

# Overview of Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process

## Introduction

An outcome is a benefit experienced as a result of services and supports provided in Early Childhood. For the Early Childhood Special Education Program (ECSE), benefit means knowing children are making progress in their development and learning. Florida's Child Outcomes Measurement System (FCOMS) is the current accountability system for early intervention and special education services and is an outgrowth of a broader initiative on the part of the US government to make agencies more accountable for results achieved through the expenditure of federal monies.

To determine if children are making progress, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires all state ECSE programs to report data on the following three child outcomes:

1. Children have positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
2. Children acquire and use knowledge and skills (including early language/ communication and early literacy);  
and
3. Children use appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Progress is measured by growth and the extent to which each child compares to same aged peers-in all three child outcome areas.

A Child Outcomes Step by Step video<sup>1</sup> describes these three outcomes. It explains functioning necessary for each child to be an active and successful participant at home, in the community, and in other places like a child-care program or preschool. To access the video, please visit <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/videos.asp>.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding a child's functioning and progress in the three Child Outcomes areas allows teams to use this information for effective service and intervention planning and delivery.

## Child Outcomes Summary Process

The COS process is a systematic method for a team of individuals who are familiar with a child, including parents, to summarize *multiple sources* of information about their functioning in each of the three outcome areas. Information could include parent report, service provider and teacher observations, and results from formal and informal assessments. The COS form is not an assessment instrument – it is a way to summarize information and is needed because there are no assessment instruments that directly measure the three child outcomes.

There are four key features of a quality Child Outcomes Summary process.

- The process produces a description of the child's functioning at a point in time by synthesizing multiple sources of information.
- It is a team process, involving professionals and family members contributing to decision- making.
- The process involves team members using the information gathered about a child to rate their functioning in each of the three outcome areas on a 7-point scale. The 7-point rating scale is used to compare the child's skills and behaviors with those expected for their age.
- The Child Outcomes Summary process is completed at two points in time, at a minimum-- when the child enters the program and when the child exits the program.

<sup>1</sup>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. Retrieved from <https://draccess.org/videolibrary>

## ***Essential Knowledge for Completing the COS Process***

All team members bring different information and perspectives to the Child Outcomes Summary process. As a group, the team members completing the process must have the following knowledge and expertise:

- Understanding of the content of the three child outcomes
- Understanding of age-expected child development and variations within cultural contexts
- Knowledge of the child's functioning across settings and situations
- Understanding of how to use the 7-point rating scale

## ***Ratings***

### **Point Rating Scale**

The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process is a team process for summarizing information on a child's functioning in each of the three child outcome areas using a 7-point scale. The [COS Ratings Definitions](#) defines the criteria for each of the seven points on the rating scale. [The Decision Tree](#) is a visual reference tool that is available to help teams understand and apply the 7-point scale.

### **Entry and Exit Ratings**

An entry rating is completed for every child who is eligible for ECSE. All children who receive an entry COS rating must receive an exit rating if they have received six months of service.

## ***Content of Florida Child Outcomes Measurements System (FCOMS)***

**Children Have Positive Social Relationships:** This outcome means having good relationships with adults and playing well with other children. It also includes being able to separate from an adult when dropped off at school, expressing emotions and feelings appropriately, following rules and expectations in different settings, and sharing and taking turns.

**Children Acquire and Use Knowledge and Skills:** This outcome involves many skills that provide the foundation for later success in school such as thinking, reasoning, remembering, problem solving, understanding symbols, and expanding vocabulary. This outcome includes understanding the concepts of measurement, making comparisons of size, quantity, weight, and spatial relationships. The outcome also includes expressive and receptive language and other communication skills, as well as emergent literacy and mathematics.

**Children Take Appropriate Action to Meet Their Needs:** Over the early childhood years, children become increasingly independent. This outcome includes taking care of basic needs like hand washing, brushing teeth, toileting, choosing proper utensils for feeding, and understanding concepts of danger and safety. It also includes using motor and communication skills to get their wants and needs met or to seek help.

Expand each of the outcomes [here](#) for additional information.

