

Questions and Answers ND Early Childhood Outcomes Process

Updated July 2010

1. Why do we need to collect entry and exit data information for preschool children receiving special education and related services?

The federal government requires states to report certain information about children's progress to determine whether or not local school district programs are making a positive difference. The ND Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education, and preschool programs that serve children with disabilities are required to report this data as part of an Annual Performance Report. The US Department of Education, Office of Special Education uses each state's data to determine how well the state's programs have helped young children.

2. What is the age range for preschool children to be included in the ND Early Childhood Outcomes (ND ECO) Process?

Preschool children to be included in the ND ECO Process are children ages three through five years of age who will be receiving preschool services for at least six months. If a child enters preschool services and will not be receiving preschool services for longer than 6 month the district will not complete entry or exit scores for the child.

Entry Data

3. When should the entry data be collected?

Entry data must be collected when a child enters Part B early childhood special education services. Entry into Part B early childhood special education services could be when a child: 1) is newly identified as eligible for Part B; 2) transitions from Part C to Part B; 3) enters a ND ECSE program from another state; or 4) reenters a program after an entry and/or exit rating were completed. Entry data can be determined up to 60 days upon entrance to early childhood special education services.

4. How should the Part B preschool team implement the ND ECO process for children transitioning from Part C?

As part of the process to determine Part B eligibility the team must complete the NDDPI Evaluation Process. If an Anchor Tool has been used as part of this evaluation process and this information is current for the child, you may use the results of this assessment to complete the Child Outcome Summary Form.

5. Are summer months counted in the timelines? What about ESY?

Summer does count as part of the 6 month time frame. If a child enters preschool services and it is unknown if the child will be participating in ESY preschool services, the team must collect entry data.

6. For children to be included in this data collection they must have received services for 6 months or more. Do children need to be in the same program for 6 months?

No, 6 months refers to time in service.

7. Does a child's time in service need to be consecutive?

Six months of service is generally 6 months of consecutive service. However, if a child is in a program 2 months, leaves and takes a month to move with his family and enrolls in another program across the state where he receives services for another 4 months, this would be considered equivalent to 6 months of consecutive service.

8. What dates should be used for the date entry summary ratings were completed and the date preschool special education services began?

Entry data must be collected when a child enters Part B early childhood special education services. Entry into Part B early childhood special education services could be when a child: 1) is newly identified as eligible for Part B; 2) transitions from Part C to Part B; 3) enters a ND ECSE program from another state; or 4) reenters a program after an exit rating was completed. The date entry ratings were completed should be the date the child's IEP team completed the entry ratings for the child. The date preschool special education services began would be the 'Starting Date' of preschool services as indicated in Section J of the child's IEP.

The comparison of the dates that the child's started preschool special education services and ended preschool special education services provides documentation of the amount of preschool special education services that the child received.

9. Once the team has completed the entry ratings information on the ND COSF, what process should be used in TieNet to save and finalize the information?

After all necessary information has been entered relating to the entry ratings, the following steps must be completed in TieNet to save and finalize the information:

- Click on the *Save, Done Editing* button
- Click on the *More Actions* button and
- Click on the *Change the Status of the Document*
- Change the status to *Final*.

Anchor Tools

10. How were the ND Anchor Tools chosen?

The ND Early Childhood Outcomes Committee established criteria to evaluate assessment tools after consideration of federal and state requirements. The Committee then met to evaluate assessment tools currently used nationally and in ND. The tools which meet the criteria were chosen as Anchor Tools to be piloted by the Project Sites. Pilot Project sites then provided feedback to assure that each Anchor Tool met criteria.

11. How does the team decide which Anchor Tool to use for a child?

The decision as to what Anchor Tool to use will require careful consideration of a number of factors. The decision making process prior to selecting the Anchor Tool for a given child, or group of children, consists of balancing several variables. Some of these variables include: 1) the child's disability and the appropriateness of the Anchor Tool being considered; 2) factors relating to the administering and scoring of the Anchor Tool; and 3) the availability of Anchor Tools.

