

Frequently Asked Questions Related to the Florida Child Outcomes Measurement System (FCOMS)

Child Outcomes Summary Process

What is the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process?

The COS is a process developed by the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center that provides a common metric for describing children's functioning compared to age expectations in each of the three outcome areas. The COS provides a rubric for a team to summarize the child's level of functioning using information from many sources including assessment tools and parent and provider reports.

Is the COS an assessment tool?

No. The COS process is a technique for consolidating information from multiple sources, including one or more assessment tools, into a single rating. It itself is not an assessment tool.

The COS process requires looking at multiple sources of information (including that from assessment tools) about a child's functioning and then making an informed decision (in a team setting) based on descriptions of how the child's functioning compares to that for age expectations. The process generates a single rating in each of the three outcome areas, even when knowledge about children's functioning comes from multiple different sources.

What does a team need to know to complete the COS process?

To determine a COS rating, one or more members of the team must be able to describe/discuss each of the following: the child's functioning across settings and situations, age-expectations for children's development and functioning in the general population, appropriate age expectations related to the child's culture, the content of the three child outcomes, and the guidelines for completing the Child Outcomes Summary Form.

What sources of information can be used to determine a child's level of functioning in each of the three outcomes?

Multiple sources of information can and should be used. The determination of a child's functioning relative to age expectations can be based on observations in the following situations: the child's home, early-care, education settings, or in other settings where that child usually spends time. Informational tools include criterion-based, curriculum-based, and norm-referenced instruments. Sources of information also include the following: family members, child-care providers, and caregivers; informed clinical opinion, observation and progress monitoring data, and work samples.

How are teams conducting COS rating meetings when they cannot meet in person?

When it is not possible to conduct a COS rating meeting in person, it is allowable for teams to conduct meetings virtually. It is important to remember that the COS process does not change when completed virtually. It is important to document the participation of all team members, including family. Follow your district guidelines for virtual meetings.

What to do if everyone has a different view of the child's functioning?

Because team members see the child in different settings and situations, people may see differences in the child's functioning across settings. Differing views should be acknowledged and considered when assigning a rating. Helping team members describe specific information about the child's functioning in different contexts and sharing how these are related to the kind of functioning expected for a child that age will usually generate enough discussion to reach consensus. Combining these approaches with the decision tree helps teams reach consensus on a rating. The following resources are helpful in guiding discussions related to ratings:

- [COS Discussion Prompts](#)
- [COS Ratings Decision Tree](#)
- [Breadth of the Three Child Outcomes](#)

Are family members supposed to be a part of the COS rating?

The information that parents or family members provide about the child's functioning at home and in their care is essential to developing a complete picture of the child's functioning and must be considered to select the most accurate description of the child's functioning compared to age expectations. Teams have different ways of obtaining that information, including having the family present for the discussion, as well as offering alternate methods of participation (i.e., phone conferences or written input).

How can a child who is eligible for services have age-expected functioning with a rating of "6" or "7" at entry?

Child Outcomes Summary (COS) ratings are independent of eligibility determinations. There are different situations where children receiving services may be functioning at age-expected levels. Children receiving services may exhibit age-expected functioning in one outcome and have challenges in another outcome area. Some children with diagnosed conditions, such as a visual impairment, may be functioning at age-expected levels in all outcomes and the services and supports are intended to prevent the child's condition from negatively impacting functioning.

If the COS rating stays the same from one time to the next or even goes down, can the team still say that progress has been made (that is, answer "yes" to the progress question)?

Yes. The question on progress refers to the child's functioning relative to his or her functioning at the last rating. If the child has acquired new skills in the outcome area, the child has made progress. The answer to the question about progress should not be based on changes in the ratings, but on whether the child has used any new skills. For example, a child who receives a rating of "4" at entry and "4" at exit will show higher-level functioning at exit (a "yes" on the progress question) because to maintain a rating of "4" over time the child's functioning must improve relative to what that child could do at the previous rating. A child who receives a rating of "4" at entry and "3" at exit could also receive a "yes" on the progress question if he or she has acquired new skills in the outcome area, but the rate of development is slower than for peers of the same age.

Child Population Included

Who are the children included in the Florida Child Outcomes Measurement System?

Preschool Population

Entry and exit assessment data must be collected for all preschool children who have been evaluated, determined eligible for special education, enroll in school, and have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This includes children referred to Pre-Kindergarten Exceptional Student Education (Pre-K ESE) from Child Find and may include children who have not entered through the Early Steps system, such as children in Head Start or Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten. Detailed information is available in the [Flowchart and Decision Rules for Entry and Exit](#).