## ***Functional Outcomes***

A key characteristic of the three child outcomes is that they are functional. Functional outcomes refer to skills and behaviors that are meaningful to children in the context of everyday living. They also reflect how the child functions throughout the day in the classroom and wherever the child spends time. This emphasis on functioning aligns with recommended practices for identifying individualized outcomes.

The outcomes are interrelated across developmental domains to capture how children integrate the skills and behaviors needed to participate in everyday activities. The team must be familiar with child development and understand the outcomes well enough to reach consensus on a rating of the child's functioning.

Discussion Prompts for Child Outcomes can be used to expand the discussion of child outcomes, ensure that COS team members are considering all aspects of development and engage the family in the discussion of outcomes.

## **Age-expected Functioning**

The COS process requires an understanding of the timing and sequences of development that enable children to have positive social relationships, acquire knowledge and skills, and take action to meet their needs. Child development typically occurs in specific sequences and time frames. For example, a sequence of play development is shown when children typically play next to their peers before they meaningfully interact with them. An example of a time frame of play development is shown when a four-year old prefers to play with other children and begins to develop cooperative play.

The rating process requires that team members understand both the sequence in which children acquire skills and the age range in which they are acquired. Team members will be asked to provide input about the child's functioning compared with age and developmental expectations. Additionally, the team will consider how a family's culture may impact what is considered age expected.

## **Age Anchoring**

Age anchoring examines a child's functional abilities, skills, and behaviors to determine how close the child's skills are to age-expected functioning. It is important to focus on functional abilities rather than isolated (or discrete) skills that a child may have demonstrated only during assessment. Each of the 7 points on the COS rating scale is defined by specific criteria which are based on three functional levels: age-expected, immediate foundational, and foundational.

**Age-expected Skills** - The skills and behaviors that are seen in children of a particular chronological age. For example, if a child is 3 years old, age-expected skills are what a 3-year old would be expected to do, and that child would be described as showing age-expected skills.

**Immediate Foundational Skills** - The skills and behaviors that come just before age-expected skills in the sequence of development. Consider the example of social play. The skills needed just before cooperative play are playing near a peer with the same materials without disturbing the peer. This would be described as showing immediate foundational skills for playing cooperatively.

**Foundational skills** – These occur much earlier in the developmental progression of skills. They are called foundational because they form the foundation for later skill development. When considering the example of play development, consider the skills needed before playing near a peer. Examples include showing awareness of the presence of other children and imitating their play. This would be described as showing foundational skills of play development.

Part of every COS discussion should include an assessment of the child's functioning relative to age expectations. If a child's functioning is not age-expected, the team needs to determine the extent to which immediate foundational and foundational skills are present.

An age-anchoring tool developed by TATS is available from TATS Regional Facilitator, as well as linked in the TATS COS Manual. The resource will assist COS teams in determining the extent each child is demonstrating age-expected skills in each of the three child outcome areas.

It is important for teams to have a comprehensive understanding of age-anchoring. It is highly recommended that COS teams review and become familiar with the [Age Anchoring Guidance for Determining Child Outcomes Summary \(COS\) Ratings](#) developed by ECTA.

## **Functioning across Settings and Situations**

In order to assign an accurate COS rating at entry, the team needs to have a complete picture of the child's skills and behaviors across multiple settings. In addition to information gathered during assessment, it is critical to get a picture of the child in the classroom and other places where the child spends time and interacts with family and others. This information can be gathered from classroom teachers, service providers, and parent input.

## ***Team-based Process***

Part of an effective COS process is effective teaming, which includes engaging all members of the team when discussing a child's current level of functioning compared to same-age peers. The COS team needs a complete picture of the child's functioning to decide on outcomes ratings. The team members contribute different information and by sharing what they know about the child, each member of the team helps establish a complete picture of the child's functioning. This helps to ensure that the COS process and the outcomes ratings accurately reflect what the child can do.

Identifying a COS rating is a consensus process. Determining the indicator ratings requires teams to summarize multiple sources of information about a child's functioning across different settings. This is to enable the team to identify an overall sense of the child's functioning at a given point in time in three outcome areas.

With knowledge and practice, teams will become comfortable with the COS process. In order to ensure a reliable rating, consider these points:

- Ensure that your rating is supported by comprehensive information and data.
- Take time to describe the evidence that is being used to support the rating.
- Include multiple sources of evidence such as progress monitoring, therapy reports, family input, formal and informal assessments, and anecdotal information.
- Discuss and describe rating criteria.

