Child Outcome Ratings Guide

PURPOSE

This manual was developed to provide a resource to assist practitioners in determining how a child is functioning in relation to his or her same-aged peers in the three functional areas:

1. children have positive social-emotional skills and relationships;
2. children acquire and use new knowledge and skills; and
3. children take appropriate action to meet their needs.

The intent is to provide a hands on document with information readily available for practitioners both before and throughout the evaluation/assessment and determination process.

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TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT: BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS

General Information about Child Development

- Every child develops at an individual rate, possesses unique characteristics, and exhibits an array of talents and interests regardless of family background, culture, special needs, experience, or ability.
- Though children follow general sequences of development, each child will develop in unique ways, depending upon the child's personality, context and experiences.
- There is a wide range for emergence of developmental skills; it is impossible to pin down the exact age at which every child will have achieved a specific milestone. For the purpose of determining a child's developmental status in relation to same age peers, skills are listed according to the latest age they typically emerge for most children.
- Optimal learning occurs when we recognize that all aspects of a child's development (e.g., social and emotional, approaches to learning, language and literacy, cognitive, and physical) are inextricably interrelated and nurtured through a combination of active exploration, play, social interactions, and thoughtfully planned activities that capitalize on children's natural tendency to seek ever higher levels of challenge to master.
- Children develop holistically; growth and development in one area often influences and/or depends upon development in other areas. It is imperative to recognize the interconnectedness of children's early development in all areas.

Using This Resource

The information has been compiled from a variety of books, assessment tools and websites. The information is organized in accordance with the three Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) child outcomes to help practitioners, parents and other family members understand the kinds of functional behaviors displayed by typically developing children at various ages. It is very important to keep in mind there is a wide range for emergence of developmental skills for typically developing children.

In order to understand a **child's developmental functioning** in comparison to same-age peers, evaluators must be familiar with the child's behavior over the variety of settings, situations, and interactions that make up the child's day to day life. The functional outcomes being rated address behaviors that are meaningful and used in the context of children's everyday lives. Evaluators should always be considering how the child is using skills and behaviors to achieve a result or outcome that is meaningful to him/her in his/her daily life.

In determining the extent to which a child's functioning meets age expectations, the team must look at an overall pattern, rather than specific fragments, of development.

Determination of Child Outcomes

General Information:

- Ratings are required only at entry and exit.

- Entry ratings on all three indicators must be done for all children new to early intervention.

- Exit ratings on all three indicators must be done prior to exit for all children who had an entry rating **AND** who have been in the system for 6 months or longer since their initial IFSP.

- The rating must be done no more than 6 months prior to exit from Part C. It is beneficial to time the exit assessment/rating as close to exit as possible in order to capture results for the full time the child was receiving early intervention services. It is recognized that there will be situations where it is not possible to complete the ratings because the children/families leave the system without notice.

Determination of Child Outcomes

Requirements for Assessments, Rating and Documentation

Entry Assessment

- Assessment information is derived from multiple sources:
    - the evaluation and assessment (including results from developmental instrument(s) and observation)
    - the family, including information about the child's performance in relation to the three indicators across situations and settings and with different people
    - any other sources (child care provider, medical records, etc.)

- Considering the information above and functional skills of same-aged peers, determine the appropriate rating from 1-7 for each of the indicators. The Decision Tree can be used to guide the process. The Decision Tree can be found on page 11.

Exit Assessment

- Using information from the same sources listed above (parents, instrument, observation, other sources), determine the child's status (rating) for each of the outcomes. NOTE: A formal assessment is not required, though documentation of the child's abilities using an instrument (such as the HELP, ELAP, etc.) is required. It is not necessary to use the same instrument that was used for the entry assessment. As is currently the practice, the primary provider determines the child's developmental levels in all areas through ongoing assessment (which can occur over multiple sessions). The instrument must be scored.

- The IFSP team considers information from the sources listed above to determine the child's status in relation to same-age peers for all three outcomes . Document the child's functional status in the child's early intervention record. This can be done in a progress note. Also document the sources of information used in the assessment process.

- Completion of the "yes/no response to the questions 'Has the child made progress?'" must always be based on the child's progress since the initial assessment, even if there has been one or more interim assessments.

Role of the Family in Ratings Discussions

The family plays several important roles in Michigan's System for Determination of Child Progress, including team member, child information provider, rating participant and customer.

Team Member: Just as families are members of IFSP teams, they are critical to the assessment team. DEC Recommended Practices (2005) tell us "Early childhood assessment is a flexible, collaborative decision-making process in which teams of parents and professionals repeatedly revise their judgments and reach consensus…"

Information Provider: Child Outcome ratings rely on information about a child's functioning across situations and settings. Parent input is crucial: family members see the child in situations that professionals do not. The rest of the team will need to learn what family members know about the child- what the child does at home, at grandma's house, in the grocery store, etc.

Participant in Rating Discussions: As members of the IFSP team, families are natural participants in the outcome rating discussion. Their role in the rating is child expert, while other members of the team will know child development and the skills and behaviors expected at various age levels.

