



Fact Sheet: Child Outcomes Assessment for Preschool Age Children with Disabilities



Part One: The Five W's of the Child Outcomes Summary Process

Why do we report on the progress of preschool aged children with disabilities?

As educators it is important to know if the instructional efforts and IEP's are effective at improving the outcomes of the children in our programs. Additionally, federal regulations require every state early childhood special education (ECSE) program to measure and annually report on the outcomes of the children they serve. The process is called the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center offers many supportive resources which are highlighted throughout this document.

- Federally reported data are used to determine if federal funding for provision of early childhood special education is making a difference for young children with disabilities and their families.
- State and Local Programs use results to know how well programs are serving children and families and how to help programs improve.
- Data are shared with Family and Community Members, so they know how children and programs are doing.
- Teachers use the results to inform instruction in the classroom.

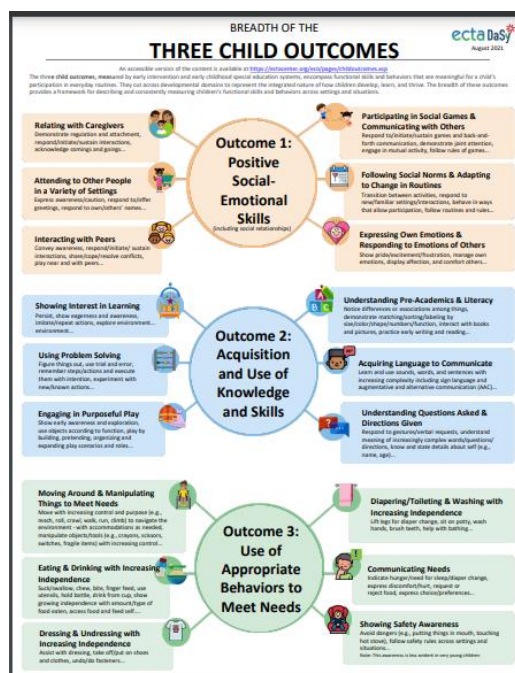
What data are submitted?

The COS process is the approach used to measure a child's level of functioning for each of the three child outcomes upon their entry to the program (of special education) and exit from the program (either leaving to kindergarten, leaving special education, or leaving the state).

The three child outcomes measurements for each child correspond to three broad categories of development.

These outcome categories are:

- Positive Social Emotional Skills
- Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills
- Use of Appropriate Behaviors to Meet Needs



The information gathered about a preschool age child when he or she is evaluated for special education and is determined eligible and in need of services, is used to develop the IEP and establishes their level of functioning relative to age expectations. Age expected skills are described in various tools, and team members determining COS ratings must be familiar with *and have a common understanding of* typical development and progression of functional skills across the ages and stages in early childhood. One example of an [age anchoring tool](#) is from University of North Carolina's FPG Child Development Institute and North Carolina's Office of Early Learning.

Each child's functioning is rated [on a 1-7 scale](#) for each of the three outcome areas upon enrollment to the early childhood special education program. This is called the entry rating. When the child is no longer eligible for preschool special education, because of their age, they no longer need of services, or the child moves, then a final rating is determined. This rating is called the exit rating. All ratings are based on what is expected for their typically developed peer at his or her current chronological age. In addition to a rating score, at exit, the COS team must also indicate if the child has made any progress since entry for each outcome where "any progress" is defined as whether or not the child has acquired at least one new skill or behavior related to the outcome.

Who is involved in the assessment process?

The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) is a team-based process that assesses a child's functioning in the three outcome areas. A team of individuals who are familiar with the child consider multiple sources of information about the child's functioning across multiple settings to determine the ratings. The documentation of the child's performance across settings must involve parents and other caregiver observations to ensure accurate and reliable ratings. Supporting [parents, caregivers, and teachers](#) to be knowledgeable about age expected development helps all team members to participate on an equal footing.

Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Definitions:
7-Point Rating Scale Criteria

Updated June 28, 2024 — Available in Spanish — <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/cosform.asp>

Overall Age-Expected Functioning

Rating Definition

- 7** Child functions in ways that are age-expected in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life. No one on the team has concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area.
- 6** Child's functioning generally is considered age-expected, but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may border on not keeping pace with age expectations.

