Module 1
Setting the Context
Trainers’ Guide
**Trainers’ Guide**

The purpose of these modules is to support local lead agencies in providing professional development to their teams on developing effective, functional, routines-based IFSPs for young children with disabilities and their families. The modules were adapted from materials developed by the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center and customized to reflect Maryland’s strengths, needs, and practices. Please feel encouraged to further adapt them to meet the needs of your program and staff. You may wish to add additional information on some topics or skip some slides and activities, based on previous trainings you have conducted and the professional development needs of your staff.

**Module 1: Setting the Context**

This module explores the philosophical and research background that explains why functional, routines-based outcomes and services are considered best practice and lays the foundation for the subsequent sessions. It may also be used alone to explain the basic principles and practices of early intervention. This module will take approximately 1 hour to deliver.

**Materials**

- Handouts:
  - Mission and Key Principles of Early Intervention (Handout 1-1)
  - Seven Key Principles: Looks Like-Doesn’t Look Like (Handout 1-2)
  - DEC 2014 Recommended Practices (Handout 1-3)
  - Child and Family Outcome (Handout 1-4)
  - Developing Functional, Routines-Based IFSPs (Handout 1-5)
  - PowerPoint handouts for participants, if desired
- Computer and LCD projector
- Internet access for playing on-line videos and exploring web-based resources
- Evaluation forms for your own planning purposes (if desired)
Welcome to Developing Effective, Functional, Routines-Based IFSPs. My name is (name) and I am the (title) at (organization).

Note to Trainers:
Please tailor this introduction to meet the needs of your audience. You may want to add your names to the title slide. You may want to include the following in your introduction:

- Housekeeping items, such as the schedule, breaks, food and drink locations, location of the bathrooms
- Who’s in the room (i.e. disciplines represented, agencies represented, etc.)
- Orientation to the packet/handouts
The purpose of Developing Effective, Functional Routines-Based IFSPs is to support professionals (such as teachers, caregivers, providers, practitioners) and families to understand the practical connection among:

- the functional, authentic assessment of young children,
- the development of meaningful and functional IFSP outcomes, and
- the measurement of the child’s functioning in relation to the three broad early childhood outcomes and the family’s capacity in relation to the three family outcomes.

**Note to Trainers:**
If you are presenting this module only (Setting the Context), and not the other 2 modules, change the text of this slide to read:

Understand the connections among:

- How children learn
- The 3 Early Childhood Outcomes and 3 Family Outcomes
- The role of the family in supporting child learning through participation in everyday routines and activities.
Module Outline

Module 1: Setting the Context
Module 2: Functional Assessment in the IFSP Process
Module 3: Developing Effective, Functional, Routines-Based Outcomes and Strategies

Note to Trainers:
If you are presenting just this section (Setting the Context), this slide can be eliminated.

This training on Developing Effective, Functional Routines-Based IFSPs was created to share information and strategies for best practices for developing IFSPs that support children and families and lead to improved outcomes and school readiness. The training is organized in three modules:

Module 1 sets the context with regard to the purposes of early intervention and reviews how research and professional knowledge about how children learn impact the delivery of high quality services. We explore the importance of engagement and routines-based intervention to support children’s growth and development and progression towards the three broad early childhood outcomes.

Module 2 explores functional, authentic assessment, which includes the what, why, when, how and who of the functional assessment of young children. The module illustrates the connections between the broad early childhood outcomes and individual IFSP outcomes, and shows how the same information can be used for both the development of functional IFSP outcomes and the federally required child outcomes measurement.

Module 3 explores the process of developing functional routines-based IFSP outcomes, including the requirements of the law, the characteristics of high quality IFSP outcomes, and the process of developing strategies and services to support outcomes.
To understand WHY and HOW to develop IFSPs featuring functional outcomes based on family routines and activities, it is helpful to consider the overall mission and key principles guiding early intervention and the IFSP process.