Are children who have an IEP and attend a charter school included in the child outcomes measurement system?

Yes. All children who have an IEP are included in the child outcomes measurement system and should receive an entry and exit COS ratings.

Are preschool-age children who attend private preschool included in the child outcomes measurement system?

Children who attend a private preschool and who have an IEP are included in the child outcomes measurement system and should be assessed at entry and exit. Children who have a services plan (SP) are not included in the child outcomes measurement system.

If a child determined eligible for prekindergarten services has not been served in Early Steps, must the child be included in the preschool measurement system?

Yes, children referred to Pre-K ESE from Child Find or who entered from programs such as Head Start or VPK might not have been in the Early Steps program.

Transition: Part C to Part B

What is the COS rating window for children who transition from Part C to Pre-K ESE prior to their third birthday?

Entry ratings are completed 45 days or less before 3rd birthday. If not done at the time of the eligibility or initial IEP meetings, entry ratings are completed by 30 school days after the initial IEP.

How can a district use the ratings from Early Steps?

School districts may choose to use the exit evidence completed by a child's Part C Early Steps to inform the entry ratings for Part B Early Childhood Special Education services. The school district team will review the Part C COS evidence, age-anchor using the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards, 2017 (FELDS) and complete the *Indicator 7: Child Outcomes Summary* form.

Must parent consent be obtained by the Local Early Steps (LES) to provide the COS information to the school district?

Yes. Any information that is exchanged between LESs and school districts (other than Notification) requires written parental consent.

May LES release data from assessments administered by a private provider?

The LESs that have obtained prior written parental consent may release the results of assessments administered by a private provider. The consent form must list the specific documents that will be released and to whom they will be released. Confidentiality provisions and prior written consent to release information provisions apply to all Early Steps records and it does not matter how those records were acquired (i.e., through a provider whom the LES has paid to provide the service vs. an entity that they did not pay) or whether specific services were paid for through Part C funds.

If a child transitioning from Early Steps to Part B was assessed by Early Steps, who keeps the original Child Outcomes Summary Form?

Early Steps should maintain all original documents and share copies with Part B.

Reminder: Any information that is exchanged between LESs and school districts (other than Notification) requires written parental consent.

What is the process of the shared evidence for Transition: Part C to Part B?

This will depend on the local collaboration in the Interagency Agreement. Some examples are as follows:

- Early Steps and district both participate in the Part C Exit and Part B Entry COS ratings process.
- Early Steps completes the COS ratings process and shares the ratings and information with the district.

What kind of information will Early Steps collect to inform their COS ratings, for example, will Early Steps use standardized assessments, checklists, observation notes, etc.?

Refer to your local Early Steps Program's guidelines, as well as to local collaboration in the Interagency Agreement.

Entry and Exit Considerations

How are "entry" and "exit" defined?

Preschool Population

Entry is defined as the date of the initial IEP, even if there is a delay in implementing the services. Exit is defined as the date of dismissal from special education or May 31st prior to kindergarten entry, whichever comes first.

What is the entry date when the child's IEP is written but the services do not begin right away?

The date of the initial IEP is considered the entry date for the child.

If a child remains in the prekindergarten program an extra year and is kindergarten age, when is the exit COS conducted?

If the child remains in the prekindergarten program an extra year, then the child is considered a prekindergarten child. The exit COS should be completed in accordance with the [Flowchart and Decision Rules for Entry and Exit](#) — within the rating window, between March 1 and May 31.

For children exiting the pre-kindergarten program, is it possible to extend the exit rating window beyond June 30, to the end of July so additional time is available to complete the testing?

No, that is not possible for children exiting the prekindergarten program.

What is the COS process for in-state transfers?

When a child moves to another Florida school district and will continue to receive special education and related services, the COS forms with completed entry and exit ratings (if conducted) are to be sent to the receiving district along with other appropriate documents.

Are children who move into Florida from out of state considered a part of the child outcomes measurement system even if they have been receiving services in the other state?

Yes. An entry COS rating must be assigned for any child who is anticipated to be in the prekindergarten program in Florida. If a school district uses the out-of-state IEP, the rating must be administered within 30 days of accepting the out-of-state IEP. If the district writes a new IEP, then the COS team process should take place at the initial IEP meeting or within 30 school days of the new IEP.