12. Does the child's teams have to use the same measurement tool for data collected near entry and exit?

It would be best practice to use the same Anchor Tool for entry and exit data. If a child's team uses a different measurement tool at entry than at exit, they should provide a description of how and to what extent different tools are comparable in what they measure.

Outcome Areas

13. What is a functional outcome?

Functional outcomes relate to behaviors, knowledge, and skills that are meaningful to children in their everyday lives. The outcomes refer to actions that children need to be able to carry out and to knowledge that they need to have in order to function successfully across a variety of settings and ultimately to be successful in kindergarten and later in school. To be successful in these settings, it is important for children to be able to, for example, get along with others, follow the rules in a group, continue to learn new things, and take care of their basic needs in an appropriate way.

14. How are the functional outcomes different from developmental domains?

Many assessment tools examine children's development in different domains. Domains are areas of development such as social, fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, or language. Functional outcomes refer to behaviors that are meaningful in the context of a child's everyday living. Functional outcomes focus on what the child can do and needs to be able to do in the context of his or her life. These are integrated behaviors that usually cross multiple domains and allow children to achieve something meaningful. Domains refer to areas of development that contribute to successful functioning but are not themselves the functioning.

15. What are the three outcome areas that the ND ECO Process measures?

The ND ECO process measures functional outcomes in the following three areas: children have positive social relationships; children acquire and use knowledge and skills; and children take appropriate action to meet their needs.

16. What are some examples of behaviors related to making and maintaining positive social relationships in age appropriate ways?

- Demonstrate attachment with the significant caregivers in their lives.
- Initiate and maintain social interactions.
- Behave in a way that allows them to participate in a variety of settings and situations, for example, on the playground, at dinner, at the grocery store, in child care, etc.
- Demonstrate trust in others.
- Build and maintain relationships with children and adults.
- Regulate their emotions.
- Understand and follow rules.
- Solve social problems.

17. What are some examples of behaviors related to children acquiring and using knowledge and skills across a variety of everyday routines and activities?

- Display curiosity and an eagerness for learning.
- Explore their environment.
- Explore and play with people and objects including toys, books and other materials.
- Engage in daily learning opportunities through manipulating toys and other objects in an appropriate manner.
- Use vocabulary either through spoken means, sign language, or through augmentative communication devices to communicate in an increasingly complex form.
- Learn new skills and use these skills in play, for example, by completing a puzzle or building a fort.
- Acquire and use the precursor skills that will allow them to begin to learn reading and mathematics in kindergarten.
- Show imagination and creativity in play.

18. What are some examples of behaviors related to children taking appropriate actions to meet their needs?

- Uses gestures, sounds, words, signs or other means to communicate wants and needs.
- Meet their self care needs (feeding, dressing, toileting, etc.). Their ability to meet self care needs allows them to participate in everyday routines and activities.
- Uses objects (for example, forks, pencils, crayons, clay, scissors, switches, other devices, etc.) as tools in appropriate ways.
- Move from place to place to participate in everyday activities, play, and routines.
- Seek help when necessary to move from place to place.
- Seek help when necessary to assist with basic care or other needs.

19. Must the preschool child's IEP have annual goals related to the three outcomes areas?

No, annual goals must address outcome area(s) only if the IEP team decides that the child has needs in one or more of the areas.

Child Outcome Summary Form

20. What is the Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF)?

The COSF is a process developed by the Early Childhood Outcomes Center that provides a common metric for describing children's functioning compared to age expectations in each of the three outcome areas required by OSEP. The COSF provides a way for a team to summarize the child's level of functioning using information from many sources including assessment tools and parent and provider reports. The COSF can be used: 1) When the state wants to use multiple sources of information to describe a child's functioning on each of the outcomes. The information could include one or more norm-referenced or curriculum-based assessments, parent report on child's skills and behavior, progress notes of therapists working with the child, observations by a teacher or child care provider, or other sources; and/or 2) When different assessments have been given to different children across the state and the results need to be placed on the same scale to be aggregated.

21. Is the COSF an assessment instrument?

The COSF is not an assessment instrument. It is a form used for summarizing across multiple sources of information about the child. The COSF allows states to address the OSEP reporting requirement as well as look at the child outcomes data in other ways. Using the COSF does not require that programs collect more data about children's progress; it is a mechanism that allows them to summarize assessment information for federal reporting as well as for their own purposes, such as for accountability, program planning, and program improvement.

