# The Early Learning Network: Why Research Matters to Policymakers

Marci McCoy-Roth & Hope Cooper,

True North Group, LLC.

marci@truenorthgroup.com / Hope@truenorthgroup.com

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# WELCOME & OVERVIEW

#### Agenda

- The relationship between policy and research
- Key elements of the policymaking process
- Making research matter to policymakers
- opportunity,
- decision makers (audience),
- strategic timing, and
- delivering the research content
- Trends and recent "wins"
- What's Lobbying, what's not

### POLICY & RESEARCH: THE DATING GAME

#### "Too many missed opportunities"

- Policymakers and researchers often have different priorities for the use of evidence.¹
- Policymaking is usually messy and fast paced, while evidence collection is usually linear and slow.
- Most social programs unfortunately are found not to produce the hoped-for effects when rigorously evaluated.<sup>2</sup>

1. The Distinctions Between Policymakers and Researchers, Decision Making and Evidence; Julie Stone, Mathematica. M50 Blog, June 21, 2018

"If we don't make necessary changes broad and routine evidence-based broad and routine will largely remain a policymaking will largely remain a promise and not a norm."

<sup>2.</sup> Coalition for Evidence-based Policy: http://coalition4evidence.org/mission-activities/

## THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS

## How are policies generated?

Policy Cycle

Different methods are used to assess program performance

Elected and political leaders often control the agenda

Public agency staff implement policies through program management

A variety of policy gatekeepers make and legitimize choices

How are policies generated?

Policy Cycle

Different methods are used to assess program performance

Advocacy

Lobbyists

Elected officials often control the agenda

Constituents

Media

**Politics** 

Research

A variety of policy gatekeepers make and legitimize choices

In reality?
Input
from all
directions
& levels.

Public agency staff implement policies through program management

## Key factors to making research matter in policy decision-making

#### Opportunity:

- Multiple and ongoing opportunities to inform policymakers
- Legislative, Administrative, Electoral

#### Decision-making audience

- Legislative, Budget, Oversight, Program Management, Political
- Elected officials and senior managers as well as technical staff

#### Strategic timing

 The legislative and administrative policymaking processes vary based on the type of policy

#### Types of information or research

Information needs range from backing trend information, return on investment, "what works" (program evaluation), program components

#### OPPORTUNITY

## Opportunities to inform legislative decision making

Modifying existing legislation

 Head Start, Child Care Development Block Grant, IDEA Part C, MIEHV, WIC, SNAP

Budget and appropriations

- President/Governor budgets
- Congressional resolutions
- Appropriations: HHS, Education

Legislation in response to crisis / need

• Immigration, Natural Disaster/Emergency Response

Education, building interest & knowledge

- Dual generation
- Racial / ethnic disparity

Oversight

- Program utilization
- Outcome measures

## Opportunities – or avenues – to inform administrative decision

Rulemaking process

- Child Care & Development Fund
- Family Foster Care Licensing Standards

Department / agency priorities & special initiatives

- Opioid epidemic
- Race to the Top

Program implementation

- Head Start
- SNAP

Program Instruction / Correspondence

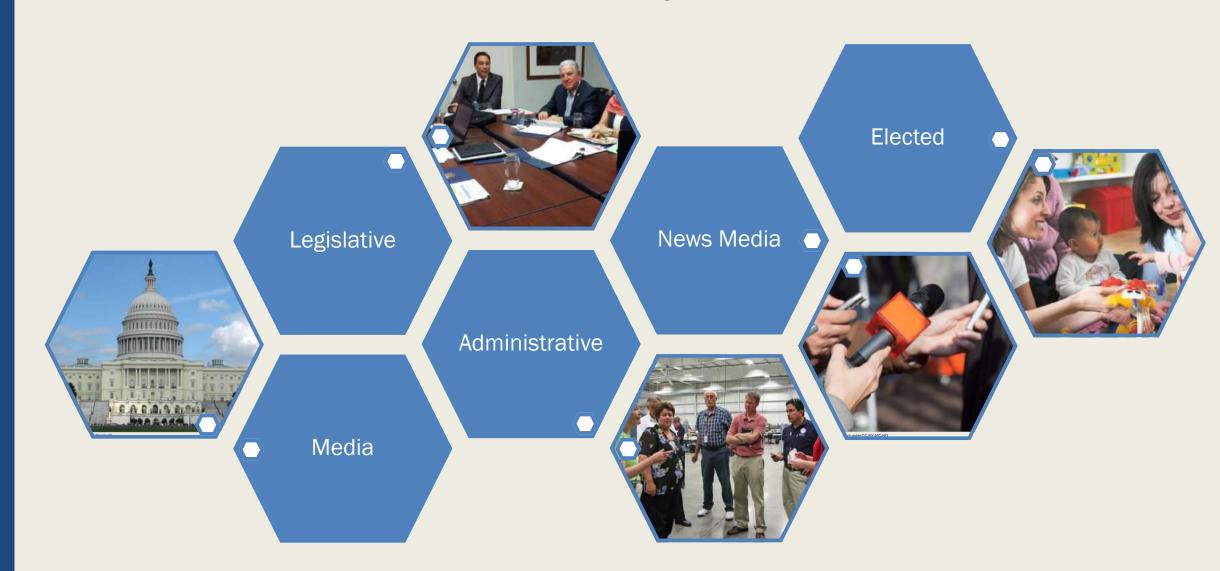
CMS Letters to Medicaid Directors

**Technical Assistance** 

- Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention
- DOE Technical Assistance Center