These principles, combined with an understanding from research and experience of how young children learn point to the functional, routine-based approach as the recommended way to deliver services to maximize family capacity and children’s growth in each of the three critical early childhood outcome areas. Designing IFSPs based on this understanding will lead to the best results for children and their families.
This graphic represents Maryland’s comprehensive and integrated Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education system of services. It highlights the interconnected nature of assessment, program planning, and service delivery. These elements inform each other and combine to promote meaningful engagement in home, school, and community settings for young children and their families.
The ultimate goal of Early Intervention (EI) is to enable children to be active and successful participants in a variety of settings and to be ready for school. In order to accomplish this goal, professionals need to use the methods, models and interventions supported by research to help reinforce the confidence and competence of families to meet their child’s needs and to participate in the community in ways that are meaningful to them. The foundations for school success are laid by early experiences. Building family capacity to support children’s school readiness is an essential component of early intervention services.

**Note to Trainers:** The goals for children and families were developed by the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center in the process of developing the three outcomes that are measured to show the effect of IDEA services on the development of young children ages birth through 5 years, as well as the family outcomes. A year-long process involving stakeholders from all over the nation and from many perspectives – providers, state and local administrators, researchers, family members, TA providers and others – resulted in defining these overarching goals and the specific outcomes of early intervention.
The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has developed mission statements to guide professionals in the field of early intervention. In 2008, a workgroup was created to review the current literature and common wisdom and practices in early intervention and to come to consensus on the core mission, principles and practices of service delivery in early intervention. The result was the “Mission and Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments” document. An additional document titled “Seven Key Principles: Looks Like/Doesn’t Look Like” provides further description of the key principles within practice.

In 2014, The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children released a revised recommended practice guide. These consensus documents are helpful in understanding the connection between the “why” and the “how” of service provision. When used as a foundation for the IFSP process, these key concepts and recommended practices help providers collaborate with families to develop outcomes that are functional and meaningful in the child’s everyday life. These three documents are included in your handouts.

**Note to Trainers:**
Additional resources are available to delve further into the principles and practices. These include:

- **Topic 2 Part 1: Early Intervention: Mission and Key Principles**
  [https://unc-fpg-cdi.adobeconnect.com/_a992899727/wam1t2p1/](https://unc-fpg-cdi.adobeconnect.com/_a992899727/wam1t2p1/)
- A module around the mission and key principles was developed by an international workgroup formed out of the Early Intervention-Early Childhood Professional Development Community of Practice.

Additional resources are currently under development to delve further into the DEC Recommended Practices. These include Performance Checklists, Illustrations, Practice Guides for Practitioners and Families, and online modules. [http://ectacenter.org/decrp/](http://ectacenter.org/decrp/)
How do the goals and principles of early intervention translate into practice? What are the characteristics of children who are “active and successful participants” in a variety of settings and are ready for school? The three broad early childhood outcomes are global descriptions of the types of skills and behaviors that we want children to have as a result of the services that they and their families receive. Notice they are functional, they are the same for infants, toddlers and preschool children, and they are the kinds of outcomes any parent would want for their child.

States are required to report on the percentage of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who demonstrate improvement in each of these outcome areas. When a child’s individual IFSP outcomes are functional and meaningful to everyday life, they support the child’s development of positive social relationships, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and ability to use appropriate behaviors to get his or her needs met. As the graphic demonstrates, the outcomes inform all aspects of the IFSP process.

**Note to Trainers:** The linked video is an excellent overview of the outcomes and how they are demonstrated in a variety of functional contexts. If your participants have seen this video in a previous training or you are confident that they do not need additional background on the outcomes, you may wish to skip the video. The video may be viewed using closed captions.
Family Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryland Infants And Toddlers Program (Part C)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Percent of families participating in Part C who report that EI services have helped the family:
  - Know their rights
  - Effectively communicate their children’s needs
  - Help their children develop and learn

Family engagement is an essential component of services for young children. Early Intervention programs are evaluated on the extent to which they support family partnerships. Taking a functional approach to assessment, outcomes, and services will support these family outcomes. Functional, routines-based IFSPs that include family outcomes to address resource and information needs, and support families as they help their children develop, will increase families’ perception that EI services helped them understand and communicate their child’s needs, exercise their rights, and support their child’s development.

