

# The 7-Point Scale

## Session 4 Presentation Transcript

Welcome to Session 4. In this session, we'll take an in-depth look at the 7-point scale that is used in the Child Outcomes Summary process.

### Understand the 7-Point Scale

In the last session, we introduced the 7-point rating scale. The 7-point scale is used to indicate a child's status on each of the three outcomes at a given point in time. These points always include entry and exit from early intervention or early childhood special education programs. Some programs determine the child's status on the scale in between these time points as well. The 7-point scale indicates how the child's current functioning compares to age-expected functioning for his or her chronological age.

The 7-point scale's highest point represents age-expected functioning and lower points represent the degree of distance from age expectations. Let's take a look at a graphic that explains this concept for positive social relationships.

### Levels of Functioning

Most children show age-expected skills and behaviors that enable them to have positive social relationships. There are many ways to demonstrate age-appropriate behaviors. Some children are shy, some are talkative, some are active, some are not. Not all 3-year-olds are the same, but as long as they are functioning like 3-year-olds, they are considered to be showing age-expected skills and behaviors. These children are in the innermost circle.

Some children's behavior is considered outside the realm of age-expected behaviors and skills. There are many different ways for children to fall outside what is considered typical, such as by showing skills and behaviors of a younger child or by showing behaviors that are inappropriate and interfere with the child's forming of positive social relationships.

Some children show behaviors and skills that are only slightly outside the realm of typical. Other children show behaviors and skills considerably removed from age expectations, and others even further removed.

The goal of early intervention and early childhood special education services is to provide children with supports to develop skills and behaviors that get them as close as they can be to age-expected. In this way, children can form positive social relationships and actively and successfully participate in a variety of settings.

## Important Notes

It is important to note that each of the 7 points on the scale is defined by specific criteria. These criteria are grounded in the three categories of functional levels we defined in Session 3: age-expected, immediate foundational, and foundational. Some points on the scale describe a level of functioning that is a combination of age-expected, immediate foundational, and foundational skills. These combinations will be described in more detail later in this presentation as we go through each point on the scale one at a time.

It is also important to note that not all states use numbers to record the Child Outcomes Summary ratings. Some states have opted to use phrases or longer “descriptor statements” instead of numbers. You will need to find out how your state is recording the Child Outcomes Summary team’s decision about a child’s functioning. Regardless of what is recorded, the Child Outcomes Summary process always includes 7 points on a scale with the same criteria for those points.

Let’s look at the definitions of each of the 7 points of the scale. In addition to the description, examples of descriptor statements are included for each of the 7 points.

## Rating of 7

Let’s take a closer look at each point on the scale, beginning with a rating of 7. A rating of 7 indicates that, in all or almost all everyday settings and situations, the child shows skills and behaviors that are expected for his or her age. A rating of a 7 also indicates that at this time, no one on the team has concerns about the child’s development. We’ll define what *concerns* are in just a bit.

## Descriptor Statements for “7”

As we just said, some states use descriptor statements instead of numbers. Descriptor statements are sets of statements that describe the mix of age-expected, immediate foundational, and foundational skills for the child. Often, states provide two to three alternative descriptor statements so that there are choices for how the statement is worded when the rating is documented. If the descriptors are used, states have a very specific list of descriptor statements to choose from for each point on the scale.

This slide shows three examples of descriptor statements. A descriptor statement for a child who is rated a 7 might be: “For a 35-month-old girl, Kimberly is showing age-expected functioning in Positive Social Relationships.” Note that this descriptor includes the critical feature for a rating of 7—that Kimberly has age-expected functioning in most or all situations in the outcome area. By using this statement, the team is describing Kimberly’s functional level, i.e., that it is what we would expect for her age.

## Rating of 6

A rating of 6 also indicates that in all or almost all everyday settings and situations, the child shows skills and behaviors that are expected for his or her age. However, a rating of 6 indicates that the team has significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. These concerns are substantial enough to suggest keeping an eye on the child's development to determine the need for additional support in the future.