## GETTING TO KNOW THE DECISION MAKERS

#### Who are Potential Policy Audiences?



### Who needs and wants the information?

Legislative	Administration	
Elected officials (senators, legislators, governors, President)	Department heads, commissioners, senior agency leaders	
Leadership staff	Political appointees	
Committee staff	Program managers	
Personal office staff	Budget and fiscal staff	
Budget and appropriations staff	Technical staff	
Oversight committees	T.A. Networks	



#### Influencers



Advocacy networks



Media



Constituents



Local programs



Research experts

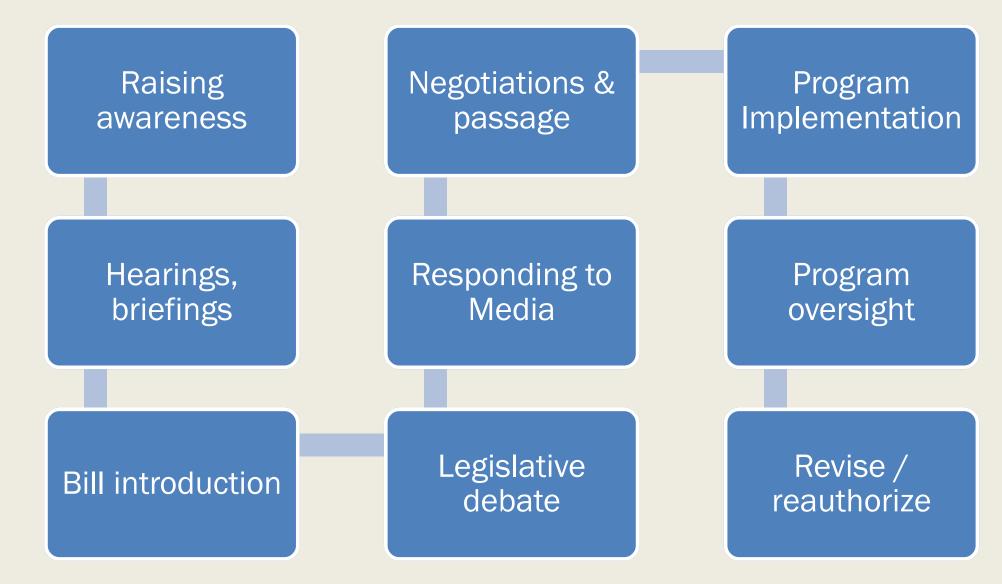


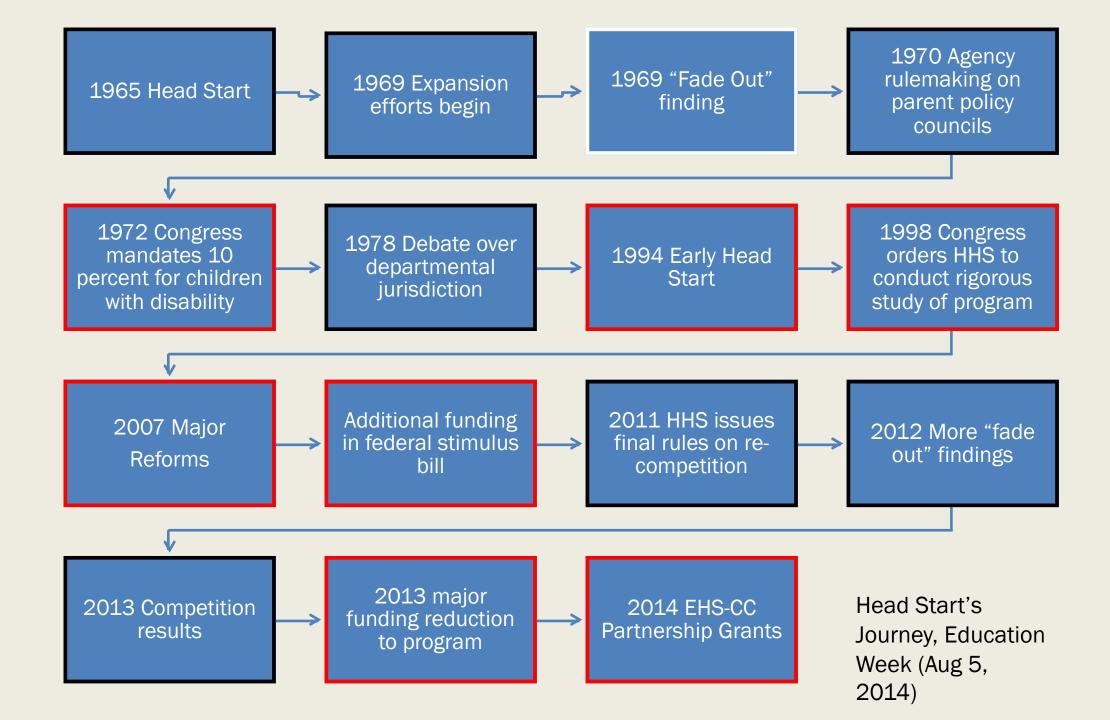
Professional associations



#### TIMING IS EVERYTHING

#### In a perfect world





## SHARING YOUR EXPERTISE

#### Information sharing highway

In person briefing

Congressional testimony

Committee briefing

Blog, Op-Ed Media Policy-focused coalition meetings

Open Letter

Elected Officials	Policy and Program Advisors	Budget / Oversight	Crowd Pleasers
•			
In person	Detail in writing	New to issue	FAQ
•			
In the media	Expect questions	Step way back – basic info first	Video clip
Key fact	Dialogue over time	What's the bottom line	Case study
Tagline / headline	Taps your expertise	How does it compare across states	State-by-state analysis
What's it mean in my state?	Asks for more information	Need yesterday	Chart book
		#	
Talk to my staff	Invite you to testify	Hard to find	Social media

#### Fair play



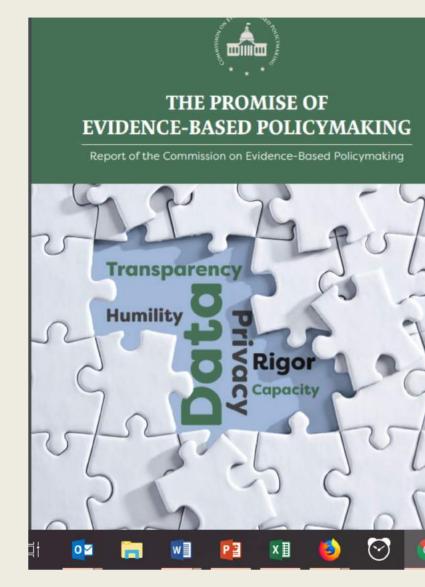
## "A brain in poverty is up against it. I'm telling you." – Jennifer Garner March 2017



# TRENDS & RECENT WINS IN EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

#### Trends in Evidence-Based Policymaking<sup>1</sup>

- Evidence-based Home Visitation Program MIECHV, HHS \$1.5b/5 yrs
- Evidence-based Teen Pregnancy Prevention TPP, HHS \$109m/FY14
- Investing in Innovation Fund DOE, \$142m/FY14
- Social Innovation Fund CNCS, \$70m/FY14
- Workforce Innovation Fund DOL, \$47m/FY14