**Note to Trainers:**
The handout “Child and Family Outcomes Two-Pager” is included as a resource. This document provides a brief description of the child and family outcomes for quick reference.
To meet the essential goals of early intervention, and achieve the outcomes we want for children and families, services need to be aligned with research and experience about how young children learn best. Expert researchers in the field of early childhood have identified that children learn best when they are participating in naturally occurring learning opportunities that are a part of everyday routines and activities within the real life context of their families and other children they know. The DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (2014) support this research. Several of these recommended practices address the practitioner’s role in how children learn best. For example:

- Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child’s access to and participation in learning experiences.
- Practitioners embed instruction within and across routines, activities, and environments to provide contextually relevant learning opportunities.
- Practitioners use coaching or consultation strategies with primary caregivers or other adults to facilitate positive adult-child interactions and instruction intentionally designed to promote child learning and development.


Children must be interested and engaged in an activity to strengthen their competency and master new skills. Interest-based playing, exploring, and participation is called engagement. This diagram illustrates the cycle of learning.

Specifically:

- When children are interested in activities, they are more likely to be engaged in the activity.
- When children are engaged in everyday developmentally appropriate activities, they are able to practice existing capabilities and learn new skills.
- Studies show high interest activities result in high competence. People, objects, and events that interest children will be more likely to get their attention and encourage them to play, explore, and participate in interactions with people and objects.
- Expression of existing and emerging competence is influenced by how others (such as parents, siblings, peers, caregivers and practitioners) respond to children’s display of competence.
- As children come to understand the relationship between their behavior and its consequences, their sense of mastery is strengthened.
- Mastery in turn reinforces existing interests and promotes new interests, setting the cycle of influence in motion again.

For example, consider a child interested in cars – because he is interested in them he plays and engages with them by pushing and rolling. Through this engaged play with cars and the encouragement from others, he builds his competence and ability. He begins to build upon his play with cars by parking and driving them up and down ramps. His interest and engagement continues and he builds his competence of elaborated play, perhaps within each of the three outcome areas: social relationships, language and actions to meet needs.

**Note to Trainers:**

Ask participants to turn to a neighbor and share an example of how a child masters skills through interest and competence. Ask a couple to share out. Highlight the child outcome area(s) that their examples reflect.
Let’s break down the cycle of learning and discuss several steps of the process, including interests, engagement and mastery.

Overall, it is important to understand that children’s interests influence:
- Their participation in activities,
- Their level of engagement in activities,
- The amount of practice they are involved in to learn new skills,
- Their development of new competencies, and
- Their sense of mastery


Note to Trainers: Additional tools and resources to support interest-based learning include the Asset-Based Context Matrix Assessment Questions and the Early Preschool Interest-Based Everyday Activity Checklist.

Asset-Based Context Matrix: An Assessment Tool for Developing Contextually-Based Child Outcomes Linda L. Wilson, M.A., & Donald W. Mott, M.A. CASEtools, Vol. 2, Number 4

Promoting Young Children’s Participation in Interest-Based Everyday Learning Activities Jennifer Swanson, A.B.D., Melinda Raab, Ph.D., Nicole Roper, Ed.D., & Carl J. Dunst, Ph.D. CASEtools, Vol. 2, Number 5
The more a child is engaged, the more positive the outcomes will be in areas such as:

- Behavior,
- Developmental progress,
- Communication,
- Problem solving, and
- Interacting with others.

Engagement is vital for learning for all children. Engagement is what creates the opportunities for children to practice new skills and behaviors.

Children with disabilities spend more time non-engaged (e.g., wandering around, crying or waiting) than do their typically developing peers."

McWilliam, 2012

Engagement sets the stage for learning. McWilliam’s research indicates that children with disabilities tend to have lower engagement levels than those of children without disabilities. For this reason, engagement is particularly critical for children with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the amount of time a child is “engaged” tends to be less of a focus in intervention, since it’s not a developmental area that is usually evaluated. Talking with families about how their child engages in various routines and activities at home and in the community is an important part of choosing intervention targets and strategies. Activities in which the child is already highly engaged provide great opportunities for intervention, because the child is motivated and available for learning. Families and caregivers may also need strategies to increase the child’s overall level of engaged behaviors.

Overall, children learn new skills through incredible amounts of practice. Let’s take walking as an example. The amount of experience a toddler has with walking (not muscle strength) is the only significant predictor of improved proficiency with walking. When a toddler first learns to walk, they typically practice keeping balance in an upright stance while moving, for more than six accumulated hours per day and they average between 500 and 1500 walking steps per hour. By the end of a day, a child may have taken 9,000 walking steps and traveled the length of 29 football fields. All of this practice leads to mastery.

