

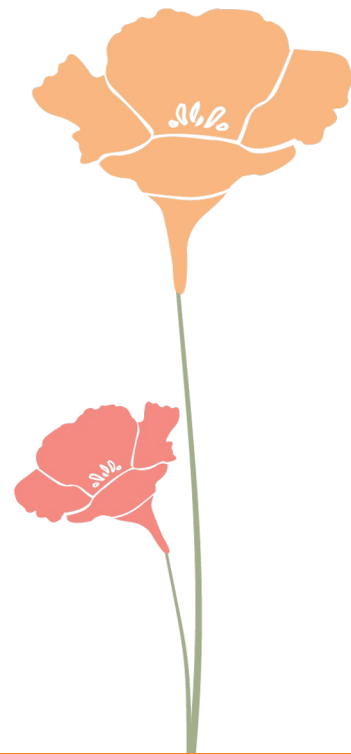


## Inclusion in California Early Learning and Care

# Cross-Sector Collaboration to Support Inclusion in Subsidized Care

Division for Early Childhood Conference

September 23, 2021



# Welcome!!

## Presenters:

- Margaret Gillis, SRI International
- Nick Ortiz, SRI International
- Sheila Self, California  
Department of Education (CDE)

We are joined by numerous members of our team from SRI, CDE, and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).



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# What is your primary role?



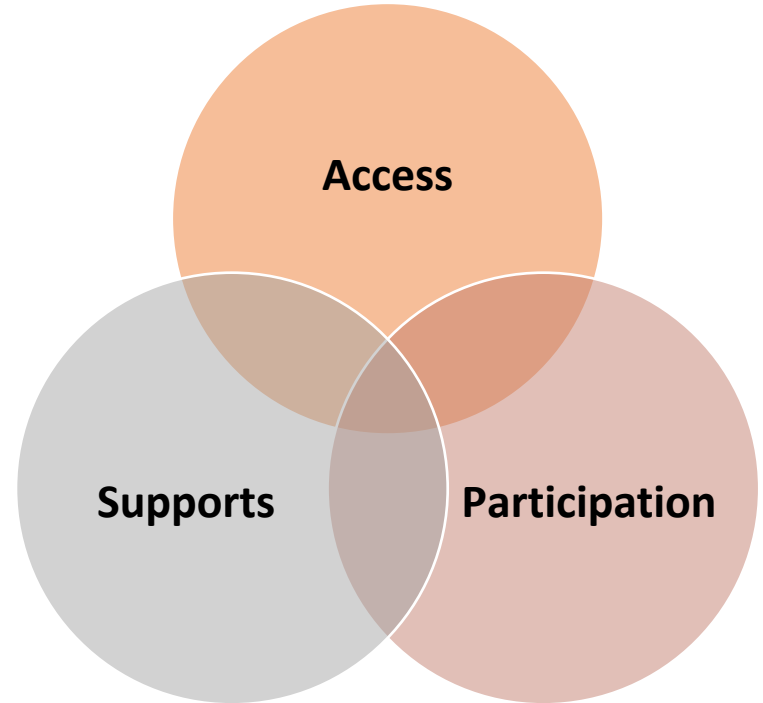
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# California's Efforts to Support Inclusion

- Inclusive Early Learning and Care Coordination Program
- Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program
- Inclusive Practices: Embedded Instruction
- Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities in California Early Learning and Care (this study)

# Inclusion is non-negotiable

- Participation of children with disabilities in early care and education alongside peers without disabilities
- Encouraged by federal legislation (e.g., IDEA, CCDBG), Federal agencies (HHS and Ed), and professional organizations (e.g., DEC and NAEYC)
- Benefits children with and without disabilities (Lawrence, Smith, & Banerjee, 2016; Odom, Buisse, & Soukakou, 2011)
- **Barriers persist** (Guralnick & Bruder, 2016; Henley & Adams, 2018)



# Study Overview



- Child Care Policy Research Partnership Grant
  - Collaboration between CCDF Lead Agencies and research entities
- Objectives
  - Describe the status of children with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care in California
  - Identify the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care and strategies to increase facilitators and decrease barriers

