can know your child's data is trustworthy and questions you can ask to make sure:

- **Clear explanation for why data is collected**

- You should ask why each piece of information is being collected. Programs should explain clearly how the data will help support your child's learning and development.



- **Information shared in simple language**

- Ask if the information will be shared in simple, clear language so you can easily understand your child's progress.



- **Ability to ask questions and get answers**

- You should ask questions whenever something is unclear. Programs should provide answers in a friendly, helpful way so you feel confident about your child's information.



- **Easy access to contact information**

- You can ask where to get help if you need more information or have concerns. Programs should make it easy to contact someone who can answer your questions.

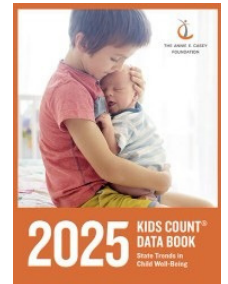


## 6. What Are Some Useful National & Nevada Data Resources?

Below are examples of some trusted data sources that help parents stay informed. These resources show how data/information is collected from different places and used by agencies to better understand children's needs and make decisions. Parents can use this data to learn what is happening in their community, understand trends that affect families, and use the information to ask questions, find support, or advocate for their children.

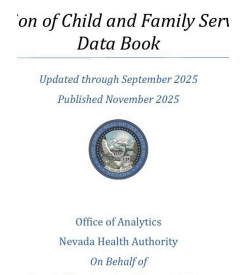
- [Kids Count Data Center by the Annie E. Casey Foundation \(National Level\)](#)

- This is a trusted national source that shares data about children's health, education, economic well-being, families and communities. Parents can see the bigger picture of how children are doing across the country and how their own state compares to others and use this information to understand trends, identify challenges affecting children, and start conversations with schools, providers, or local leaders. The most recent findings are included in the [2025 Kids Count Data Book](#).



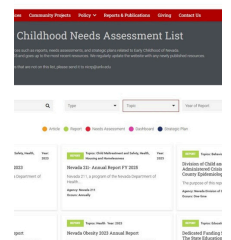
- [Nevada Division of Child and Family Services \(DCFS\) Data \(State level\)](#)

- This Nevada-based resource provides information on child welfare, mental and behavioral health, and juvenile justice services. This helps parents better understand how state agencies support children and families and what services are available in Nevada. Parents can use this data to learn how services are being used, identify gaps or needs, and ask informed questions when seeking help or support. It also includes the most recent [Data Book](#), which summarizes key findings in one place.



- [Nevada Early Childhood Needs Assessment List \(State level\)](#)

- This resource is a central website that brings together many reports, needs assessments, strategic plans, and data related to early childhood in Nevada. The data comes from multiple sources and covers areas like health, education, child well-being, housing, and family and community, etc. Parents can use this information to learn about early childhood needs and find resources that may benefit their children and families, especially during the early years when supports matters most.



## 7. Glossary

- **MAP (Measures of Academic Progress)**

- MAP is a test schools use to see how your child is learning over time in reading and math. It helps teachers understand what your child is doing well and where they may need extra support.



- **WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)**

- WIC is a program that helps pregnant women, new moms, and young children get healthy food and nutrition support. It is designed to help families give their children a strong, healthy start.



- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)**

- SNAP is a program that helps families buy groceries by providing monthly food benefits. It's meant to make sure children and families have enough nutritious food to eat.



- **FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)**

- FERPA is a law that helps protect your child's school records. It gives parents the right to see this information and decide when it can be shared with others.



- **HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)**

- HIPAA is a law that helps keep your child's health and mental health information private. It makes sure this information is handled with care and shared only when appropriate or with parents' permission.



**Look for the data. Ask questions. Stay informed. When you understand the data, you can better advocate for your child.**

