Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

Birth–4		Birth–K		Age 3–5		Age 3–21		Birth–21	

Child Outcomes Summary (COS)

"The goal of early intervention/early childhood special education is to enable young children to be active and successful participants during the early childhood years and in the future in a variety of settings – in their homes with their families, in child care, in preschool or school programs, and in the community."

From *Family and Child Outcomes for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education*, Early Childhood Outcomes Center (April 2005).

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) began requiring State Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs to report on child outcomes, beginning in 2005, as a means of measuring program effectiveness. IDEA, SEC. 616. <<NOTE: 20 USC 1416.>> MONITORING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND ENFORCEMENT. ``(a) Federal and State Monitoring.-………..``(2) Focused monitoring.--The primary focus of Federal and State monitoring activities described in paragraph (1) shall be on-- ``(A) improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities."

Three outcomes are considered critical to children becoming active and successful participants across a variety of settings:
1. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills; and
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

The Child Outcome Summary (COS) process is used in Maryland for measuring child outcomes to meet federal accountability reporting requirements for all children receiving services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or a preschool Individualized Education Program (IEP). This process also drives State and local data-based decision-making.

The process for determining the COS provides a common mechanism for describing children's functioning compared to age expectations in each of the three outcome areas. The COS is not an assessment. Rather, it provides a way for teams to summarize the child's

level of functioning compared to that of same-age peers, using information from a variety of sources, including but not limited to formal evaluation using standardized tools, parent and provider input, observations, and authentic assessment.

Synthesis of Information

The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process is a synthesis of numerous assessment activities. It is not an actual assessment. Recommended practice in early childhood assessment is to use multiple methods and sources of information throughout the process. There is no evaluation/assessment instrument that directly measures the three child outcomes and often these tools look at isolated skills within specific developmental domains outside of meaningful contexts. Therefore, when using instruments as one source of information for the COS, it is necessary to think about the specific skill or behavior within the context of daily routines and activities and understand that domains will link to multiple or even all three outcomes. For example, communication skills are considered across all three child outcomes because how a child communicates affects how he interacts with others, how he is able to learn new things, and how he is able to get his own needs met. The context and the purpose of the skill or behavior determine which outcome teams should address. Authentic assessment, such as observing a child participate in daily activities in a variety of settings, is a rich and critical source of information. Equally important is the information gathered from interviews and input provided by parents, family members and other caregivers involved with the child. Their perspective and insight adds information that the team needs to have when considering a child's participation across settings and activities. The COS process allows teams to take all of this varied information and produce data that can be summarized in a common metric across programs and states.

Team-Based Decision Making

Determining a COS rating requires a team of people who have knowledge about a child's functioning in daily activities across multiple settings and situations. The team may include parents and family members, teachers, childcare providers, service providers and service coordinators. All have critical information and perspectives to contribute to the discussion of determining an accurate rating. All team members should be prepared to share what they know about the child, whether from day-to-day interactions, observations, interviews, or formal assessment/evaluation. When team members cannot participate in face-to-face IFSP/IEP meetings, they can share information via phone or send written information for the team's consideration. Collectively, the team needs to understand: the content of the three child outcomes; age-expected child development; how the child functions across settings and situations; age expectations within the child and family's culture; and how to use the 7-point rating scale.

Engaging Families

Family input and involvement throughout the COS process is essential. Families and primary caregivers can provide rich information about the child's functioning across a variety of settings. Information about the three child outcomes should be shared early and often with

families, beginning with referral, to support families as engaged partners in the team-based decision making process.

Functionality
The three early childhood outcomes are broad and reflect how the child functions in meaningful ways throughout the day at home, within classroom routines, and wherever the child spends time. The outcomes intentionally cross developmental domains to reflect the integrated nature of how children develop and successfully interact in the world. This is also consistent with recommended practices in identifying individualized and functional outcomes on IFSPs and IEPs.