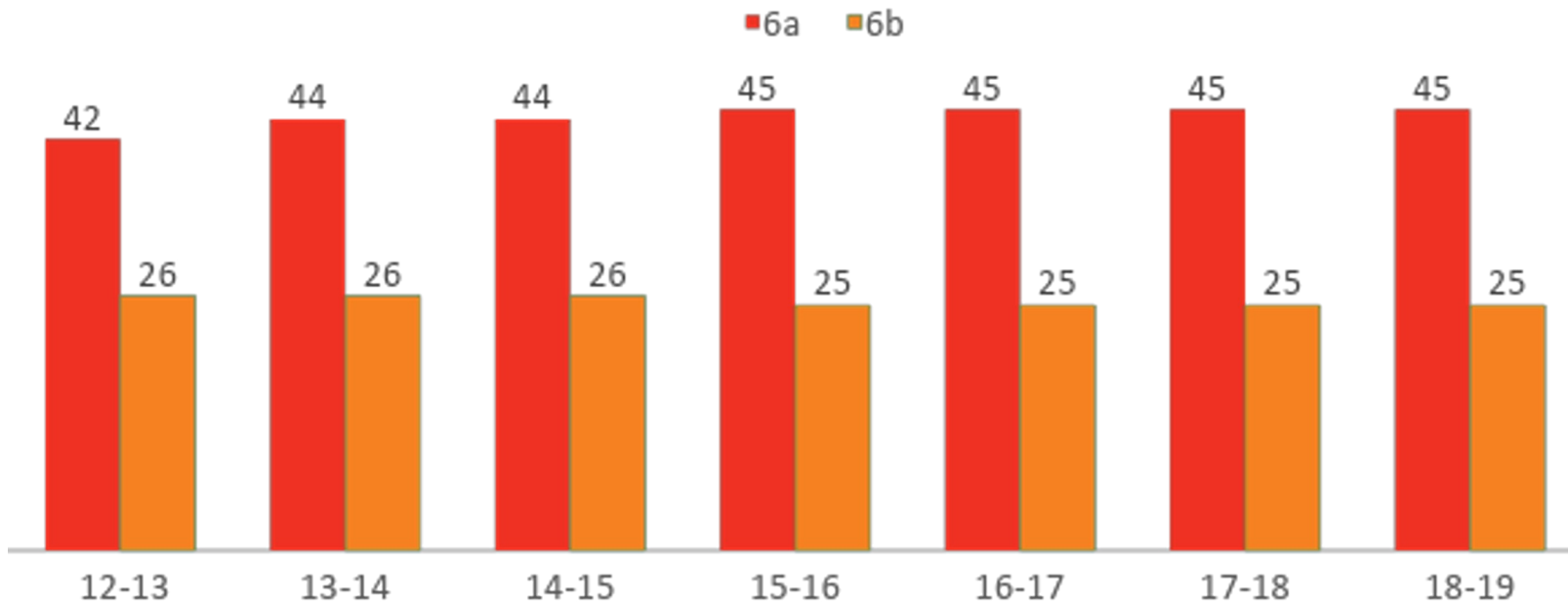


# Study Design

Method	Data Collection	Sample
Administrative Data	Subsidized early learning and care Special Education DRDP (Assessment +) Fiscal Data	All children ages 3-5 with disabilities
Key Informant Interviews	Interviews	23 professionals in a variety of roles in early childhood and early childhood special education
Case Studies (6 communities; 10 children and their families in each)	Interviews	60 families and their associated child care providers, directors, special education providers and administrators
	Observation	Each classroom associated with the 60 families
	Document Analysis	60 families' IEP/IFSP
Statewide Survey	Surveys	Child Care Local Preschool Special Education Administrators

# The IDEA data on inclusion have shown no change for years

(National Educational Environments: Percentages Over Time)



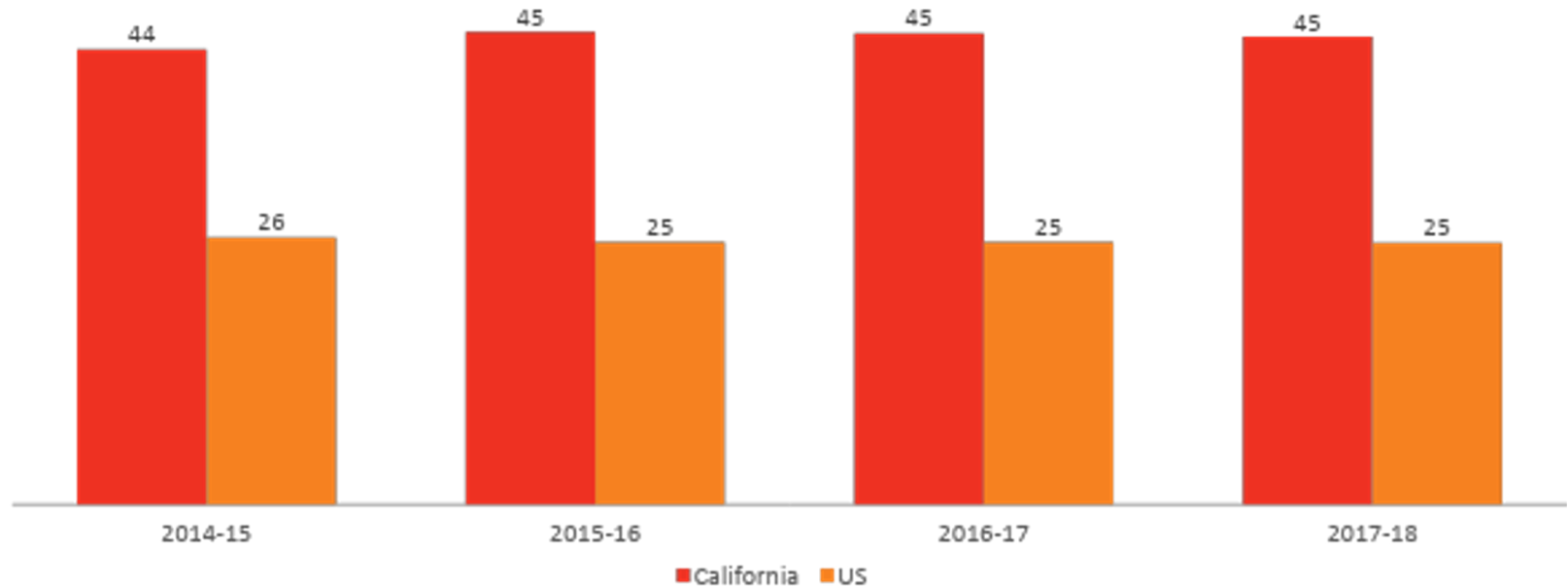
6a. Children who attend a regular early childhood program and receive majority of special education service in the program