Some Age-Expected Functioning

Rating Definition

- 5** Child functions using a mix of skills, with more skills that are age-expected than not age-expected, across settings and situations in this outcome area. Child's functioning might be described as like that of a slightly younger child.
- 4** Child occasionally uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in this outcome area. More functioning is not age-expected than is age-expected.

Not Yet Age-Expected Functioning

Rating Definition

- 3** Child uses immediate foundational skills most or all of the time across settings and situations. Child does not yet function in ways that would be considered age-expected in this outcome area. Functioning might be described as like that of a younger child.
- 2** Child occasionally uses immediate foundational skills across settings and situations. Child does not yet function in ways that would be considered age-expected in this outcome area. More functioning reflects skills that are foundational than are immediate foundational.
- 1** Child only uses foundational skills across settings and situations. These foundational skills are crucial to build immediate foundational skills. Child does not yet function in ways that would be considered age-expected or immediate foundational in this outcome area. Child's functioning might be described as like that of a much younger child.

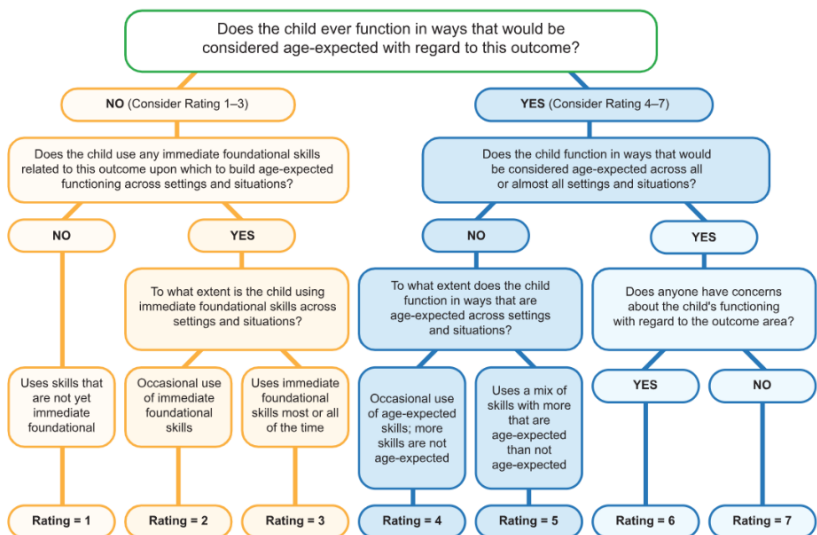
Where/How is the information collected?

A [variety of methods are used across the states](#) to collect COS data on preschool aged children with disabilities. Some states have a state mandated tool, others suggest [various published tools](#), many of which are already being used during the evaluation process. The [Battelle Developmental Inventory](#), the [DAY-C 2](#) and [Teaching Strategies Gold](#) are able to generate outcomes scores through crosswalks of assessment items to the three outcome areas, or through proprietary platform reports.

The process requires a team to reach consensus about a child's functioning using [a 1 to 7 rating scale](#) on each of the outcome area prior to services and at the completion of services. The functional skills and behaviors assessed in this process are meaningful for participation in everyday routines, and the rating will reflect their level of functioning relative to age expected development.

Each outcome area includes functional skills and behaviors that cut across developmental domains. For example, within the Social Emotional outcome area, skills and behaviors such as relating with peers, participating in social games, communicating with others and adapting to change are included in the outcome. The team discusses information about a child's functioning and summarizes all the

information gathered from such sources as classroom assessments, observations, evaluations, and ongoing progress monitoring tools. The team may use the [COS form](#) to document the discussions. The team should also use a [Decision Tree](#) to help determine the ratings based on the collected information, guiding the



team to select a rating on the 7-point rating scale for each outcome area. COS teams may prefer to use the [descriptor statements](#) tool to assist teams to describe levels of functioning.

Because this is a team-based process that requires knowledge of child development, there is a great deal of training offered by state education agencies and national technical assistance centers the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) and the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy). One way to evaluate the abilities of the practitioners on the skills of the Child Outcomes Assessment process is to take the [Child Outcomes Summary Knowledge Check for practitioners](#). The SEA will arrange for sites to initiate this process.

