

Cradle-to-Career Definitions Subcommittee Meeting Summary

September 22, 2020

This document provides a summary of the key points that emerged from the September 22, 2020 meeting of the Definitions Subcommittee. The suggestions from this group will be used to craft specific definitions for elements in the P20W data set. More information about the meeting, including support materials, a recording of the meeting, and the PowerPoint, are available at <https://cadatasystem.wested.org/meeting-information/definitions-subcommittee> (click on “Meeting Materials”).

The goals of this meeting were to:

- Establish documentation protocols
- Establish public display options for the following elements:
 - Foster Youth Status
 - CalWORKS Status
 - CalFresh Status
 - Medi-Cal Status
 - Homeless Status
 - Expected Family Contribution
 - Economically Disadvantaged
 - Age Brackets
 - Language
 - Disabled Status
 - IEP Status
 - Migrant Status
 - Parental Education
 - Military Status

The following Definitions Subcommittee representatives attended the meeting:

Randy Tarnowski, Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities; Joanna Murray, Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education; Todd Hoig, California Community College Chancellor’s Office; Jerry Winkler, Glenn Miller, Paula Mishima & Channa Hewawickrama, California Department of Education; Muree Larson-Bright, California Department of Health Care Services; Akhtar Khan, California Department of Social Services; Janet Buehler, California Department of Technology; David Sanabria & Jennifer Schwartz, California Health and Human Services Agency; Patrick Getz, California Labor and Workforce Development Agency; Rima Mendez & Amy Fong, California School Information Services; Monica Malhotra, California State University; Adrian Felix, California Student Aid Commission; Erin Skubal, Marjorie Suckow, & Phi Phi Lau, California Teacher Credentialing Commission; Margo Gonzales, Employment Development Department; Chris Furgiele, University of California Office of the President; Todd Britton, University of LaVerne; and Valerie Mendelsohn, West Coast University

Public Comment

The meeting began with five public comment statements regarding the foster youth data element.

Debbie Raucher of John Burton Advocates for Youth noted the urgency of providing better data on foster youth, who are more likely to be low-income, homeless, and attain fewer education milestones. Providing administrative data from CDSS, rather than relying on self-reported data, would create a better understanding of whether foster youth are enrolling and succeeding in college. Including this information in public displays would allow foster care advocates and policymakers to determine how best to focus resources and improve outcomes. She referenced a letter that had developed by the John Burton Advocates for Youth, Children Now, and the CalYouth project that recommended specific ways to document foster youth status, which had been used by CDSS to develop the proposed display options.

Kristen Power of Alliance for Children's Rights echoed Debbie Raucher's comments and supported the adoption of the recommendations in the letter.

Nathaniel Okpych of the University of Connecticut, who conducts research on foster youth, noted that high-level designations of foster youth status are not as helpful when examining child welfare data. He supported the recommendations in the letter.

Daniel Webster of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, who has experience developing public-facing metrics on topics such as foster youth status, also supported the recommendations in the letter.

Carrie Lemmon of UNITE-LA, who works to improve foster youth employment outcomes in the Los Angeles region, noted how difficult it is to secure data about foster youth participation in public assistance. She endorsed the recommendations in the letter, noting the value of also being able to link more nuanced foster youth data to employment and earnings information.

Documentation Protocols

Kathy Booth of WestEd noted that comments made at the last meeting highlighted the need to identify when data points are derived from multiple elements, and whether partner entities would prefer to provide a flag that reflects this calculation or if the partner entities would prefer that the managing entity construct the data point using a pre-determined calculation. Therefore, the documentation forms are being modified to collect this information. A WestEd staff member will reach out to partner entities to fill in this information on the data points that had already been discussed.

Next, Kathy Booth suggested a protocol for completing documentation on each element. Given that it may not be possible to evaluate data quality and completeness until data are combined and the outputs are produced, the subcommittee could use a three point scale:

- OK to include
- Concerns about data, further evaluation needed [may include note on why]
- Should not be included

The subcommittee agreed that this would be an appropriate approach.

Finally, the subcommittee considered the concept of how to handle time-bounded categories. For example, with social service data, information could be shared regarding if the individual had ever received CalFresh, or if they received CalFresh during a specific school year. The group recommended

that time-bounded data be constructed using both an “if ever” option and for specific years, and that the display of this information would be determined as part of a user-centered design process.

Foster Youth Status

The group discussed the fact that different partner entities capture different facets of foster youth status. For example, Paula Mishima from CDE noted that the agency uses a narrow definition associated with the Local Control Funding Formula, which focuses on students under the jurisdiction of a court. This excludes students in home placement, family maintenance, or voluntary placement. Recently, CDE saw a decline in foster youth in its data, but after working with CDSS to examine all categories of foster youth, they realized that more counties were putting children in voluntary placement, which is not included in the funding formula definition, which was skewing the results.