6b. Children who attend a special education class, separate special ed school or residential facility



# The California data also has not changed – and shows far more preschoolers in special classes

(National Educational Environments: Percentages who attend a special education class, separate special education school or residential facility)



# Collaboration across sectors

- What is a sector?
  - Childcare
  - Public prek
  - Private prek
  - Family child care
  - School system
    - Special education

# Why is collaboration important?

- Children with disabilities participate in multiple settings.
- Early childhood educators, early childhood special educators, and specialists all have a role in ensuring children with disabilities can access the general education curriculum and participate fully.

## Which of these is inclusion?

Child with a disability is in preschool but does not have an IEP.

Family of child with IEP wants child in preschool but child does not attend. Child receives special education services in a special program.

Child with IEP attends preschool and receives special education services in a different setting.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work only with child who is pulled from the classroom.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work with child and teachers to support child's access to learning opportunities and participation in all classroom activities.

System is not operating as it should to meet the child's needs.

Child with IEP attends preschool and specialists work with child and teachers to support child's access to learning opportunities and participation in all classroom activities.

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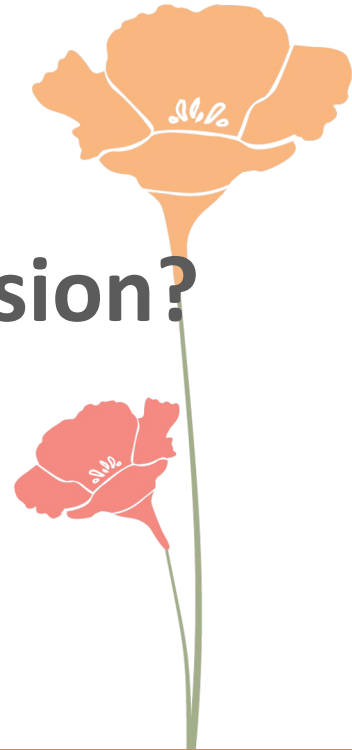
Child with a disability is in preschool but does not have an IEP.

There are many variations in what some call inclusion.

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# How do you define inclusion?



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# We have learned that people around the state use the word “inclusion” to mean different things

- Makes communication challenging
- Importance of a shared vision for inclusion (especially for school districts operating programs)
  - Why is it important for children to be included?
  - What are the goals of inclusion?

