Streamlining Your Data: Special Education Data Management Systems
Presenters

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Agenda

• Defining data management systems
• Reviewing system benefits and challenges
• Engaging stakeholders and other issues to consider in system development
• Reviewing state examples of special education data management systems
Data Management Systems: Where to Begin?
What Are Data Management Systems?
Modern Data Management Systems
Benefits of Statewide Data Systems

- Consolidated location for information
- Enhanced uniformity in the information developed and retained
- Improved data quality through validation processes and business rules
- Increased access to data
- Streamlined reporting functionality
Challenges of Statewide Data Systems

- Capacity for hosting or managing a data system
- Buy-in from internal and external staff and stakeholders
- Interfacing and integrating data with other state systems
- Confidentiality of data
- System performance issues, such as system bugs or glitches
Assess Capacity

- Who will manage the data system development process
- Can the data system be developed in-house by existing information technology (IT) staff
- Are funds available to pay for internal system development or establish outside contract
- Will management of the data system be sustainable (e.g., staff allocated to work, funding)
Engage Stakeholders

• Pull together those the data system will impact
• Ensure a diverse array of participants, such as
  ▪ Educators
  ▪ Agency administrators
  ▪ Related service providers
  ▪ Parents
  ▪ Community organizations
  ▪ IT staff
Engage Stakeholders (cont.)

• Learn what things are important to the stakeholders
• Host stakeholder input opportunities in multiple locations
• Provide updates and keep open lines of communication
• Share system proposal with those who will be impacted
Data Integration

- Identify existing state data systems
- Determine data communication to and from existing systems
- Ensure data can be interfaced through existing processes
- Document all potential pitfalls of data integration and how the state can mitigate risk
System Data Confidentiality and Performance Management

- Document all confidentiality requirements [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), state-specific requirements]
- Map layers of data protection, encryption
- Identify how the state will support use of the system internally or externally (e.g., help desk, call line)
- Develop protocol for addressing data confidentiality or system performance issues
Final System Proposal

- Outline all data elements the system needs to capture
- Develop required business and data validation rules
- Create timeline for release that is realistic
  - If system currently exists, consider overlapping years of system implementation
- Determine responsibilities of parties managing the system or system vendor
Example – State A

• Current statewide data system has been in place 4 years
  ▪ Previous data system did not have same robust functionality
• System use is technically voluntary, though all LEAs participate
• Developed Request for Proposal (RFP)
  ▪ Included business rules and validations
  ▪ Based RFP on IDEA requirements
• Selected outside vendor based on internal capacity limitations
• Vendor managed a message board for users to report issues
Example – State A (cont.)

• Enhancements made annually, informed by state priorities and feedback from system users

• State’s final reflections
  ▪ Consider for whom you are developing the system (LEAs and state staff)
  ▪ Don’t let fear of change in systems stop you from developing a better process
  ▪ State system can limit time and effort on state and LEA staff, streamline monitoring processes, reduce paperwork burdens
  ▪ Be clear and explicit in the definition of data components, reports, and business rules and/or data validations
Example – State B

- Just released statewide system this school year (had previous system in place)
- Required all LEAs to use system
- Developed RFP
  - Used specification documentation from previous state system
  - Included business rules and validations
  - Based RFP on IDEA requirements
- Selected outside vendor based on internal capacity limitations
Example – State B (cont.)

• Communicated system issues or questions via a message board
  ▪ State staff answer policy questions
  ▪ Vendor answers system-specific questions

• State’s final reflections
  ▪ Glad that the system was developed and appreciative of LEAs’ patience
  ▪ Wished we could have overlapped the previous system and the new system for a year
  ▪ Rolled out information in pieces over time, not all at once
Example – State C

- State system has been in place since 2011
  - Used three pilot sites to release system
- System use is voluntary
  - 75% of state’s LEAs use the system
- State developed and manages the system
- State embedded data processes and business rules in the system
Example – State C (cont.)

• State meets annually with system users to discuss the system and suggested enhancements

• Feedback loops are available for system users
  ▪ Loops include surveys, ticket system to maintain user messages, and system alerts

• State’s final reflections
  ▪ State is pleased with the system, best product to manage special education data
  ▪ Making system voluntary has worked overall, high participation rate
  ▪ Housing system in the state longitudinal data system has been beneficial
Questions?
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For More Information

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