Establish Age-Expectations
The COS process requires a comparison of the child's daily functioning with the expected skills and behaviors of children their same age. It is essential that members of the team understand and can share information about typical development, including the sequence and time frames. Following the gathering of information, teams identify the status of the child's functioning as:

> Age-Expected - Skills and behaviors that are typical for children of a particular chronological age;
> Immediate Foundational – Skills and behaviors that develop just prior to age-expected skills; and
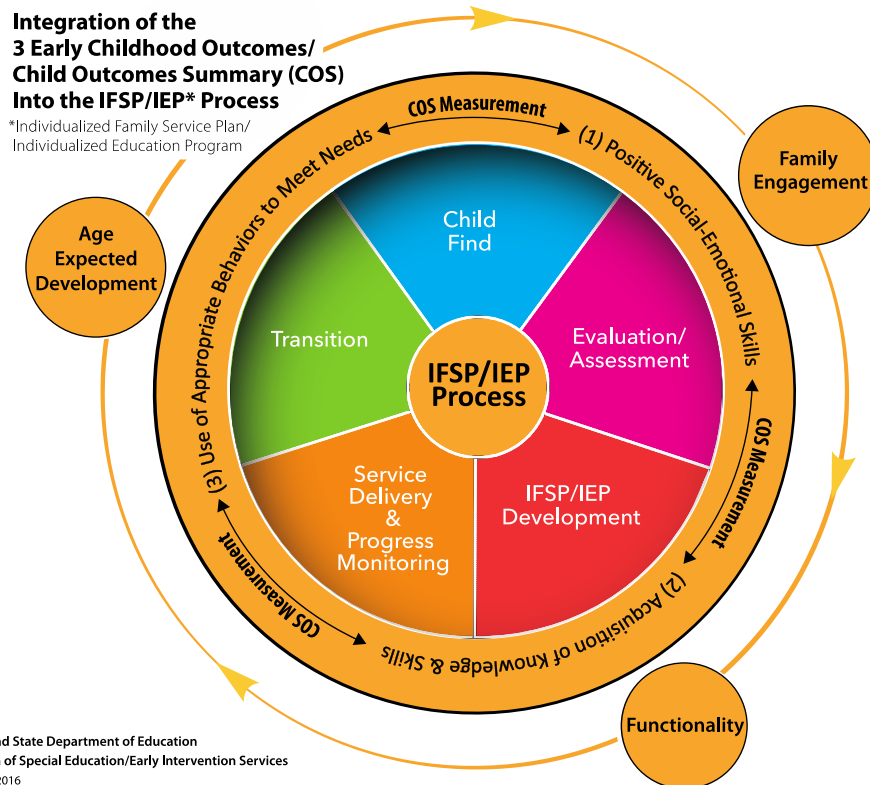> Foundational – Skills and behaviors occurring earlier in development that are conceptually mapped to later skills and behaviors. These serve as the foundation for later development.

Teams are highly encouraged to reference child development frameworks when determining the status of each child's abilities, such as Maryland's *Healthy Beginnings: Supporting Development and Learning from Birth through Three Years of Age* or *Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy Birth to Age 8.* Additional child development resources can be found on the ECTA Center website at:
http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/training_resources.asp#ChildDevelopment

It is also important for teams to understand the child and family's cultural expectations about child development. For example, some cultures value a parent spoon-feeding their child well after the age that many norm-referenced tools might suggest more independence. Team discussions should reflect careful and sensitive considerations about the child's developmental abilities within the cultural opportunities and expectations.

Also, the use of assistive devices or modifications allow the child to more fully interact, participate or be independent within activities. Teams should consider and allow the use of such supports when determining ratings.

Integration of the 3 Early Childhood Outcomes/ Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Into the IFSP/IEP* Process
Individualized Family Service Plan/ Individualized Education Program

COS Measurement

(1) Positive Social-Emotional Skills

COS Measurement

(2) Acquisition of Knowledge & Skills

COS Measurement

(3) Use of Appropriate Behaviors to Meet Needs

Child Find

Evaluation/ Assessment

IFSP/IEP Development

Service Delivery & Progress Monitoring

Transition

IFSP/IEP Process

Age Expected Development

Family Engagement

Functionality

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Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
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Integration in the IFSP/IEP Processes

Federal reporting requires the COS process to be completed when a child enters the program and again when they exit the program. In Maryland, the COS process is integrated into the IFSP and IEP processes, including annual reviews. The comparison of exit and entry COS ratings provides information about the child's progress and program effectiveness.

