**From ECTA**

**Understanding the Family’s Cultural Context Question**:

Should the family’s culture be taken into consideration when determining COS ratings?

Answer: Yes, a family’s culture affects what is considered age-expected development.

Certainly, within early intervention and within early childhood special education, we often work with families who come from cultures other than our own. Interventionists need to understand how cultural practices influence the age at which children develop certain skills. For example, families in some cultures don’t expect the same level of independence in feeding, and parents may continue to assist their children with feeding into the preschool years. In working with these families, culturally competent interventionists would not see this as a problem because it has no long-term impact on development.

For identifying appropriate targets for interventions as well as for the Child Outcomes Summary process, the team needs to understand age expectations within the context of the family’s culture.

When teams see skills and behaviors that are below mainstream U.S. age expectations but are the result of cultural practices, like the example of independence, then they need to adjust age expectations for those skills for that child.

Working effectively with families from other cultures can be challenging for providers. These challenges are also challenges for the Child Outcomes Summary rating process. The team needs to understand what is considered age-appropriate in that child’s culture and base their sense of what should be considered age-expected functioning for that child on that understanding.