

Increasing Family Access and System Coordination Through Coordinated Eligibility and Enrollment – Part 2

Howard Morrison:

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the second of three videos on Increasing Family Access & System Coordination through Coordinated Eligibility and Enrollment, or CEE. Today we're going to talk about where to begin and what to consider when you have multiple approaches to CEE.

I'm Howard Morrison, and this is my colleague, Wei-Bing Chen. To learn more about us, scan the QR code to connect with us on LinkedIn. Also, be sure to follow SRI on LinkedIn and subscribe to SRI EDU News by scanning the QR code.

Wei-Bing Chen:

During our last episode, we talked about what CEE is and why it's good for a community. Today, we're going to get into how a state or local community that is interested in CEE can begin this work. So, Howard, can you tell us how a community can begin to tackle CEE?

Howard Morrison:

Sure. So this may sound obvious, but before you even begin to implement, you need a plan. We try to boil down the planning into four steps. Note that each step requires a team of people being on the same page with each other. This is because, at its core, CEE is a systems-building strategy, and people from across systems have to come together to build it. In our learning community, First 5 Alameda County, City of Madison in Hawaii, we're in the planning phase. We're learning about CEE, setting goals and identifying the steps to get there. For each state or local community considering CEE, there are some main decisions they will need to make. Can you talk us through these, Wei-Bing?

Wei-Bing Chen:

So these decisions are actually all interrelated, and it is not a linear process of moving from one to another. But one of the things that you must determine is which program enrollment processes you want to coordinate. In episode one, we talked about the progression of processes, and you can start small with just joint recruitment, for instance, and then get more ambitious as you go and have more buy-in from leadership and sustained resources. Many communities aim to have a common application with joint eligibility determination.

Another thing you have to decide is which service sectors or which programs you want to coordinate. This is the scope of coordination. So Oregon is working to coordinate their state preschool program, to coordinate enrollment into their state preschool program, which is technically one funding stream, but is provided through multiple settings or mixed delivery. Other localities coordinate state preschool, Head Start and child care within their early care and education sector, and some coordinate benefits programs such as [inaudible 00:02:52], SNAP and TANF. States that do this include Michigan, Minnesota, Colorado and many others that we know of. But some take on coordinating across multiple sectors, so that would be early care and education with benefits or with health and mental health, for example. An example of this is South Carolina, which has a state website called the First 5 South Carolina that has an eligibility calculator and common application for over 40 early childhood programs, which span early care and education, food and nutrition, parenting and family support and others.

Howard Morrison:

So something else to keep in mind is, whichever programs are working together, for anything beyond joint recruitment, there needs to be some case management happening together. So this means CEE efforts require some level of data sharing or joint data management capacity. So this can range from simple sharing Excel worksheets to using an integrated data system, but really need to ensure that in both those instances their data is private and secure.

Wei-Bing Chen:

That's a great point. So lastly, a community also needs to choose what level of governance they want to implement at. And what we mean by that is, is it going to be local level, regional and/or the state level? And I say and/or because these are not actually mutually exclusive. When the scope of coordination is limited to services like benefits where there's no local provider, or they're only aiming to have a common application but no coordinated enrollment, then the coordination can potentially occur at the state level with little to no local involvement. When provider selection or matching of families to providers is needed, though, coordination typically needs to occur at the local or regional level. State administrators can still be highly involved, though, by providing guidance, oversight and supportive infrastructure. And in our experience, we've seen that CEE has its farthest-reaching effects when implemented at both the state and local levels with aligned decision making and flow of data between the two levels.

So more on this point of considering levels of governance when planning for CEE. Howard, can you take us through what we have seen local and state communities that are wanting to implement CEE consider regarding governance?

Howard Morrison:

Sure. So localities have to see what is feasible for them. There are some local communities who are doing this on their own accord without state support, so they would fall into the light blue local implementation bucket. An example of this is Ready Region West in Virginia when they first started out. Other communities may be doing this at the prompting of the state. So this could be voluntary, resulting in scattered local implementation with state support, the orange bucket, which is where Ready Region West is now, because the state has shown interest in helping them sustain their system and scaling it up to other parts of the state. Or it could be mandated statewide in a way that allows for local variation, leading to the yellow bucket, which is statewide implementation that is done locally. Oregon, Louisiana and Michigan are all examples of states in this category. Finally, the green bucket is state-level implementation. An example of this is South Carolina with their First 5 South Carolina website.

Wei-Bing Chen:

That's it for today. Stay tuned for our next and final video, Episode 3, which will focus on the key factors that can either facilitate your community CEE efforts or become a barrier, plus other important things to remember. Here's some additional resources if you're looking for more information, and here's where you can go to learn more about SRI Education and other work that we do. Thanks for joining us.

Howard Morrison:

Thanks. See you next time.