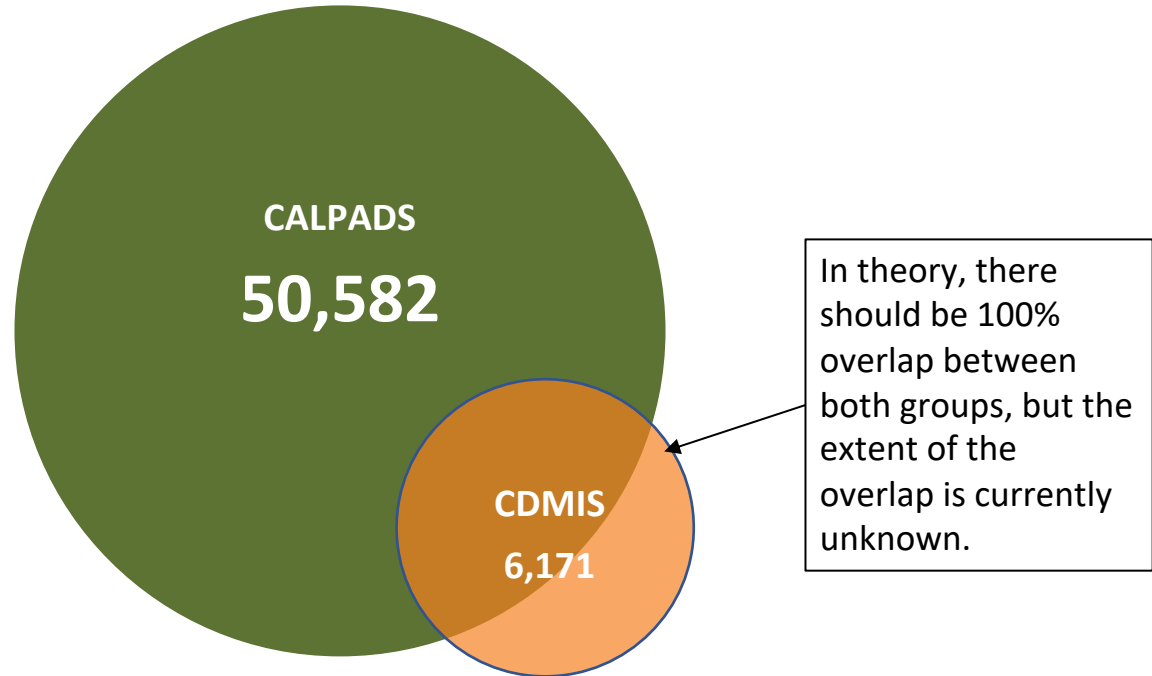


# Administrative Data Sets

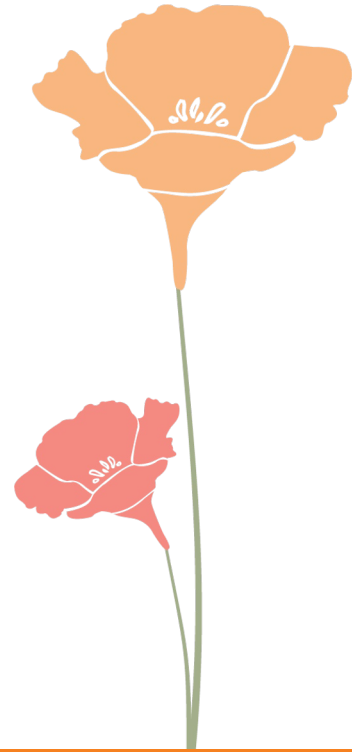
- **CDMIS:** Child Development Management Information System
  - Subsidized child care ACF 801 reporting, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
  - Includes some but not all children with IEPs
  - The present study's focus is on children ages 3-5 receiving subsidy
  - “Inclusion” = child with an IEP is in a subsidized program
- **CALPADS:** California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System
  - Special Education, P-12 in public school
  - Only includes preschoolers on IEPs; no other preschoolers
  - “Inclusion” = child with an IEP participates in a general education setting and receives the majority of their special education services in that location



# How many preschoolers with IEPs are captured in CDMIS versus CALPADS? (Fall 2019)



# Children with Disabilities in Subsidized Early Learning and Care



# Characteristics of preschoolers receiving subsidy and the programs serving those children

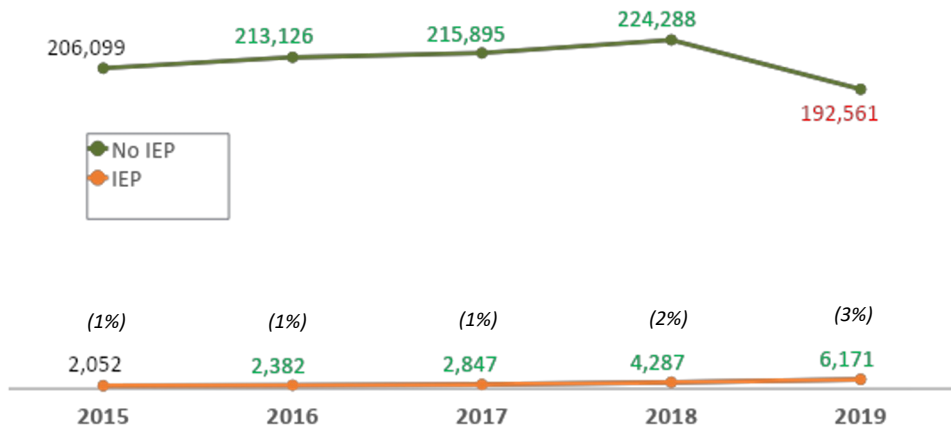
Preschoolers with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care were more likely to have the following characteristics compared to all preschoolers receiving subsidy, most of whom did not have an IEP (3% with IEP, 97% without IEP).