Children with disabilities may need MORE PRACTICE to master some skills:

- Lots of learning opportunities
- Varied and meaningful contexts
- Supports and encouragement
- Time

As important as practice is for typical children, it is even more important for children with disabilities, who may need additional practice to master skills. Because they may spend less time engaged, they may spend less time practicing needed skills and behaviors, which will impact their ability to gain and maintain those new skills and behaviors.

Gerald Mahoney’s research on young children with disabilities, identified that a child with a 50% delay needs twice as much practice as a typically developing child to master a new functional skill. A child with a disability needs to practice more to develop both the breadth (such as how long a child attends to an activity) and depth (applications across settings such as walking on rugs, yards, gravel) of his or her skill. Because it takes more practice, and therefore longer, for children with disabilities to master new skills, it is especially important to choose skills that will have a high impact on their development and engagement, and can be used in multiple contexts, as the targets for intervention.

Twice as much practice is not to be confused with twice as much therapy or services. Practice happens everywhere and families play an important role in providing practice opportunities.

When is a young child’s “learning time?”
All day, every day!
Routine activities like dressing, eating, bathing, and running errands provide plentiful opportunities to work on:

- Relationships
- Engagement
- Independence

Integrating intervention in these routines:
- Provides meaningful practice
- Supports family functioning
- Increases learning opportunities

Every part of a child’s day is learning time! Effective early intervention fosters family and caregiver ability to increase the quality of the child’s interactions, participation, and independence in their everyday routines and activities; examples include getting ready for the day, eating meals, doing household tasks, running errands, playing, reading stories, and taking a bath. The service provider helps the family and caregivers find ways to make these routines easier and to increase the child’s independence and mastery of skills in these meaningful everyday contexts.

Instead of the OT working with the child using button boards and zipping cubes, the service provider coaches the parent on helping the child learn to work fasteners when they are getting dressed for the day and getting ready to go outside and play. Putting skills in context means that practice is more likely to happen and is more meaningful for the child and the adult. It makes it more likely that the child will be able to use the skill and apply it to everyday contexts.

The Embedded Learning Opportunities tool on Maryland Learning Links provides multiple examples of ways to enhance relationships, engagement, and independence (the three broad early childhood outcomes) during routine activities for young children birth through age 5.

**Note to trainers**: Take a few minutes to show the participants the features of the site and how to use it. [http://marylandlearninglinks.org/376862](http://marylandlearninglinks.org/376862)
Effective intervention promotes the mastery of essential skills. One of the most successful ways to achieve this is to help the adults in the child’s life provide adaptations, support, and practice of the targeted skills during everyday activities. Intervention should strengthen the capacity of families and caregivers to use their routines and everyday activities as opportunities for their child to learn and practice.

The goal is to improve the child’s participation in family and community activities that are important to the family. Helping a family create opportunities for their child’s successful participation in routines and activities will lead to more practice and learning and, ultimately, mastery of skills. Services should also help families and caregivers feel confident about making adaptations to help their child become successful during challenging activities.
The bottom-line is this: families and caregivers (or consistent adults in a child’s life) have the greatest influence on children’s learning and development. It’s what happens between intervention visits that is most critical for learning! It is important to remember that all families and caregivers have strengths and capabilities that can be used to help the child develop and learn. To optimize learning opportunities for children, it is essential for providers and teachers to support the family’s and caregivers’ strengths and capabilities. The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children recognizes the central role of families in the intervention process and the responsibility of providers to support them in its recommended practices. DEC Recommended Practices (2014) includes a number of guidelines for working effectively with families, including:

- Practitioners and the family work together to create outcomes, develop individualized plans and implement practices that address the family’s priorities and concerns, and the child’s strengths and needs.
- Practitioners support family functioning, promote family confidence, and competence and strengthen family-child relationships by acting in ways that recognize and build on family strengths and capacities.
- Practitioners engage the family in opportunities that support and strengthen parenting knowledge, skills, and confidence in ways that are flexible, individualized and tailored to the family’s preferences.

Note to Trainers:
In what ways do our current practices fit with these principles of early learning and family support?

What might we need to change?

Note to Trainers:
Give the participants an opportunity to reflect on what has been discussed so far by (1) individually thinking about the above question silently for a few moments and writing down three of their current practices that fit with these principles and two needed changes; (2) discussing it with the person sitting next to them; and (3) choosing one practice that fits, and one needed change, to share with the group.

