

History and Overview of the Child Outcomes Measurement System in Florida

Background to the Accountability System under the 2004 Reauthorization of IDEA

The current accountability system for early intervention and special education services is an outgrowth of a broader initiative on the part of the U.S. government to make agencies more accountable for results achieved through the expenditure of federal monies.

Under the reauthorized IDEA, state lead agencies for the Part B program serving children ages 3–21 and the Part C program serving infants and toddlers ages birth to 3 years were required to develop a State Performance Plan (SPP) that evaluates the states' implementation of the requirements and purposes of the statute. The SPP was to be submitted every 6 years, however, the first SPP was extended by OSEP for an additional 2 years, remaining in effect until FY 2012-13. The SPP requirements have undergone a number of modifications, including the streamlining of several indicators and the addition of an indicator for both Part B and Part C programs known as the State Systemic Improvement Plan. In accordance with the SPP, state Part B and Part C programs must submit an Annual Performance Reports (APR) each February for the fiscal year ending the previous June.

One indicator that is common to the Part B and Part C SPPs is an indicator addressing the progress that children make as a result of their participation in the program. Indicator 7 of the Part B SPP, related to children in the preschool program, and Indicator 3 of the Part C SPP, related to children in the early intervention program, are known as the “child outcomes” indicators and their requirements are very similar.

Specifically, states are required to report on the percent of infants and toddlers with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) or preschool children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who demonstrate improved:

1. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication [and early literacy]); and
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

For each outcome, states must report the percentage of children exiting the program, who were served for at least 6 months, who:

- a. Did not improve functioning
- b. Improved functioning, but not sufficiently to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers
- c. Improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers, but did not reach it
- d. Improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers
- e. Maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers

In Florida, the data used to classify children into the above categories come from entry and exit administrations of the Battelle Developmental Inventory, 2nd Edition (BDI-2; Newborg, 2005). This assessment yields raw and standardized scores in 5 domains: personal-social, communication, adaptive, motor and cognitive. In Florida, only data from the first three domains are reported for accountability purposes, with data from the personal-social scale used to address the first outcome area, data from the communication domain used to address the second outcome area, and data from the adaptive domain used to address the third outcome area.

For federal reporting purposes, states must also provide the following “summary statement” percentages:

- *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. Formula: $(c+d)/(a+b+c+d)$
- *Summary Statement 2:* The percent of children who were functioning within age expectations in each Outcome by the time they exited the program. Formula: $(d+e)/(a+b+c+d+e)$

As part of the federal reporting system, the above summary statements must be reported both for the state as a whole, in the state's Annual Performance Report, and for individual programs, on the state's Part B and Part C websites.