## **Preschoolers with IEP were more likely to be:**

- male (*IEP = 67%, all children ages 3-5 = 50%*)
- Hispanic (*IEP = 73%, all children ages 3-5 = 67%*)
- speaking Spanish as a primary language (*IEP = 37% IEP, all children 3-5 = 28%*)
- enrolled in part-time care (*IEP = 72%, all children 3-5 = 52%*)
- attending a program participating in the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (*IEP = 65%, all children 3-5 = 49%*)
- Participating in a program run by a school district (*IEP = 63%, no IEP = 41%*)

# Enrollment of preschoolers with IEPs in subsidized care has increased even as overall enrollment has decreased.

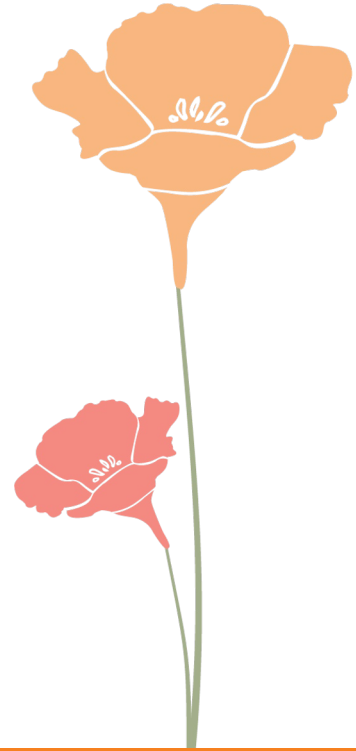
Overall Enrollment, Ages 3-5 (CDMIS, October of Each Year)



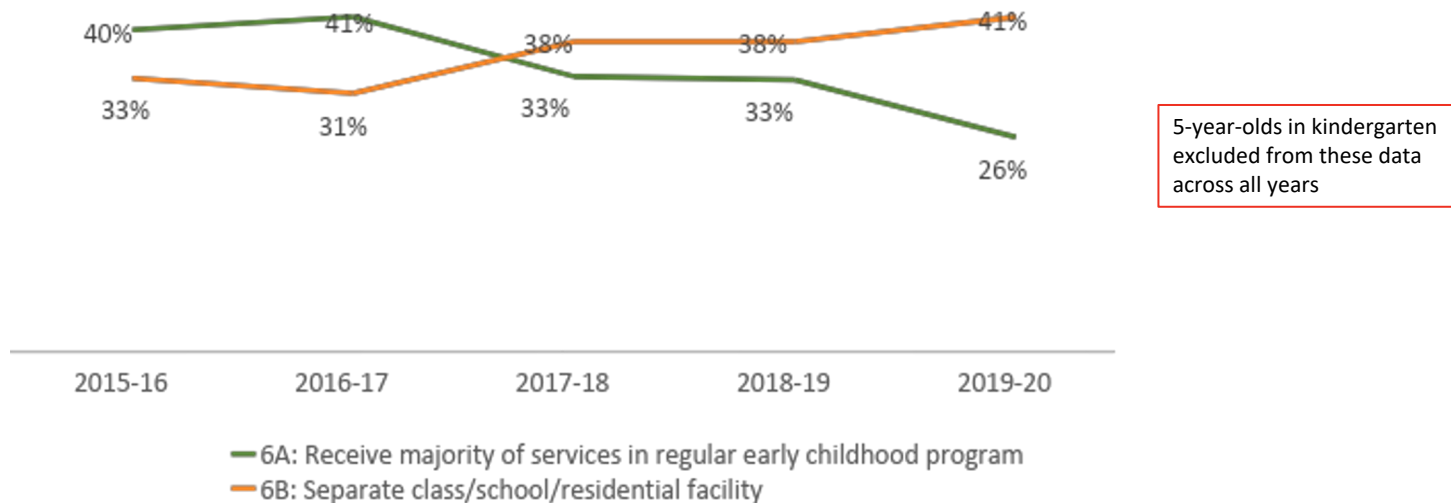
Subsidy enrollment for preschoolers *without* IEPs had grown steadily from 2015-2018 but dropped in 2019.

Subsidy enrollment for preschoolers *with* IEPs had tripled over the last 5 years prior to the pandemic.

