1. Align Predictive Analytics initiatives with agency priorities to enhance existing work

Child welfare leaders need to take the time to understand what Predictive Analytics is and appreciate the limitations of this approach. Then, it is important to decide on the purpose, gap, or key planning or practice questions the approach will address. Identifying how Predictive Analytics aligns with existing priorities and initiatives is an important step to support this process.

2. Engage internal and external stakeholders to create understanding and buy-in

Involving constituents in considering questions Predictive Analytics could help address, identifying various approaches, and implementing a process will help create and sustain buy-in from the beginning. Further, engagement from the beginning can help increase receptivity to findings as they become available.

3. Assess jurisdictional readiness to ensure the jurisdiction has sufficient resources

Readiness assessments address the organizational, structural, technical, and staffing factors needed to implement a new initiative. Before venturing into Predictive Analytics, it is imperative to assess readiness to ensure that a jurisdiction has the resources to effectively implement and sustain a Predictive Analytics initiative.

4. Establish an ongoing communications plan to keep stakeholders engaged

Communication is one of the most critical components to implementing a new process or program. Communication plans can include several touch-points (both before and after implementation of a Predictive Analytics initiative) that focus on several audiences within the jurisdiction.

5. Prepare for media attention to enable quick and accurate response

While jurisdictions engage in Predictive Analytics with the best of intentions, critics may cite concern with using data in novel ways. Proactive preparation will allow for quick and accurate response.

6. Establish a framework to ethically guide Predictive Analytics design and implementation

An ethical framework that includes protocols for ensuring confidentiality of information, training for agency staff, updates to relevant agency policy, and thoughtful engagement of families in any Predictive Analytics initiative.

Considerations for Implementing Predictive Analytics in Child Welfare

1. Align Predictive Analytics initiatives with agency priorities to enhance existing work
2. Engage internal and external stakeholders to create understanding and buy-in
3. Assess jurisdictional readiness to ensure the jurisdiction has sufficient resources
4. Establish an ongoing communications plan to keep stakeholders engaged
5. Prepare for media attention to enable quick and accurate response
6. Establish a framework to ethically guide Predictive Analytics design and implementation
7. Identify if Predictive Analytics will be conducted internally or with a contractor
8. Assess data available to conduct Predictive Analytics
9. Understand the assumptions behind the Predictive Analytics model and monitor them over time
10. Use Predictive Analytics to strengthen practice
11. Evaluate Predictive Analytics process and outcomes to maximize model fidelity and success
12. Use Predictive Analytics to improve policy

7. Identify if Predictive Analytics will be conducted internally or with a contractor

Several agencies around the country have begun to conduct Predictive Analytics themselves. If the Predictive Analytics is done internally, capacity building and infrastructure need to be addressed. If done externally, other decisions need to be made, including identification of a contractor through already established relationships or by issuing a request for proposals (RFP).

8. Assess data available to conduct Predictive Analytics

During the decision-making process, it is helpful to consider the quality and completeness of the data that will be used and form hypotheses about the relationship between predictors and outcomes. Not only should data be checked for quality and completeness before use in a predictive model, but also regularly thereafter.

9. Understand the assumptions behind the Predictive Analytics

Every Predictive Analytics model is based on a number of assumptions. For example, we assume that one of the best predictors of future behavior is past behavior. It is important for child welfare leaders to understand each assumption and to test the model before implementation. Continued monitoring of the model over time to test whether those assumptions remain true is also important.

10. Use Predictive Analytics to strengthen practice

Predictive Analytics is a tool that takes information from many cases to identify patterns in data that sometimes may not otherwise be observed. It is intended as a tool to support clinical judgment to help make sense of how information collected across a population of youth can be used to better serve individual youth.

11. Evaluate process and outcomes to maximize model fidelity and success

Evaluation is part of a quality assurance process that is meant to assess how well the Predictive Analytics model is being implemented and whether the approach and practice response are achieving the outcomes they were intended to affect.

12. Use Predictive Analytics to improve policy

Predictive Analytics findings can be used to refine agency policy as well as to better allocate agency services and other staff resources. Use of Predictive Analytics may generate insights to make more informed decisions and improve agency performance.

casey family programs

To learn more about the considerations for implementing predictive analytics see our full report on casey.org.