22. What is the COSF Scale?

The Child Outcome Summary Form Scale is a 7-point scale used to capture a child's current level of functioning across a variety of settings and situations that make up his/her day. Rating decisions should convey the child's typical functioning across typical settings, not his/her capacity to function under ideal circumstances.

23. Are the scores on the COSF determined by comparing the student to same-aged peers?

Yes, the purpose of the summary is to get an overall picture of the child within the variety of settings and the people in his or her life. The team needs to decide the extent to which the child displays behaviors and skills expected for his or her age related to each outcome area. Team discussions and the use of a state accepted Anchor Tool and the ND COSF will allow for this comparison.

24. Why is the progress of children with a disability being compared to expectations for same age peers?

States are required to compare the functioning of children receiving early childhood special education services to age expectations because age expectations provide a common standard for all young children. To record that children made progress between entry and exit would not provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the program. Also, one of the goals of early childhood services is to prepare children to succeed in kindergarten and, in kindergarten, children will be expected to meet grade level standards. Not all children will be able to function comparable to same age peers at the end of early childhood services, but the NDDPI collects data as to how many children have achieved or moved closer to functioning at an age expected level.

- 25. Children with severe disabilities may not improve functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers, but they often do make progress. Will this progress be reflected in federal reporting?**
Children who make progress but have not moved closer to functioning like same aged peers are counted as children who made progress. Small steps of individual progress are counted as progress when determining the child’s exit ratings.
- 26. If a child has the same entry and exit rating, can the team document a “no” in the Progress section of the ND COSF?**
A “no” response to the progress question means the child has not shown any new skills or behaviors relating to the outcome between entry and exit. To receive the same rating on the scale at two time points, the child has to have acquired new skills, because as children get older it takes more skills to receive the same rating.
- 27. What are immediate foundational skills?**
Some of the skills and behaviors that develop early serve as the foundation for later skills and behavior, or, expressed another way, later skills build on earlier skills in predictable ways. Immediate foundational skills are earlier skills that serve as the base and are conceptually linked to the later skills. These skills can be used to help children move to the next higher level of functioning developmentally.
- 28. What is the ND ECO Process Quality Assurance Checklist?**
To assure consistent high quality data within each ND Child Outcomes Summary Form (ND COSF), the ND Early Childhood Outcomes Committee developed and piloted the ND COSF - Quality Assurance Checklist. The ND COSF Checklist is completed by individuals responsible to assure quality data within their district/unit. The information gathered from the review of unit/district ND COSFs will provide valuable information which will assist in determining training needs for the district/unit. A complete copy of the Quality Assurance Checklist and Directions is located in the Appendix of the ND ECO Process Guide.
- 29. What should be listed in the Supporting Evidence section?**
As stated in the Quality Assurance Checklist Directions, the Supporting Evidence should: correspond to the specific outcome area; cover all appropriate aspects of the outcome; provide examples of the child’s everyday functioning in the outcome area; provide discipline specific evidence to support the outcome area; and provide an overall picture of how the child functions for the outcome area across settings and situations.

Exiting a Child from Early Childhood Special Education Services

- 30. When should the child’s IEP team complete exit data for the child?**
Exit data should be gathered during the time period right before the child leaves the early childhood special education services or by the time the child turns 6 years of age if they are receiving ECSE services beyond their 6th birth date.
- 31. Once the team has completed the exit ratings information on the ND COSF, what process should be used to save and finalizing the information in TieNet?**
When it is time to enter the necessary exit rating information in TieNet:
- Click on the *Edit This Section* button
 - Entry the necessary exit ratings information and progress ratings information and
 - Click *Save, Done Editing*.

32. Does the early childhood outcome assessment at exit constitute a re-evaluation?

The outcome assessment at Part B 619 exit is not considered a reevaluation. However, if a reevaluation is already occurring, the assessment may be used for both purposes and the reevaluation requirements will apply. If the team is not completing the exit rating as part of a reevaluation process, the team does not need to complete the complete evaluation process, e.g. student profile, assessment plan and integrated written assessment report.