Entry Ratings: Entry COS ratings are determined following eligibility for Part C or Part B 619 services and part of the initial IFSP/IEP development. The COS rating discussion should happen after assessment activities have been completed and prior to determining individual child outcomes. The IFSP contains COS rating descriptors on the Strengths and Needs Summary page(s). COS information on the preschool IEP is included in the Preschool-Aged - Present Level of Educational and Functional Performance page(s). Documentation on the IFSP/IEP pages should be complete and descriptive, providing functional examples of what the child can/is doing related to each outcome area.

Annual Ratings: IFSP and IEP teams in Maryland are required to complete COS ratings at annual IFSP and IEP meetings as a means of tracking progress towards outcomes. The COS rating discussions occur as with the entry COS rating process, within the context of updating assessment information and individualized plans.

Interim Ratings: When a child/family move to another jurisdiction within Maryland and they have been in the program for at least 6 months, complete an interim COS rating, not an exit rating. If the child/family is moving out of state, and has been in the program for at least 6 months, an exit COS rating is required.

Exit & Transition Ratings: Exit ratings are completed as near to the child exiting the program as possible and are completed for all children who have been in the program for at

least 6 months. As with previous COS discussions, exit ratings require a team discussion with input from all. If a team is unable to include family input due to unexpected loss of contact or family situations and the team has had contact with the child/family within the last several months, the team must complete the rating without parental input and note this on the reporting form. IEP teams may add Exit COS Ratings to an IEP through an administrative amendment if convening the team is not realistic. In these situations, teams must still determine a means of sharing information and coming to consensus on ratings.

For children continuing to receive services through an IFSP after age 3, the exit COS at age three becomes the entry COS after age 3. An exit COS is required if the child continues to receive services after age 3 for at least three months. Children transitioning from Part C Infant and Toddler Programs to Part B Preschool Special Education programs will have an Exit rating for Part C services and an Entry rating for Part B services. The transition process provides an opportunity for IFSP teams to share valuable information with Part B teams that can contribute to COS discussions and ratings for both programs. Jurisdictions are encouraged to thoughtfully plan the timing of these discussions and consider the implications for families.

State Reporting Requirements
All states are required to report on five progress categories and the percent of infants and toddlers with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) or preschool children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who demonstrate improvement in each of the outcomes.
The five progress categories include:
   a. Infants/toddlers/preschoolers who did not improve functioning
   b. Infants/toddlers/preschoolers who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers
   c. Infants/toddlers/preschoolers who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it
   d. Infants/toddlers/preschoolers who improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers
   e. Infants/toddlers/preschoolers who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers
States must set targets on the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) indicators and annually measure State performance compared to the set targets. The summary statements for each of the three outcomes for Part C (Indicator 3) and 619 (Indicator 7) are the following:
   • **Summary Statement 1**: Of those children who entered the program below age expectations in each Outcome, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they exited the program.
   • **Summary Statement 2**: The percent of children who were functioning within age expectations in each Outcome by the time they exited the program.

The Maryland Online IFSP and IEP databases calculate the State Summary Statements used for federal reporting based on data input at the jurisdictional level. All children who have an entry and an exit rating are used in the calculations.

Additional Online Resources:

Maryland's Preschool Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Introduction Module
http://olms.cte.jhu.edu//olms2/538321

Maryland Learning Links Child Outcomes Summary Tutorial
http://marylandlearninglinks.org/11695

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTACenter) Online Professional Development Training Activities:
http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/training_activities.asp

Step-By-Step Video:
- **Edelman, L. (Producer). (2011). Child Outcomes Step-by-Step (Video). Published collaboratively by ResultsMatter, Colorado Department of Education; Desired Results*access* Project, Napa County Office of Education; and Early Childhood Outcomes Center.**
http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/videos.asp

Training Modules:
DaSy The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems, Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process Module: Collecting & Using Data to Improve Programs:
http://dasycenter.org/child-outcomes-summary-cos-process-module-collecting-using-data-to-improve-programs/

Online training module: *Understanding Young Children's Development: A Focus on Positive Social Emotional Skills***(content by the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities)** *(January 2011)*

Online training module: *Understanding Young Children's Development: A Focus on Children's Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills* **(content by the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities)** *(January 2012)*

Online training module: *Understanding Young Children's Development: A Focus on Taking Appropriate Action to Meet Needs* **(content by the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities)** *(January 2012)*

Age-Expected Resources:
http://ectacenter.org/eco/assets/pdfs/Age-expected_Resources.pdf

For more information, call 410-767-0249

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