Creating a more equitable and inclusive early childhood education and care mixed delivery system has always been at the center of the Pyramid Model focus. Illinois is also on this journey. This brief serves as a guide for how Pyramid Model work and data collection can further support.

Background on Equity in Early Childhood

Our colleagues at the Children's Equity Project (CEP) operationalized three concrete areas in which we should be thinking about equity work in early childhood. They include:
1) Harsh discipline and its disproportionate application
2) The segregation of children with disabilities in learning settings
3) Inequitable and inadequate access to bilingual learning opportunities for language and English learners

In their report, the CEP authors also identify data gaps that make it difficult to understand the scope of these issues and any progress that is being made.

Pyramid Model has consistently paid special attention to each of these three core action areas that the Children's Equity Project outlined. The model presents a way to positively impact children's lives regardless of their background and geographical locations. On page 2, we consider how these three points for consideration intersect with our data and evaluation work.

Why use data?

Historically, in Illinois and beyond, data have not always been used to further an equity-centered agenda. The Center for Law and Social Policy reminds us that data have not always been used in a way that accurately reflects or is clear about what is going on; data can be collected and analyzed in traditionally siloed systems that have marginalized BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities, and where there still remains a disconnect between those who receive services and those who create policies using data.

In line with our mission, it is imperative that we collect and report data on the diversity of Pyramid Model participants and implementation sites across the state, as well as how our work is contributing to reducing inequitable practices. We are highly aware of the fact that demographic data always has the potential to be misused and we approach this work in partnership with a diverse (e.g., race and ethnicity, backgrounds, etc.) team of constituents, using a community-engagement framework, to minimize that risk.

In Illinois, we have a longstanding history and strong commitment to diversity and equity work in early childhood, as well as data collection. While there continues to be movement forward in this direction, work to date has also identified gaps, areas that can be strengthened, and where the Pyramid Model can contribute to what we know.

Who are we serving and who are we not serving?

We would benefit from demographic data at all levels (program, child/family) regarding who we have been able to serve to date and whether this is an adequate reflection of the demographic diversity in Illinois (by race and ethnicity, languages spoken, geographic region, disability status, etc.). With the existing Pyramid Model data sources, DEI initiatives can be examined and supported at the community-level, thereby ensuring BIPOC communities are partners in DEI work and directly positively impacted.

Equity Brief

Below, we outline questions to be asked and potential data sources related to the Pyramid Model that can further the state's equity knowledge and agenda. The questions are organized by the Children's Equity Project three focus areas for equity in early childhood systems.

Children's Equity Project Area #1: Exclusionary Discipline

What does discipline look like in programs using the Pyramid Model? Are we helping to curtail exclusionary discipline?

- Increase the frequency in which Behavior Incident Reports (BIR) are utilized and analyze findings at the program and community-level to identify patterns and disproportionality.
- Disaggregate state-wide exclusionary discipline data (e.g., ISBE & DCFS) by Pyramid Model implementation-site status.
- Disaggregate state-wide exclusionary discipline data (e.g., ISBE & DCFS) by race and ethnicity, gender, and other factors we know to be disproportionately associated with exclusionary discipline.
- Compile and share effective discipline policies from parent and staff handbooks to serve as an example for programs.

Children's Equity Project Area #2: Children with Disabilities

How do Pyramid Model programs work with children with disabilities in inclusive learning settings? What identity-affirming, strengths- based practices are utilized to support children with disabilities?

- Utilize data from Indicator 6 for LEA (school district) programs and data from the special education administration (parsed by school) to understand a program's ability to include children with disabilities by Pyramid Model implementation status.
    - Understand the extent to which INCCRRA and Head Start have similar data.
- Analyze specific Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) items (now housed in the Pyramid Implementation Data System, or Pyramid Implementation Data System (PIDS)) that speak to inclusion practices based on crosswalks between the TPOT and Inclusion Classroom Profile and other measures of inclusivity including Early Childhood Education Environment (ECEE).

Children's Equity Project Area #3: Dual Language Learners

How does the Pyramid Model support bilingual and dual language learners, staff, and families? How does the Pyramid Model promote culturally responsive practices?

- Finalize and continuously update the chart of resources by language to identify and close gaps.
- Conduct a case study analysis of "what we didn't know we didn't know" based on lessons learned from implementing the Pyramid Model in Spanish-speaking Family Child Care settings.
- Include language spoken at home in the PIDS data system for early childhood educators, coaches, and moving forward, include children.