When is the Data Collected and Submitted?

Entry data: Data to complete the COS for each preschool aged child with a disability may be gathered during the Review of Existing data, at the Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Team meeting, and/or at the initial IEP meeting. The entry rating must be determined prior to the onset of services to document the child's level of functioning and entered either into the CDS data system or other required tracking system.

Exit data: The exit COS is completed immediately prior to when the child is discharged from services (because s/he is graduating, transitioning to kindergarten special education services, or moving out of state). This exit ratings data includes an indication of progress between entry and exit. Data will be entered into the CDS data system or other required tracking system and submitted for all exiting children who have received services for at least 6 months.

Part Two: FAQ's About the Child Outcomes Summary Process

Q: Are we required to do the COS process for all children in the classroom, both with and without disabilities?

A: No, the COS process reflects two point-in-time assessments of its preschool children with disabilities. However, ongoing progress monitoring activities of all children is a best practice and includes observations and documentation of their performance using work samples, photos, videos, and notes collected during the school day. This information is used by teachers to determine instructional needs and progress on the curriculum. Ongoing progress monitoring also can help inform children's progress relative to IEP goals.

Q: Is there a mandated tool or process for conducting the COS process?

A: No, because the COS is a process, sites can determine the team's methodology for rating children's performance once professional knowledge of the COS process is established. There are a variety of [published tools](#) that practitioners can use, or, without using a published tool, and following the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) guidance to address all six skill bundles within each outcome area through team discussions and documentation, be able to consistently choose a rating that reflects age expected development.

Q: How do we know if our teams are ready to utilize the COS process accurately?

A: There are a variety of resources and trainings available for teams to ensure they are knowledgeable about the process. Professional development through the ECTA includes [online modules, guides, and practice activities](#). The Knowledge Check assesses practitioner knowledge about the process and provides a score when the test taker passes. Links for training and assessment of skills are as follows:

Training Resources:

- [COS Process Online Module](#)
- [Professional Development to Strengthen COS Knowledge and Skills](#)
- [Frequently Used Resources for COS](#)

Knowledge Check Information:

- [Child Outcomes Summary Knowledge Check for Practitioners](#)

Q: How is data submitted on the COS process for each child?

A: Depending on who is serving the preschool aged child with the disability, there are currently separate processes:

- *For CDS staff*, entry data to complete the COS for preschool aged children will be determined during the initial evaluation and documented in CINC. Exit ratings and answers to the progress question are determined and updated in CINC prior to the end of the period for a child that have been in the program for at least six months and will no longer receive services, must be submitted by the end of the school year. CDS Part B staff must cite and maintain evidence for the selection of the ratings for each child, should there be unusual patterns of data identified by the State Education Agency (SEA).
- *For Cohort I schools and staff*, entry ratings are determined from information gathered during the evaluation process and is submitted via spread sheet to the State Education Agency (until the data collection process is integrated into existing state data systems). Exit ratings and answers to the progress question for children who will no longer be receiving services, that have been in the program for at least six months, must be completed prior to the end of the school year and submitted to the SEA. SAUs must maintain and be able to cite documentation as evidence for the selection of the ratings for each child, should there be unusual patterns of data identified by the SEA.

Q: Can the COS process take place alongside the initial evaluation activities, or when we have kindergarten transition meetings?

A: Yes, rather than conduct the COS as a standalone activity, there are ways to integrate the COS process into existing IEP process activities. The ECTA offers a [flow chart](#) to reflect how the

COS process may be integrated into assessment/ongoing progress monitoring activities across the stages from Child Find to service delivery. Whether children are transitioning from Early Intervention or are referred through the Child Find process, the first way to integrate COS activities is by communicating information about the COS process to parents. In the evaluation and eligibility process, evidence of children's performance is gathered to contribute to selection of ratings across the three outcome areas. During IEP development, finalize the COS ratings during discussion of present levels of performance and complete the COS. Once service delivery begins, monitor and share progress on goals as well as performance on the three outcome areas. At exit from the program, complete the COS assessment using assessments and other information across settings and routines.

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