# Preschoolers with Disabilities in Special Education

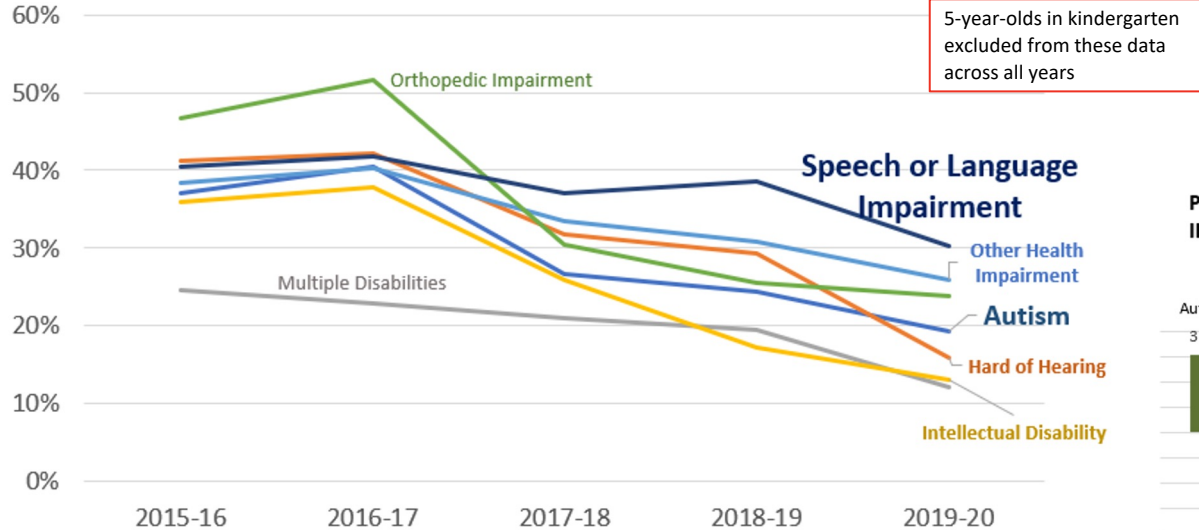


## Preschool inclusion rates have been declining in CA.



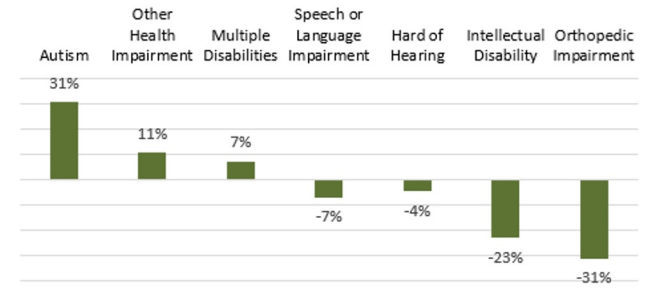
# Preschool inclusion rates vary by disability type.

Inclusion rates have dropped across all disability types, some types more so than others.



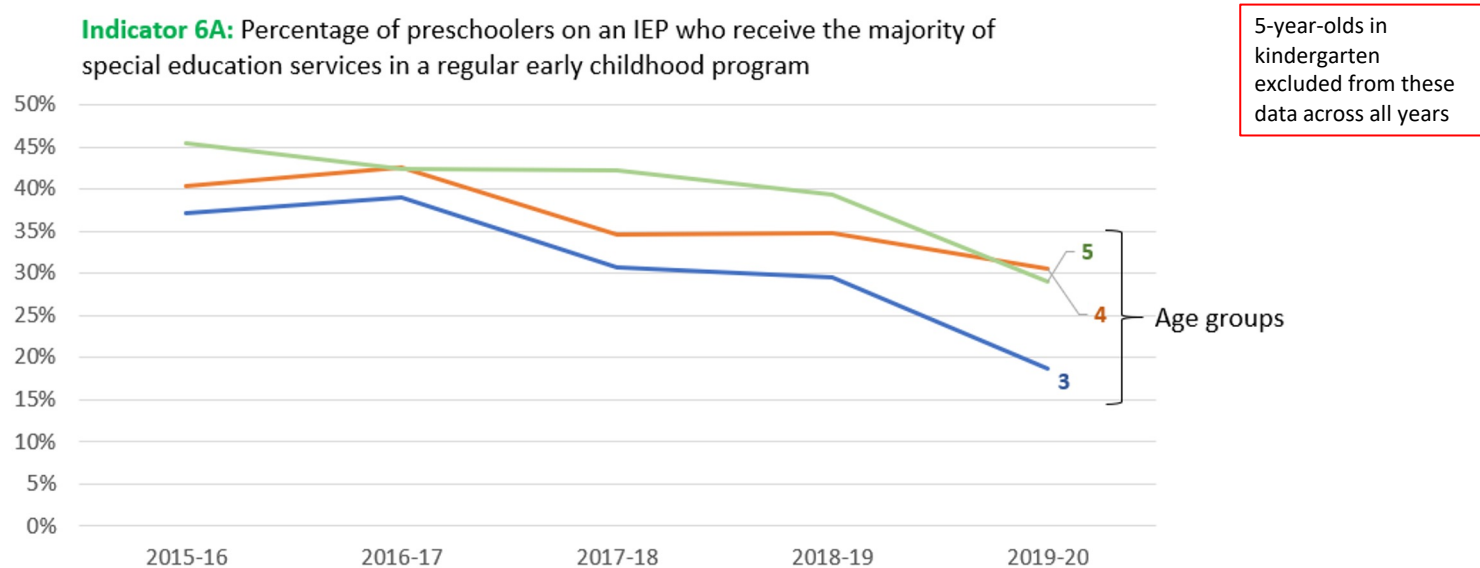
Disability Type	Total N of Preschoolers on IEP in CA (2019-20)
Speech or Language Impairment	29,016
Autism	14,995
Other Health Impairment	2,280
Intellectual Disability	1,743
Hard of Hearing	1,025
Orthopedic Impairment	664
Multiple Disabilities	581
Visual impairment*	145
Specific Learning Disability*	73
Traumatic Brain Injury*	48
Emotional Disturbance*	7
Deaf-Blindness*	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,582</b>

Percent Change in Number of Preschoolers in CA on an IEP by Disability Type (2015-16 to 2019-20)



