Technical Assistance Bulletin

Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services | Bulletin # 16-02

☐ Birth – Age 4	☒ Birth – K	☐ Age 3 – K	☐ Birth – 21	☐ Age 3 – 21

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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 Outcomes 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 rating provides a common mechanism for describing children's functioning compared to age expectations in each of the three outcome areas.
The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process is a synthesis of numerous assessment activities. It is not an actual assessment in and of itself. 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.

OVERARCHING TENANTS OF THE COS PROCESS

Engaging Families

Family input and involvement throughout the IFSP/IEP/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.

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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 IFSP outcomes and IEP goals.

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. 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.

COS PROCESS FIDELITY
In 2016, the ENHANCE Research Project, conducted four studies to examine the quality of the data being collected through the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process in an effort to improve the quality of child outcomes data. Key findings from the project determined that COS ratings are valid for program improvement and accountability *when the process is implemented with fidelity as intended* (Center for Education and Human Services at SRI International, March 2016). In Maryland, the COS process is integrated throughout the IFSP and IEP processes. To support this process, the MSDE Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services has identified four Core Components of the Child Outcomes Summary Process that must be implemented to ensure statewide consistency and fidelity of practices related to child outcomes data. The **Core Components** include:

1. **Authentic Assessment**
   A **functional child and family assessment,** gathered through interviews with adults who know the child, observations across settings, and other methods, is essential and required, in addition to the evaluation for eligibility. All assessment information should inform the team regarding the child's functional interaction with others, learning and participation in everyday activities, and levels of increased independence.

   Recommended practice in early childhood assessment uses 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 personal 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 add information that the team needs to have when considering a child's participation across settings and activities. The COS process allows teams to synthesize all of this varied information and produce data that can be summarized in a common metric across programs and states.

2. **Age-Anchoring**
   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;

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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.

The use of **age-anchoring tools** for every rating discussion is critical to look at the child's functional social interactions, learning and participation, and independence compared to the functioning of same-age peers. Age-anchoring requires teams to consider developmental progressions when making determinations about how close or how far a child is functioning relative to age expectations for each of the three outcomes. Most current evaluation tools focus on isolated skill-based tasks and do not identify functional skills and behaviors specific to the three outcome areas. Therefore, it is necessary to use age-anchoring tools that have been developed and are organized by the three child outcomes or that at least identify more functional skills and behaviors such as in curriculum-based or criterion-referenced tools.

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: https://ectacenter.org/

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.

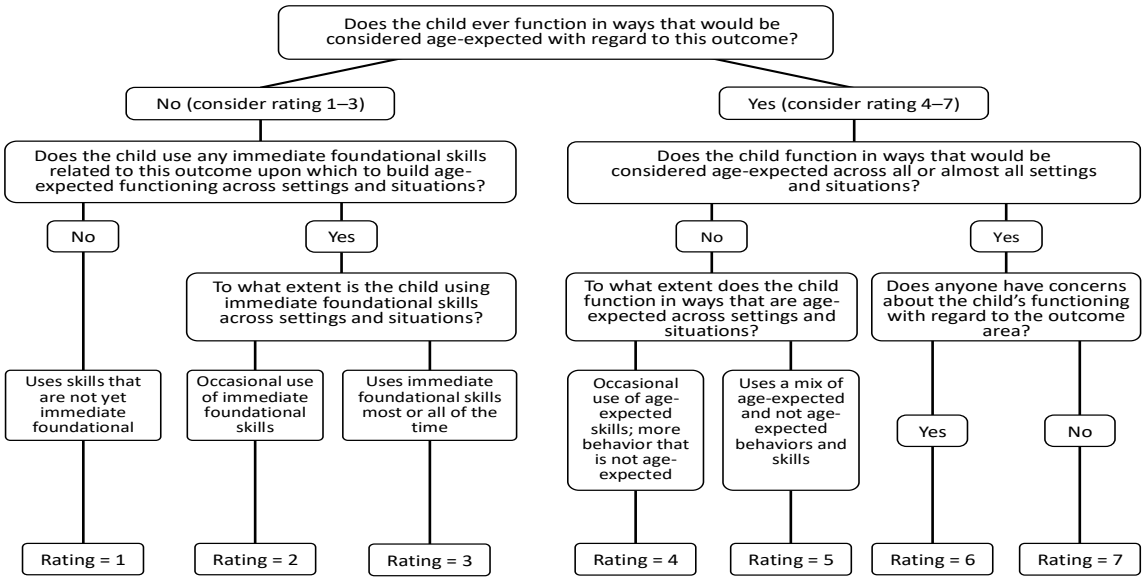
Also, the use of assistive devices or modifications allow the child to more fully interact, participate or be independent within activities. Teams should consider and allow the use of such supports when determining ratings.

3. **COS Rating Prep Tool (Documentation)**
   Use of the **COS Rating Prep Tool** provides consistent documentation of age-expected (AE), immediate foundational (IF), and foundational (F) skills and behaviors that gives teams qualitative and quantitative data to lead to accurate ratings. Teams may also highlight or color-code the written assessment summary to depict the skills and behaviors in each outcome area as AE, IF, or F.

4. **Decision Tree**
   After assessment information has been summarized and when the functional skills and behaviors most pertinent to the child's participation have been identified as AE, IF, F, use of the **Decision Tree** provides teams with a guide to take the quantifiable child assessment information to consistently and systematically determine the specific COS rating (1-7). The Decision Tree is used for every COS rating discussion to ensure teams use a consistent methodology for reaching consensus of the outcome rating and fidelity to the COS process.