The group flagged the importance of revisiting definitions to reflect changes in practice. For example, individuals under Family Maintenance could be classified as foster youth, although this would require amending statute.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Foster Youth Status as “ok to include.” They also recommended that only CDSS data be used to identify foster youth, because it offers the most comprehensive set of options.

FLAG IN DOCUMENTATION: However, Glenn Miller of CDE noted that there is a new foster youth category—tribal foster youth—which will be collected by CDE rather than by CDSS due to federal reporting requirements. While this information may not be of sufficient quality to include in public-facing tools for several years, the question of how to incorporate this information should be reviewed at a future date.

CalWORKS Status

David Sanabria of CDSS noted that it would be possible to expand the metric to include individuals who are categorically eligible but are not receiving benefits. For example, an individual receiving Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits would be eligible for CalFresh but may not receive that aid.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized CalWORKS Status as “ok to include.” They also recommended the data point also include information on individuals who are categorically eligible but are not receiving benefits.

Medi-Cal Status

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Medi-Cal Status as “ok to include.” They also recommended the data point also include information on individuals who are categorically eligible but are not receiving benefits.

FOLLOW UP: David Sanabria of CDSS noted that information on eligibility relies on record reconciliation efforts within CDSS. Akhtar Khan of CDSS agreed to confirm with the Department of Health Care Services—which houses the Med-Cal data—whether eligibility information would be available starting in 2015 or 2016, and if they had any other input into the proposed display items.

Homeless Status

The group discussed the best source(s) of information on this status. Akhtar Khan of CDSS expressed an interest in conferring with a colleague to provide more information about the strength of CDSS information on this data point.

Glenn Miller of CDE noted that recent wildfires have caused periods of homelessness among children, which CDE is tracking within days of an event. Also, CDE captures the status of migrant students, who might be considered homeless as well. Therefore, it may be helpful to integrate information from multiple data providers.

Debbie Raucher of John Burton Advocates for Youth noted that this is another case where varying definitions constrain data sets. CDSS focuses on individuals in homeless services systems, whereas CDE's definition would be broader.

Channa Hewawickrama of CDE noted that in the context of early care, information on homeless and seeking housing are grouped together, which creates a much broader definition.

Adrian Felix of CSAC indicated that FAFSA applications capture information on whether a student is at risk of becoming homeless.

Todd Hoig of CCCC noted that the community college application allows a student to self-identify as homeless.

Glenn Miller also noted the importance of having an "if ever" option for this category to get a better understanding of how the temporary loss of a home impacts longer-term outcomes.

FOLLOW UP: The group decided that WestEd would coordinate with CDE, CDSS, and CSAC to craft a revised proposal.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

Given that expected family contributions for the total cost of college can be any dollar value, which works poorly in a drop down menu, the group discussed appropriate grouping of dollar values.

Ravinder Singh of WestEd noted that Hawaii includes EFC on its dashboard, but that the number needs to be put into context to ensure that users understand what it means.

Debbie Raucher of John Burton Advocates for Youth noted the importance of including a value of zero in this list, and Chris Furguele of UC concurred.

Debbie Raucher also wondered if the EFC cutoff for being Pell eligible would be a useful measure. Adrian Felix of CSAC clarified that if income is below a certain threshold on the FAFSA, then the EFC is automatically set to zero.

Chris Furguele wondered if EFC is a useful value and suggested that it would be more helpful to show median family income, which can also be derived from FAFSA. However, Todd Hoig of CCCC noted that community college students often do not fill out the FAFSA and family income data captured for Promise Grant applications is not reported to the state level, so family income may not be available for this group of students.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized EFC as “concerns about data, further evaluation needed,” particularly regarding whether there would be sufficient information on community college students.

FOLLOW UP: The group recommended that EFC point be revised at a future meeting, with suggested display options, ideally using the same groupings as CSAC.

Monica Malhotra of CSU also noted that data in the FAFSA system is subject to restrictions and questioned whether financial aid data could be integrated into the Cradle-to-Career data system. The group agreed that all financial aid topics would be examined together at the October meeting, beginning with a presentation by an expert in federal policy on financial aid data.

Financial Aid Dependency

Chris Furgiuele of UC inquired about whether it would be helpful to include an “if ever” option. Randy Tarnowski of AICCU noted that the group is balancing the desire to make everything available versus ensuring that the public display focuses on the most useful information. Another consideration is the cost of acquiring and maintaining this information. Monica Malhotra of CSU noted that if information on financial aid dependency is coming from college applications, then the only option would be an “if ever” flag.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Financial Aid Dependency as “concerns about data, further evaluation needed,” particularly regarding whether the information would be useful to end users.