Customer: Professionals need to be able to explain why the rating is being done and what it means.

Functional Outcomes Definition

What is an outcome?

- Outcomes are the benefits that children and families experience as a result of early intervention
- The three child indicators, as measured for accountability purposes, are different than IFSP outcomes in that:
    - The three child indicators reflect global functioning in three broad areas of development (social-emotional, knowledge and skills, getting needs met)
    - IFSP outcomes are specific to an individual child, based on his or her individual needs
- Each outcome is a snapshot of
    - The whole child
    - Status of the child's current functioning
    - Functioning across settings and situations

What makes an outcome functional?

Functional outcomes:

- Refer to things that are meaningful to the child in the context of everyday living
- Refer to an integrated series of behaviors or skills that allow the child to achieve the important everyday goals

How do I assess functional outcomes?

- Emphasize **meaning**. Ask "Can the child carry out meaningful behaviors in a meaningful context?" not "Can the child perform discrete behaviors such as knowing 10 words, smiling at mom, stacking 3 blocks, pincer grasp, walking backward?"
- Observe a child in natural settings to learn:
    - What does the child usually do?
    - What is his actual performance across settings and situations?
    - How does the child use his/her skills to accomplish tasks?

- The assessment of functioning is NOT about:
    - The child's capacity to function under unusual or ideal circumstances, skill by skill, domain by domain
    - The child's performance In a structured testing situation in on standardized way

Why isn't assessing the child's ability to perform discrete behaviors enough?

Discrete behaviors (e.g., those described by some items on assessment instruments) may or may not be important to the child's functioning on the indicator.

- Individually, they are not especially informative
- Summed, they may or may not be useful, depending on the functionality of the behaviors/items

Think about isolated behaviors ad what observing them tells you about the child. For example, suppose an assessment instrument asks you to observe whether or not a child can point:

- If you know that a child can point, do you know that the child can communicate her wants and needs?
- If you know that a child can't point, do you know that she can't communicate her wants and needs?
- How does knowing about pointing help you understand how the child takes action to meet needs?

What about domains?

- Functionality is not domains-based; children function across developmental domains
- Functionality can involve multiple domains and can cross domains
- Functional outcomes refer to behaviors that integrate skills across domains

What does functionality have to do with using the Child Outcomes?

Ratings on the seven-point scale for each outcome are a snapshot of:

- The whole child
- Status of the child's current functioning
- Functioning across settings and situations

Ratings are based on the child's functioning:

- What the child does across settings and situations
- Compared with what is expected given the child's age

Guidelines for Outcome Ratings

1. Are the skills and behaviors demonstrated what one would expect for a child this age?
2. If not, are they like those of a younger child? Are they the skills and behaviors that come just before the age-expected skills and behaviors?
3. If not, are they like those of a MUCH younger child? Are they farther away from age expected skills and behaviors? (much earlier or atypical skills and behaviors).

Foundational Skills

Some of the skills and behaviors that develop early serve as the foundation for later skills and behavior, or expressed another way, later skills build on earlier skills in predictable ways. Teachers and therapists can use the earlier skills to help children move to the next higher level of functioning developmentally. We refer to these earlier skills that serve at the base and are conceptually linked to the later skills as “foundational skills.” For example, children play along side one another before they interact in play. Development in the early childhood years proceeds through several levels of foundational skills with skills and behavior becoming more complex and more proficient as children get older.

All skills that lead to higher levels of function are foundational skills, however, the set of skills and behavior that occur developmentally just prior to age-expected functioning can be described as the immediate foundational skills in that they are the most recent set of foundational skills that children master and move beyond.

A child whose functioning is like that of a younger child is probably showing **immediate foundational skills**. Her functioning does not meet age expectations, but she **demonstrates skills and behaviors that occur developmentally just prior to age expected functioning** and are the basis on which to build age-expected functioning.

A child whose functioning might be described as like that of a MUCH younger child does not meet age expectation, nor does she demonstrate skills and behaviors that immediately precede age-expected functioning. She has **foundational skills**, but not yet an immediate foundational level.

Some foundational skills get replaced by newer skills whereas others continue in children’s (and adult’s) repertoires throughout life. The nature of interacting with other children changes fundamentally as children get older. On the other hand, skills like making eye contact, turn-taking, and eating with a fork get incorporated

into more sophisticated routines but never disappear. **To identify whether functioning that continues throughout life constitutes an immediate foundational skill, ask yourself at what age one would first expect to see this functioning and how close it that to the child's current age.** For instance, being able to make eye contact is not an immediate foundational skill for a three year old.

Example 1: Chrissa is 30 months (2 ½ years) old. Although she does not play with other children, she watches them with great interest. A child who is 30 months of age or so should play with other children, even taking turns. A younger child (18-24 months or so) would play alone, but would be very aware of other children, such as the toys another child is using, and may snatch a toy away from another child. A much younger child (12 months or so) would stay very close to his or her primary caregiver, showing early awareness of other children. Chrissa is more than aware of other children; she visually follows their play with enthusiasm. She has immediate foundational skills on which to build the next level of relationships with peers, which would involve playing with other children and turn taking.