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Decision Tree for Summary Rating Discussions



The *Maryland Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process Fidelity Checklist* can be used by programs and providers to think about the implementation of each of the Core Components of the COS process in their local jurisdiction and to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth that contribute to increased fidelity. The checklist may be used to review evidence in written form in an IFSP/IEP or to observe some or all of the components (authentic assessment, age-anchoring, COS Rating Prep Tool/documentation, and the Decision Tree discussion) of a COS process. The checklist can be found on the Maryland Birth to Kindergarten Child Outcomes Gateway website:

http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/data/ck/sites/4055/files/COS%20Process%20Fidelity%20checklist.pdf

Integration in the IFSP/IEP Processes

In Maryland, Child Outcomes are integrated throughout the IFSP and IEP processes, from referral to transition, as the framework for all discussions related to child development. Examples of the integration at each phase include:

- Referral/Child Find – As program personnel are learning from families about their concerns and reason for referral, questioning includes how the concern (e.g. child not talking) impacts how the child is relating/interacting with others, learning and participating in activities, and how independent they are. As appropriate, personnel may also ask families how they think what their child is doing compares to other children they know at the same age. This provides insight to the parents' knowledge and expectations about development as well as a potential opportunity to share additional information about typical child development.
- Evaluation/Assessment – Authentic assessment activities intentionally gather functional information in the three outcome areas and are then summarized and organized accordingly. Gathering the right types and amount of information, across settings and relationships, throughout assessment is key to the COS process.
- IFSP/IEP Development – Authentic assessment is a required component of the IFSP/IEP process, which is conducted and organized by the three child outcomes. The COS rating discussion occurs during initial and annual IFSP/IEP meetings. The process, document, and online tool support this discussion occurring after summarizing the child's present levels of development and academic functioning. IFSP outcomes and IEP goals can be related to one or more of the outcome areas.
- Service Delivery/Progress Monitoring – The ongoing collection of functional information within the context of the three outcome areas is at the heart of service delivery. It serves to inform, and modify as necessary, all intervention and specially designed instruction.
- Transition – As children transition from early intervention to preschool special education programs, teams frame conversations and organize shared information in the three outcome areas. Local practices may include conversation to jointly identify early intervention exit COS ratings and preschool entry COS ratings.

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STATE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Federal reporting requires the COS ratings to be completed when a child enters the program and again when they exit the program. The comparison of exit and entry COS ratings provides information about the child's progress and program effectiveness. Maryland also requires a COS rating annually as a means of monitoring progress.

Entry Ratings: Entry COS ratings are determined following eligibility for Part C or Part B 619 services and are 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/goals. Assessment information organized within the three outcome areas is documented in *IFSP Section C – Assessment Summary: Present Levels of Functional Development*. The online IFSP tool also includes the Decision Tree to facilitate the discussion to identify the appropriate COS rating descriptor statement. COS information on the preschool IEP is included in the Preschool-Aged - Present Level of Academic Achievement 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/programs.

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 Extended 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.

FEDERAL 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

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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, and have received at least six months of services on an IFSP or IEP, are used in the calculations.

PERSONNEL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The MSDE DEI/SES is committed to providing effective services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. This requires a competent workforce fully grounded in early intervention and preschool special education key principles and recommended practices. The *Maryland Early Childhood Intervention and Education System Personnel Standards Guide* outlines training requirements and recommendations for all early intervention and preschool special education personnel which includes COS Process Training and Support. The Personnel Standards provide a consistent plan for initial and ongoing training and support to ensure all providers understand the three early childhood outcomes and implement the COS Rating Process with fidelity.

Initial Training

The ENHANCE Research Project recommends 12 hours of training for personnel new to the COS process. Maryland Personnel Standards outline the following components of a comprehensive training and follow-up coaching protocol to ensure consistent processes and procedures across the state:

1. New employees complete ECTACenter/DaSy online modules (within 2 weeks of hire) at: http://dasyonline.org/DaSyCOS2015 (~2 hours)
2. New employees observe at least 2 real-time COS rating processes with co-workers.
3. On-site face-to-face training conducted (individually or in groups) (within 60 days of hire) using the MD Birth-K COS Trainer Support site. Training must be in person and takes ~10 hours to complete.
4. Personnel need to complete and pass the MD COS Competency Check, including the knowledge assessment questions. If they do not pass, the supervisor/training team need to develop a follow-up training plan to address areas still needing development.
5. Supervisors/Training team review at least the first three records of new personnel completing the COS process to monitor documentation of authentic assessment, age-anchoring practices, and evidence and justification of COS rating. Feedback and reflection are shared with the new employee.

Ongoing Fidelity and Refresher Training

Annually, programs utilize the *COS Team Collaboration (COS-TC) Quality Practices* for continued reflection and improvement of teaming practices. The COS-TC is organized in five topic areas:

- Planning COS
- Explaining COS
- Discuss Child Functioning
- Identifying Ratings
- Interactive Principles

The COS-TC tools include:

- Checklists for Quality Practices
- Descriptions and Examples
- Video Clip Activities

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The *COS-TC Quality Practices and Trainer's Guide*, as well as online modules, can be accessed on the ECTA Center website: http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/costeam.asp

Additional Case Studies and Training Resources may be used to supplement the initial face-to-face training. Examples of when/how to use them include:

- During 1:1 coaching or supervision sessions for additional or clarifying information
- As part of team professional development and/or group discussions

Additional Online Resources:
Maryland's Birth to Kindergarten Child Outcomes Gateway
http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/mdcos-gateway

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:

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

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