When is it recommended for the entry COS rating to be completed?

Entry and exit COS ratings are completed for preschoolers with IEPs. Since situations vary it may not be known if a child will access services, have delayed entry, move, or discontinue services for some reason; therefore, it is recommended that the COS ratings be completed at the eligibility meeting, initial IEP meeting, or within 30 school days after the IEP.

*Special Circumstance: Within the first 30 school days of the child's attendance, if the classroom teacher sees conflicting information from the initial COS rating, an IEP team may be convened to review classroom data and update COS evidence and ratings. When updating COS information and evidence, the team should update IEP information (for example, present levels and goals, as well as strengths and needs for support).

What is the time frame for completing the entry ratings?

Options include:

- the eligibility meeting,
- initial IEP meeting, or
- within the first 30 school days of special education services.

* If a child's IEP initiation date is after November 30th the year before transition to kindergarten, COS entry and exit are not needed.

What if a student does not enroll in the program right away and months elapse before the child attends?

It is encouraged that the COS process be conducted during the eligibility or initial IEP meeting in case there is a lapse in time from IEP date to enrollment. Both the date of the IEP and the date of the completion of the Child Outcomes Summary Form will be entered into the on the Children's Registry and Information System (CHRIS) database.

Reminder: The COS ratings must be completed within 30 school days of the IEP date.

How often is the COS process conducted during each year? How often is information from Child Outcomes Summary Forms required to be entered into the Children's Registry and Information System (CHRIS) database?

The COS process to assign ratings is conducted at least twice for a student, at entry and at exit from the district Prekindergarten Exceptional Education program and these ratings are entered into the COS section of the CHRIS database. Districts will develop a process for collecting and entering the COS data into the CHRIS database.

The COS conducted for purposes other than entry or exit is marked as "Interim" on the Child Outcomes Summary Form and the ratings are not entered into the CHRIS database. Interim COS ratings may be useful for the following: progress reports, annual, amended, or interim IEPs.

The COS informational tools provide valuable information and should be used independent of the COS ratings process for progress monitoring, informing instruction, and developing IEP present levels and goals.

Extended School Year (ESY)

Does the child's planned participation or lack of participation in ESY affect the exit rating window?

No. The rating window does not change based on the child attending ESY. For the child going to kindergarten in the fall, the exit window is still March 1 to May 31.

Parent Consent and Data Sharing

Is written parent consent required to conduct the COS rating to measure child outcomes?

Parent consent is not required since the COS process is not an assessment and is not being used as part of the child's initial evaluation to determine eligibility. The COS process is being conducted as part of the child outcomes measurement system (e.g., at the close of the preschool year for all preschool children with disabilities exiting the program outside the reevaluation process).

The following information is from the Office of Special Education Programs:

"In general, if the SEA (State Education Agency) or LEA (Local Education Agency or lead agency) collects, uses, or maintains information about an eligible child to meet the requirements of Part B [Part C], including reporting on child outcomes, prior written parental consent is not required under Part B [Part C]."

However, family members are important members of the COS team and should always be invited to participate in COS meetings. If they are not able to attend, their information should be gathered through other methods.

COS Process

Who should participate in the COS rating process?

School districts identify personnel to assume responsibility for completion of entry and exit ratings. When COS ratings are completed by IEP team members, the case manager may serve as the team leader. Possible COS team members include the following: teacher (special and/or general education), psychologist, speech and language pathologist, related service providers, family members and others as needed.

The COS process requires that ratings be assigned by a team consisting of a minimum of two people at both entry and exit. Generally, the process is completed during a face-to-face team meeting; however, it is possible for team members to contribute to the COS ratings virtually or by submitting written notes or reports.

For situations in which the COS process is conducted at eligibility determination and/or initial IEP meeting, possible participants include the IEP team members, the evaluation team, family members, childcare and/or preschool staff and others who are familiar with the child's functioning across settings and situations.

Family members are important members of the COS team and should always be invited to participate in COS meetings. If they are not able to attend, their information should be gathered through other methods.

What data does the state need for the purpose of the Child Outcomes Accountability System?

The entry and exit COS ratings must be entered on the Child Outcomes Summary Form. Districts enter the summary ratings from the forms into the CHRIS database. These ratings enable the state to determine the appropriate performance category in which to place the child for the purposes of annual accountability reporting.

*Copies of the Child Outcomes Summary Forms along with progress monitoring data and other information used in the COS process should be kept with the child’s records according to district guidelines.

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