## “Concerns” That Distinguish Ratings of 7 vs. 6

Now let's talk for a minute about when a team would use a rating of 6. All children have strengths and weaknesses, and most families and providers will identify areas to work on to support ongoing growth, which may be called “concerns.” So, what types of concerns would result in a rating of 6? The kinds of concerns that lead to a 6 rating rather than a 7 are more developmental concerns— developmental issues that are significant enough to warrant closely watching and/or supporting the child. Examples of concerns where a rating of 6 would be appropriate are concerns about the child's development potentially not keeping pace with age-expected development in the future or a child who is showing early signs of a possible developmental problem.

On the other hand, examples of concerns where a rating of 7 would be appropriate instead of 6 might include: Shyness—A 15-month-old child may be very shy, but the behavior is expected for the age; or Temper tantrums—A parent may be worried about a 2-year-old's temper tantrums. The team will want to help the parent address these behaviors, but the team can also help the parent understand that tantrums are to be expected given the child's age.

## Rating of 5

Now let's move on to a rating of 5. A rating of 5 indicates that a child shows some functioning that is expected for his or her age in some settings and situations or some of the time. This means that at other times or in some settings, the child is showing some functioning that is not age-expected. This mix of age-expected and not age-expected functioning is the main differentiation between a rating of 5 and ratings of 6 or 7. Children who are rated a 5 have functioning that might be described as that of a slightly younger child because, developmentally, they present with some skills and behaviors that we would expect to see earlier in development.

Now let's take a look at how ratings of 5 and 4 differ from one another.

## Rating of 4

A rating of 4 also indicates that there is a mix of age-expected and not age-expected skills, but in the case of a rating of 4, the child shows more functioning that is not age-expected. Children who receive a rating of 4 show only *occasional* age-expected functioning across settings and situations; they show mostly

functioning that is not age-expected. The functioning that is not age-expected could be described as immediate foundational or foundational functioning, or both.

## Rating of 3

Now let's look at the criteria for a rating of 3. The key feature of a rating of 3 is the lack of any age-expected functioning in the outcome area. A rating of 3 means the child is showing immediate foundational skills almost all the time and across settings and situations and possibly some foundational skills, but no skills or behaviors that are age-expected in the outcome area. Children who are rated a 3 have functioning that might be described as that of a younger child when comparing their functioning with what is expected at their age because their skills and behaviors are those that we might see earlier in the developmental progression.

## Rating of 2

In a rating of 2, we see fewer immediate foundational skills compared with a 3. A rating of 2 indicates that a child only **occasionally** uses immediate foundational skills across settings and situations and primarily has more of the foundational skills we see earlier in development.

An example descriptor statement for a rating of 2 might be: "In the area of Positive Social Relationships, Felipe occasionally shows immediate foundational skills but has more skills that are like those of a much younger child." Note that this statement includes the key points of a definition of a rating of 2, namely the presence of occasional immediate foundational functioning, but more functioning that is at the foundational level.

## Rating of 1

Finally, a rating of 1 means the child does not yet show any age-expected *or* immediate foundational functioning in the outcome area. A child with a rating of 1 is showing all skills at the foundational level of development. Children with a rating of 1 have functioning that might be described as that of a much younger child; when comparing their functioning with age expectations, their skills are at levels we'd expect to see much earlier in the developmental progression.

An example descriptor statement for a rating of 1 might be: "The skills that Ana uses to get her needs met are like those of a much younger child. She has early skills in this area but not yet immediate foundational or age-expected skills." Note that this statement highlights the important point that a child with a rating of 1 has an array of **foundational skills** but not yet any immediate foundational or age-expected skills.

## Important Note

Early intervention and early childhood special education programs serve children with a wide range of abilities, including those with mild developmental delays and those with significant disabilities and

regressive disorders. Some children have a delay in only one of the outcomes areas and will show age-expected functioning in the other two outcomes. It's important to remember that children with more significant developmental delays and disabilities will receive ratings at the lower end of the 7-point scale - and that's OK. It's an accurate picture of the child's functioning at that point in time.

Understanding the criteria for the 7-point scale is extremely important for deriving an accurate rating. More information will be provided in a future presentation about how to use the rating scale in a team decision-making process.