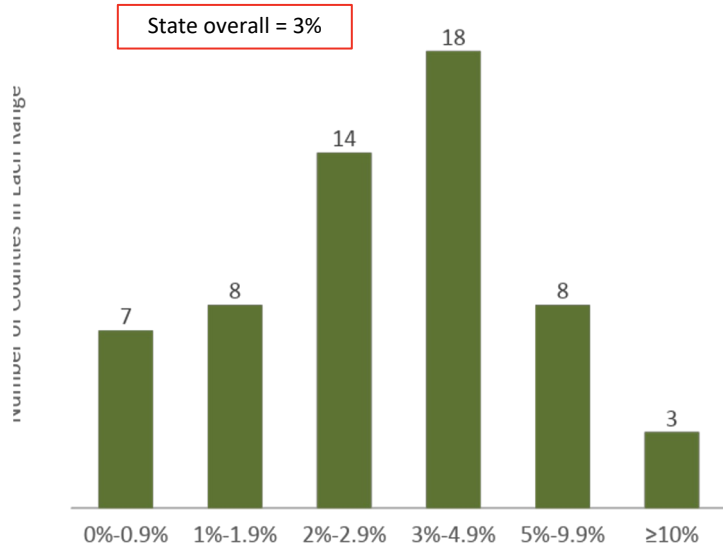
# Preschool inclusion rates vary by age.

Preschool inclusion rates have been dropping in CA across all age groups. Three-year-olds currently have lower rates of inclusion than four- and five-year-olds in preschool.





## Variation across counties in the percentage of preschoolers with subsidy who have an IEP

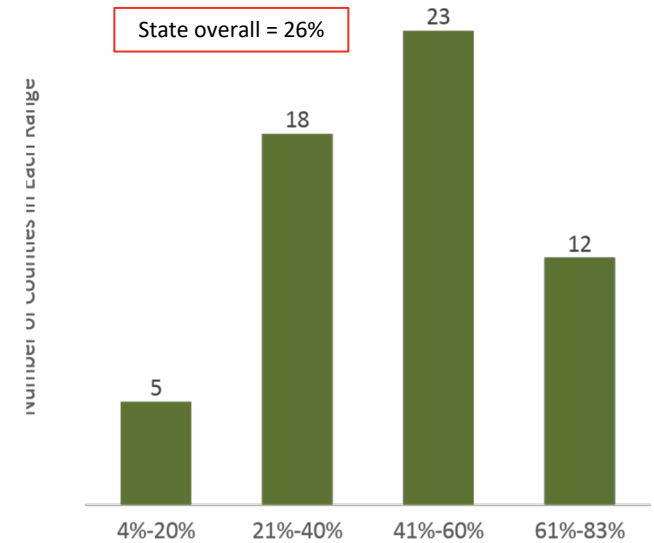


Source: CDMIS, Oct 2019

### Is there any relationship?

No strong relationship. Counties with the highest percentages of children with disabilities receiving subsidies are typically not the same counties with high percentages of preschoolers with disabilities receiving services in inclusive settings. ( $r = .28$ )

## Variation across counties in the percentage of preschoolers with an IEP attending regular early childhood programs and receiving the majority of their special education services in that location (Indicator 6A)



Source: CALPADS, Oct 2019

# Takeaways from Administrative Data Analyses

- The percentage of preschoolers with disabilities in subsidized care has increased even as overall enrollment has decreased.
- California's inclusion rates among all preschoolers with disabilities (regardless of subsidy) have been steadily declining.
- Inclusion rates are declining for all disability types and age groups, steeper for certain types/groups.

# Data Challenges and Opportunities

## Challenges

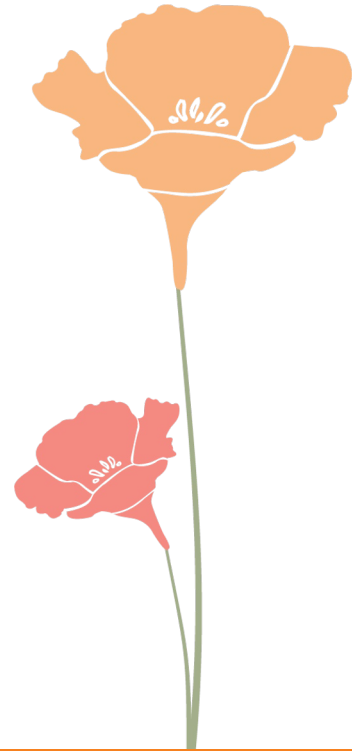
- Lack of common program and child identifiers across databases
- Little incentive to report IEP status in subsidized care database, leading to possible underreporting of children with disabilities
- Inconsistent understanding of federal inclusion data (Indicators 6A and 6B) among local special education and early care and education providers
- Limited verification of data quality

## Opportunities

- Lay the groundwork for future data integration
- Raise awareness of data available on the inclusion of children with disabilities
- Visibility of the data deepens understanding of current data and data quality issues
- Commitment from state leaders to promoting inclusion
- Pinpoint areas of improvement in data collection

# Key Informant Interviews:

What are the facilitators of and barriers to inclusion for preschool children in CA?