- Family First Prevention Services Act HHS, entitlement expansion
- Commission for Evidence-based Policymaking final report May 2017



<sup>1.</sup> Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy: <a href="https://www.coalition4evidence.org">www.coalition4evidence.org</a>

<sup>2.</sup> HHS/OPRE, Commission on Evidence-Based Policy: <a href="https://cep.gov/content/dam/cep/report/cep-final-report.pdf">www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/commission-on-evidence-based-policymaking-cep</a> https://cep.gov/content/dam/cep/report/cep-final-report.pdf

## WHAT'S LOBBYING WHAT'S NOT



#### Lobbying vs Education

Wait a second... we're researchers, we don't like to tell people what to do!

But policymakers WANT to hear what you think should be done.

And if we want better policies, they need to hear the research findings.

## What is considered "education" rather than lobbying?

- Education is providing basic information about a particular organization or issue.
- Education gives information about who is affected, number of people served, budget or proven impacts and accomplishments. Education does not provide value judgments or ask people to take a particular stance.
- Making the results of nonpartisan analysis, study or research available to the general public or governmental bodies, officials or employees is not carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.

# DEVELOPING A POLICY COMMUNICATION PLAN

### Putting it all together: Developing Your Communication Strategy

- 1. Identify the research content you hope to share
- 2. Plan your broad communications objectives. What do you most want policy makers to learn?
- 3. How does your research aligns with policy opportunities
- 4. Analyze your audiences based on the priority opportunities
- 5. Decide on the specific information and messages to convey to your audiences
- 6. Create shareable product
- 7. Create a communications plan to guide your activities
- 8. Evaluate your communication activities

#### Thank You!