Based on the comments and questions up to this point in the presentation and the responses to the think-pair-share, you may want to ask additional questions for whole group discussion.

Potential questions for reflection:
• “How does this information about supporting families resonate with you?”
• “What are you already doing to support families?”
• “In what ways, if any, might you need to change your own practice?”
• “What additional supports and resources might you need?”
• “Do you have any questions?”
As we reflect on principles of early learning and support to develop functional IFSP outcomes, it is necessary to understand the child’s and family’s current routines, interests and desired activities. Functional outcomes enhance the quality of the child’s engagement in activities that are important to the family. Embedding learning opportunities into ongoing and meaningful activities and daily routines will naturally lead to increased engagement, more opportunities for practice in meaningful contexts and family empowerment around their child’s learning, which will lead to greater child growth and achievement of the outcomes.

For some children practicing meaningful skills in real-life activities may require significant adult and low or high tech supports.
Let’s look at some examples. These are IFSP outcomes that are based on the family’s priorities for improving their child’s participation and functioning in the daily activities of their lives. In addition to addressing family concerns and goals, these outcomes promote achievement of the broad early childhood outcomes and thus prepare the child for school and life.

Which of the three early childhood outcomes do these individual IFSP outcomes support?

- William will greet friends at story time at the library by waving or saying “hi.” *(Outcome 1, positive social relationships)*
- Marcus will play in the backyard getting around on his own using his walker. *(Outcome 3, using appropriate behavior to get needs met)*
- Kamika will sleep through the night. *(Outcome 3, but could have impact on Outcomes 1 and 2 as well)*
The three broad early childhood outcomes intentionally cross domains to help us look at children’s development more functionally. For example, because communication is essential to virtually all activities for children of all ages, the context and intent of the communication determines which of the three broad outcomes are addressed. These three IFSP outcomes illustrate this.

In the first example, the communication skills are used in the context of a play interaction with his brother.

The second shows how communication skills are demonstrated to show an understanding of names of pictured objects and interacting with books.

And the third is an example of how Nathan uses communication to get his wants/needs met during meals.
Can you think of any functional IFSP outcomes that wouldn’t support a child’s growth and development in one or more of the three broad early childhood outcome areas?

**Note to Trainers:**
Be prepared to make connections between participants’ answers to the three outcomes. Try to anticipate answers that you may hear from the group. For example, “participation in classroom routines” may be a suggested outcome. If written functionally, this outcome may help a child develop skills in getting his/her needs met (i.e. transitioning throughout the day without having a tantrum), be better able to participate in learning centers (acquisition and use of knowledge and skills) or play in a center with peers (positive social relationships).

The answers to the question above should support that functional IFSP outcomes support children’s development in the three outcome areas. If you hear examples that do not, reiterate that the connection should be present and any outcome that does not support the child’s growth and development in one of the three outcome areas should be examined for functionality.
This graphic provides a framework for developing functional, routines-based IFSPs. Maryland’s IFSP Quality Workgroup contributed to the development of this illustration, which describes the process for developing an effective, functional, routines-based IFSP.

The process begins by gathering authentic functional information about the child’s development and the family’s needs, concerns, and priorities. This process is detailed in Module 2 of this training.

Once this information has been gathered, it can be translated into outcomes that improve the quality of the child’s interactions, engagement, and independence in daily routines and activities and strategies and services that support parents and caregivers to help children meet those outcomes.

Module 3 of the training details the process of developing outcomes and the services to support their achievement.

**Note to Trainers:**
A more in-depth handout “Developing Effective, Functional, Routines-Based IFSPs” is included as a resource.
Note to Trainers:
Wrap-up final activity and ask participants if they have any questions or comments. Discuss plans for future training (such as the other modules) or other ways to apply this information. Thank participants for coming!
This product was adapted by the MCIE and the MSDIE from materials created by the ECTA Center and WRRC in response to the need expressed from state and local providers to have specific information and resources about developing IFSP outcomes. The full training package, including a full reference list, is available online:

http://www.ectacenter.org/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals.asp

**Note to Trainers:**

Add the contact information for the presenters on this slide. Consider including name, email address and/or phone number.