# 23 Key Informants

- Local & state-level Family Resource Center and Resource and Referral staff
- County Office of Education staff
- School district personnel
- Directors of statewide projects
- Community-based program administrators and teachers
- Tribal Child Care
- IHE/Researchers

# Initial Take-Aways

- Wide variation in definition of “inclusion”
  - Children with typically developing peers, co-teaching, services are pushed in
  - Children with typically developing peers, co-teaching, children are pulled out for services
  - Children in segregated classrooms with inclusion opportunities during playground time
  - Classrooms where 50% of children have IEPs
  - Private child care settings where children with IEPs are with typically developing peers, but with no teacher knowledge of/coordination re: IEP goals

# Very preliminary findings: What we are learning about the school district perspective

- (Some/many?) School systems see half a day as the maximum for special education services for preschoolers.
- Some districts see themselves as solely responsible for a child with a disability meeting IEP goals – and as the sole provider of the services.
  - Concerns over capacity of ECE teachers to adequately support children in progress toward IEP goals (training as well as accountability)
  - This can manifest as leaving general early learning and care out.

# Preliminary findings: School district perspective, cont'd.

- Prevalence of services delivered as pull-out, especially speech/language, & related issue of transportation
- Special day classes (SDCs) as automatic placement in many communities, often presented as only option for parents
- View that expanding inclusive opportunities (moving away from SDCs) would require additional public school classrooms (vs coordination with private settings)



# Initial Take-Aways

- Seemingly two separate systems
  - Not a system
  - ECE seems to have access to training and other supports for inclusion, but these do not seem to be coordinated with Special Education
  - “Our kids”
- In communities where true inclusion is happening, every sector seems to be on board
- Possible facilitators
  - State preschool program designates a percentage of slots for children with IEPs
  - Universal PreK

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**How do these preliminary findings compare with your experience? (1 = not at all similar, 5 = very similar)**

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## Very preliminary findings: Emerging issues

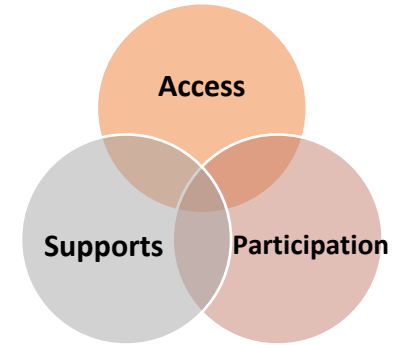
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure a preschooler with an IEP whose family needs more than a half or even full school day of care can function successfully for the entire time in non-school system general ed settings?
  - How do district programs wrap with their other program?
  - How is transportation provided and minimally disruptive?

# Collaboration across sectors

- Preliminary finding: may not be as much collaboration as we would like to see
- Requires sustainable infrastructure in the community
  - Joint training/planning
  - Joint planning time
  - Expectation of collaboration

# Policy Considerations

- Need to promote collaboration of school districts with community ELC programs
  - How to ensure all preschoolers with disabilities are being found (especially those not in programs run by districts)
  - Community programs should be considered an LRE option
  - Coordination when child with IEP is in a program run by a district **and** a community program
  - Sectors working together to support the child's development and learning throughout the day
    - Shared accountability
- How to support teachers in
  - Using assessment to guide instruction for all children, including those with IEPs
  - Modifying instruction and other accommodations and adaptations for children with IEPs

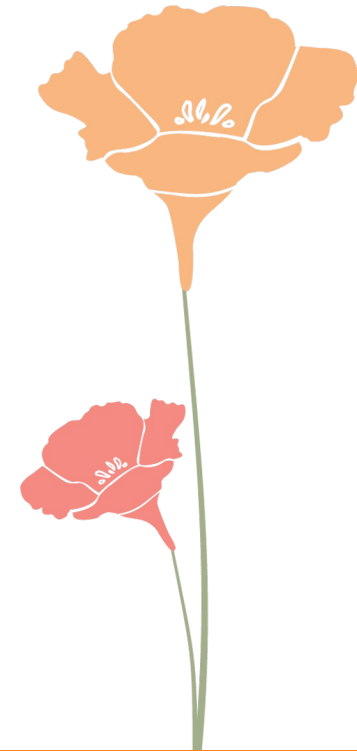


# Thank you

This project is made possible by Grant No. 90YE0218 from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation ([OPRE](#)) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of these institutes. We are committed to providing access to our web pages for individuals with disabilities. If for any reason you are having difficulty accessing any of our resources, please [contact us](#).



[CAEarlyLearningInclusion.org](http://CAEarlyLearningInclusion.org)



# Policy Considerations

- How to ensure strong communication and other connections between families of children with IEPs and district-run programs
- Need for ongoing professional development and other supports for staff for working with children with disabilities and the adults who work with them
  - Teachers in district-run programs
  - Special education teachers and specialists
  - Early childhood teachers/care providers in the community