FOLLOW UP: The subcommittee asked to revisit this data point in the context of the other financial aid related items that will be discussed in the October meeting.

Economically Disadvantaged Status

The group discussed the challenge that each partner entity documents economically disadvantaged status in a different way, by including variables ranging from receiving financial aid to receiving social services to parental education level. For example, CDE uses the term socioeconomically disadvantaged, which is based on whether students are eligible for free or reduced priced meals or have parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma.

Chris Furgiuele of UC and Monica Malhotra of CSU thought it would be more appropriate to list the specific options captured by each data provider, rather than to create a generic flag that includes students flagged as economically disadvantaged by any data provider.

David Sanabria of CDSS and Glenn Miller of CDE noted that it might be possible for the managing entity to implement a calculation that applies a uniform definition, but all the data providers would need to agree on that definition and the public tools would need to provide documentation on how the data point is derived. Chris Furgiuele questioned the value of putting such a data element in the public dashboard because the process would be too subjective.

Akhtar Khan of CDSS suggested using CDE’s data point on socioeconomic status, as it already exists and would be available for many individuals in the data system.

DECISION: The group categorized Economically Disadvantaged Status as “should not be included,” due to the inconsistencies of definitions, and that financial aid information should be provided instead.

Age Brackets

The group discussed whether there should be specific age brackets for individuals younger than 18. Several noted that most postsecondary institutions and CSAC do not capture granular information below the age of 18, however, they agreed that it would be very useful for child welfare topics. The group suggested deferring to CDE about the optimal categories, which are not uniform. For example, CDE tends to group early learning and care in the brackets of 0-3 and 3-5, based on eligibility requirements for state-subsidized care. Special education breaks out ages by infant, toddler, and preschool and migrant education has age brackets for children under the age of six.

Next the group looked at the way older students are categorized. In adult education, programs are geared toward specific aged brackets, such as 55 and older.

David Sanabria of CDSS reminded the group that because this will be a derived variable, it would be possible to have different age groupings for different dashboards, depending on what would best fit that visualization.

FOLLOW UP: A team from CDE and CDSS volunteered to work together to create a list of suggested age brackets for individuals under the age of 18. A team for CDE, CCCCCO, and CLWDA will identify appropriate categories for individuals over the age of 50.

Language

The group discussed the limitations of this data element given that many partner entities do not track information on language and those that do collect information on language capture different facets of language skills. The subcommittee felt that it would be preferable to capture level of language fluency in specific time periods. However, it would be better to have the limited variable of Primary Language rather than no public-facing information on language.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Primary Language as “ok to include.” They also recommended that CDE’s English language learner information be included in public tools so that the public could examine results for individuals who were English language learners as children.

Disabled/Individualized Education Program (IEP) status

CDE staff members flagged concerns about this data point, given the transient nature of IEPs and the potential need to include Individualized Family Service Plans for infants.

FOLLOW UP: CDE will work with its special education staff and provide a recommendation on how to address the overlap between disabled and IEP status. The subcommittee will revisit both Disabled Status and IEP Status at a future meeting.

Migrant Status

Glenn Miller of CDE spoke to the urgency of including this data point, given the large number of migrant individuals in California and the allocation of federal dollars to support this population. He also noted the nuance between the children of migrant farmworkers (who often were born in the United States) and adults who are migrant farmworkers. Todd Hoig of CCCCCO cautioned that while the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act now mandates collecting information on migrant workers for adult education, the data are still spotty. Glenn Miller noted that a CDE review of information on migrant status from K-12 adult schools showed that data collection was inconsistent across regions. Paula

Mishima of CDE suggested that the public data might only show information on children of migrant farmworkers until the migrant farmworker data matures.

FOLLOW UP: A team from CDE and CCCCCO will develop a suggested data display for discussion at a future meeting.

Parental Education

Monica Malhotra of CSU asked if it would be possible to add the categories of “no high school” and “some post baccalaureate but no graduate degree.”

David Sanabria noted the complexities of a scenario where there are multiple parents and guardians who care for a child, particularly in the context of foster youth, which would not be made clear by the proposed public tool categories.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Parental Education as “ok to include.” They also recommended having a parental education drop down rather than a binary First Generation College Student status.

FOLLOW UP: WestEd will examine the source data to see if the categories of parental education can be expanded.

Military Status

The group discussed the fact that CSU has only recently expanded its data options to allow for a more granular understanding of students’ military status, such as active duty and national guard.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Military Status as “concerns about data, further evaluation needed,” particularly regarding whether the data point should be displayed as a binary status, or if there is sufficient information to include the more granular options.