Child development does not progress in a neat and tidy sequence. Children spend various amounts of time in any one stage of development. Areas of development may overlap with one another. It is impossible to pin down the exact age at which every child will have achieved a specific milestone. Children manifest developmental expectations in different ways. All children follow general sequences, but each child will develop in unique ways, depending upon the child's personality, context and experiences. In determining the extent to which a child's functioning meets age expectations, the team must look at an overall pattern, rather than specific fragments, of development.

Example 2: Justin is 24 months (2 years) old. He uses a spoon, but often spills the food before it gets to his mouth. Without his mom's help he wouldn't get much to eat at mealtime. A child who is 2 should be able to meet his feeding needs without much help, using various kinds of tools, including his fingers. The younger child (toddler) experiments with tool use, but with limited success. The much younger child (infant) participates in feeding by opening his mouth, but does not attempt to feed himself.

• How would you describe Justin's skills and behaviors? Are they age-expected? Immediate foundational? Or not yet?
• What if Justin were 12 months old? How would you describe his skills and behaviors? What if he were 36 months old?

Please Note: A thorough explanation and details of development are beyond the scope of this document. It is incumbent upon early childhood professionals to have a thorough knowledge of development. Resources listed in this manual can be used as one mechanism for professionals to increase their knowledge. Observation of typically developing children and specific coursework are other methods to increase professional competency in child development.

Outcome Ratings

A domain score on an assessment does not necessarily translate directly into an outcome rating.

Outcome ratings require:

• Looking at functional behaviors
• Collecting and synthesizing input from many sources familiar with the child in many different settings and situations

To Decide on a Rating…

• Know what behaviors and skills are appropriate for the child's age; How do children who are developing typically function on this indicator?
• Review the available sources of information to determine how the child functions across a variety of situations and settings
• Understand the differences between response options on the summary form

1	Not Yet	Child does not yet show functioning expected of a child his or her age in any situation. Child's skills and behaviors also do not yet include any immediate foundational skills upon which to build age appropriate functioning. Child's functioning might be described as that of a much younger child.
2	Between Emerging and Not Yet	Some of the foundational skills are there, though not all the immediate foundational skills.
3	Emerging	Child does not yet show functioning expected of a child his or her age in any situation. Child's behavior and skills include immediate foundational skills upon which to build age appropriate functioning. Functioning might be described as like that of a younger child.
4	Between Somewhat and Emerging	Immediate foundational skills are in place and child has demonstrated age appropriate skills once or twice, perhaps not deliberately.
5	Somewhat	Child shows functioning expected for his or her age some of the time and/or in some situations. Child's functioning is a mix of age appropriate and not age appropriate functioning. Functioning might be described as like that of a slightly younger child.
6	Between Completely and Somewhat	Child's functioning generally is considered appropriate for his or her age, but there are some concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area.
7	Completely	The child shows functioning expected for his or her age in all or almost all everyday situations that are a part of the child's life. Functioning is considered appropriate for his or her age. No one has any concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area.

Decision Tree

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This guide was adapted from the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia
http://www.infantva.org/ovw-DeterminationDevelopmentOSEP.htm
and Early On Michigan Child Outcomes: Handbook to Guide the Measurement and Reporting of Child Outcomes for Early On Michigan
by Julie Lagos, Macomb Intermediate School District, Early On Macomb
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The Early Learning Accomplishment Profile – Birth to 36 months, Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project, Inc.

University of Maryland Medical Center. (2006). Developmental Milestones.

Child Development – Print Resources

Brazelton, T.B., & Sparrow, J.D (2006). Touchpoints: Birth to Three: Your child's emotional and behavioral development. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

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Caplan, T., & Caplan, F. (1984). The early childhood years: The 2 to 6 year old. New York: Bantam Books.

Greenspan, S. & Greenspan, N.T. (1994). First feelings: Milestones in the emotional development of your baby and child. New York: Viking.

Lowman, D.L. (2007) Amazing Babies: An Overview of Development from Birth to Thirty-Six Months. Virginia: Partnership for People with Disabilities, Virginia Commonwealth University.

Shelov, S.P., & Hannemann, R.E (2004). Caring for your baby and young child: Birth to age five. New York: Bantam Books, Inc.

Child Development – Web Resources

Age Expected Child Development Resources: Early Childhood Outcomes Center/ECO Tools/Resources: http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/pdfs/Age-expected_child_dev10-11-06.pdf

Baby Center / Baby Milestones: http://www.babycenter.com/baby-milestones

Born Learning: http://www.bornlearning.org/default.aspx?id=19

Kids Health/Growth and Development: http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/index.html

Child and Family Outcomes

The Early Childhood Outcomes Center:

Documents
ECO Activities and Resources
ECO Tools (and Training Resources)
Instrument Crosswalks
Presentations
Papers
Meetings/Conferences
Federal and State Activities
Outcomes 101: ECO Q & A

Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia/ Virginia's System for Determining Child Progress

Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia

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