The Child Outcomes Summary Process Team Collaboration [Quality Practices and Descriptions](#) checklist provides a mechanism for those who implement, supervise, or train on the COS process to identify, observe, and assess recommended team collaboration. It includes a description of each of the quality practices and two examples of ways to introduce the different COS discussion points with team members.

## ***Family Engagement***

It is very important to provide families with background information about the COS process so that they can fully participate in discussions that will be held to arrive at the COS rating. This will assist families to be actively engaged as team participants. A COS team member should explain the three outcome areas, the purpose of the COS process, the rating scale, and the Decision Tree (referenced on page 5). It is important families understand how valuable their input is in this process.

Resources to support family engagement in the COS process are: [Including Families in the Rating Discussion](#) from Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center/Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data System (ECTA/DaSy) and [Family Guide Participating in the Child Outcomes Measurement Process](#) (National Parent Technical Assistance Center at Parent Training and Information (PACER) Center in collaboration with ECTA).

The following TATS documents are available to support family engagement:

- [The Family's Role in Florida's Child Outcomes Summary \(COS\) Process \(TATS\)](#)
- [Family Questionnaire \(TATS and Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources System - FDLRS\)](#)

## ***Annual/Periodic Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meetings***

Teams are encouraged to implement the COS process in conjunction with IEP reviews and progress monitoring. When families have had more than one opportunity to participate in the process, they are likely to feel more supported in being active participants. COS ratings completed at periodic and/or annual IEP meetings will not be used for federal reporting purposes.

## Implementation of the COS Child Outcomes Summary Process (COS)

Effective July 1, 2021, Florida's Early Childhood Special Education program will use the COS process, rather than a single standardized instrument (i.e., the Battelle Developmental Inventory -2nd Edition Normative Update - BDI-2NU) for child outcomes entry data. Full implementation of the COS will be a three-year process, as the same method of measurement must be used for exit as was used for entry. The table below identifies the required methods for entry and exit outcomes data:

Entry	Exit
Entry outcomes data measured by administering the BDI-2 ( <i>prior to July 1, 2021</i> )	The BDI-2 must be administered for exit outcomes data
Entry outcomes data identified using the COS ( <i>after July 1, 2021</i> )	The COS must be used for exit outcomes data

## Data Collection, Documentation, and Submission

### Data Collection

#### Entry Rating

All children eligible for ECSE must receive an entry COS rating. The timelines for entry are included in the COS Manual. Please note – it is important that the team identifying the entry and exit ratings have been directly working with the child and have a thorough understanding of the child's functioning.

#### Exit Rating

All children who receive an entry COS rating and who also have received at least six months of service must receive an exit rating. The exit rating must be obtained during the specified exit window (beginning of March – May 31). A formal assessment is not required. The team should identify a rating based on the child's current functioning evidenced by progress monitoring, recent assessments, and input from service providers, teachers, and family. The sources that are used should be indicated on the COS rating form. Teams are encouraged to determine the exit rating prior to reviewing the entry rating to prevent any bias.

#### Progress Question:

At the time of the exit rating, the team must also answer the question on whether the child has shown any new skills or behaviors (yes/no) since the entry rating for each of the outcomes.

#### Documenting the Ratings

Data from the COS process will be used to address the OSEP Reporting Requirements for Indicator 7. The Local Education Agency (LEA) must provide valid and reliable data for the measurement of State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator 7. Documentation is important because it provides evidence that the COS process was implemented with fidelity.

#### Data Reporting/Submission

For consistency, all LEA's are required to collect and report data using the detailed process described in the COS Manual.

## More Information

To learn more about the COS process it is recommended to access the independent, online modules provided by FL DOE Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) on the [BEES Professional Development Alternatives Portal](#).

<b>Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)</b> 3280 Progress Drive FAAST Center, Suite 250 Orlando, FL 32826	<b>Tel: 407-823-3058</b> <b>Fax: 407-823-1360</b> <b>Email: <a href="mailto:tats@ucf.edu">tats@ucf.edu</a></b> <b>Website: <a href="http://www.tats.ucf.edu">http://www.tats.ucf.edu</a></b>
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