33. If a child moves to another ND district does the team complete an exit rating?

The team would not complete an exit rating if a child moves to another district in ND. Following district procedures and TieNet procedures, the child's records will be made available to the new school district. The new district would then be responsible for the completion of the exit rating at the appropriate time.

34. If the child moves to another state does the team complete an exit rating?

If the child is moving out of state and has received preschool services for at least six months, you would complete the exit rating for the child. If the child has not received preschool services for at least 6 months, enter the date preschool special education services ended on the child's ND COSF and provide a statement why exit ratings were not completed, e.g not received services for 6 months.

35. What do you do if a child is removed from ECSE services unexpectedly?

This is considered an exit from a program. If the child has an entry COSF completed, then leaves Part B and has not been in the program for 6 months, no outcome summary rating data will be completed. Enter the date preschool special education services ended on the child's ND COSF and then provide a statement why exit ratings were not completed, e.g not received services for 6 months. If the child has been in the program for 6 months then exits unexpectedly, exit outcome summary ratings would be entered for the child. If the team is not able to complete the Anchor Tool before the child exits, the team must complete the exit ratings with the current available information.

Data Reporting

36. Can the State determine when the N size is too small to report child outcomes?

States and districts must look at other public reporting standards, including those used in their state to report Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. In North Dakota, the N size is 10 students per district.

Transfer Children

37. If a child moves in from another state with or without current early childhood outcome ratings, is it necessary for our program to rate the child again using the Child Outcomes Summary Form?

When a child has been receiving Part C or Part B services in another state and moves into a program in ND, it is necessary to gather the appropriate information and make an entry rating in the three outcome areas using the COSF. New entry ratings on the ND COSF is necessary even if the child was rated in the early childhood outcomes areas in his/her previous state program. Children moving in from another state are new to ND and therefore need new entry ratings.

Parent Involvement

38. Can a parent refuse to have their child's assessment data used for purposes of the OSEP's outcomes data collection?

District professionals are encouraged to provide information to families about the purposes of OSEP's child outcomes data collection. Since these data are needed for federal accountability for the Part C and Part B programs, families cannot refuse to have their child's assessment data included in the aggregate.

39. Does the child's team need to get parental consent to administer the Anchor Tool for the entry and exit ratings?

If the collection of outcome information is used as part of the child's initial evaluation or reevaluation the district must provide prior written notice and obtain parent consent. Also, parental consent is required when information is collected on an individual child that is not being obtained for all individuals of that age, e.g. ND ECO exit ratings. If a parent refuses consent to administer an Anchor Tool, the team must complete the ratings with the current available information.

40. What are the roles for parents in the outcome rating process?

Parents provide valuable input as members of the team for the Evaluation and IEP Process. Parents should participate in team discussions relating to the determination of the Early Childhood Outcomes ratings for their child. As part of these discussions, the team must remember that the COSF ratings are a function of program evaluation, not individual child evaluation.

Articulation Only Children

41. Do districts need to assess children in all three outcome areas even when it is not an area of concern? (e.g. children who are determined to have a disability in the area of speech)

Yes, all preschool children receiving special education and related services must be assessed in all three outcome areas.

42. Is it necessary to use one of the state approved Anchor Tools for a child with articulation/phonological impairments only?

As part of the ND ECO Process, results from an approved Screening Tool, instead of a comprehensive Anchor Tool, can be considered by the multidisciplinary team for children with a suspected articulation/phonological impairment only. In addition to the approved Screening Tool, the child's team must continue to provide a comprehensive articulation/phonological assessment. The results of the approved Screening Tool and comprehensive articulation/phonological assessment will assist the team in several ways. The assessment results will: 1) provide a brief summary of the child's functional ability in the three child outcome areas, 2) assist the team in determining the impact of the articulation/phonological impairment as it relates to the child's overall functioning, and 3) assure that there are no other areas of concern for a child. If, after reviewing the Screening Tool and communication assessment results, the team determines that additional assessment information is needed, then an approved Anchor Tool must be administered as part of the process.