

Overview of the Child Outcomes Summary Form 6-23-06

The following questions and answers provide the ECO Center's current thinking on the use of the **Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF)**. Several states are field testing the COSF and have given us feedback about its use. Based on this feedback, we have revised instructions for using the COSF, including definitions for each of the scale points (see *Instructions for Child Outcomes Summary Form*, on the ECO website). The COSF is still under development; research on its use is currently underway. Please continue to check the ECO web site for revisions.

1. What materials related to the COSF are available on the ECO web site?

The following materials are available on the ECO web site:

- **Instructions for Completing the Child Outcomes Summary Form** – This document contains instructions for completing the form along with the definitions of the scale points.
- **Child Outcomes Summary Form** – This form can be used to summarize information from multiple sources on the 3 outcomes. Status on each outcome is summarized on a 7-point scale. A yes/no rating of whether or not the child made any progress since the last rating also is recorded. The form includes a cover sheet and space for providing the supporting evidence. The supporting evidence provides a way to audit the fidelity with which various programs or teams are using the form to generate the outcomes rating.
- **Child Outcome Summary Form Training Materials** – The materials included are a sample training agenda, a power point presentation which can be used or adapted for states training sessions, and decision trees which may be used as part of the training session to guide trainees in the determination of a rating on the 7 point scale.

2. What is the COSF?

The COSF is a 7-point scale for summarizing information related to a child's progress on each of the three child outcome areas recommended by ECO and required by OSEP. The COSF can be used:

- 1) When the state wants to use multiple sources of information on 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.

The COSF will allow 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 retain more of the assessment information for their own purposes. Ways in which the COSF can be used to address the OSEP reporting requirements as well as answer additional questions are addressed later in this document.

3. What is the basis for the scale on the COSF?

The scale on the COSF is based on several assumptions:

- a. The overall goal of programs and services for children is active and successful participation now and in the future across a variety of settings. Achieving each of the three outcomes is key to the overall goal.
- b. For many, but certainly not all young children with disabilities, receipt of high quality services will allow them to move closer to age-appropriate development than they would have been able to without those services.
- c. Documenting children's movement toward age-appropriate development is one type of evidence that can be used to make a case for the effectiveness of early intervention and early childhood special education.
- d. Documenting the extent of children's progress is a second type of evidence.

Building off of these assumptions, the highest point on the scale is age-expected or age-appropriate development with each lower point being a degree of distance from age expectations. Additional information about the scale points is included in the document *"Instructions for Completing the Child Outcome Summary Form."*

4. Who completes the COSF?

States need to decide who completes the COSF. It could be completed by a team or by a provider and a parent at a home visit. It could also be completed by a service coordinator or provider who works with the child. Finally, the answer to the 3 questions on the form could be generated by a computer program based on code written to generate outcome summary scores for different assessments.

5. How often is the COSF to be completed?

To provide data for the OSEP reporting requirements, the COSF must be completed at a minimum at program entry and exit. States that want outcome data for their own purposes should consider completing the form more often, for example, annually or every 6 months.

6. How are the data from the COSF to be analyzed? How can they be used to address the OSEP reporting requirements?

Note: Please review the COSF before reading the response to this question.

Each child will have 3 numbers (one for each outcome) at entry. When the form is completed the second, third, etc. time, each child will have 3 more numbers plus three answers to the yes-no questions.

The scores of 6 and 7 on the scale are both used to reflect age-expected development. A "7" is assigned to a child showing age-appropriate functioning for whom there are no concerns related to the outcome and a "6" is assigned to a child whose functioning is

generally considered age-appropriate but for whom there are also some concerns. Children who are rated a 6 or 7 at both time points are children who maintain age-expected functioning. Children who are rated 5 or lower at entry and a 6 or 7 at exit are children who achieve age-expected functioning. Children who move up the scale (e.g., from a 3 to a 4, a 4 to a 5, etc.) are children who make progress and have moved closer to age-appropriate functioning but have not yet achieved it. Children who obtain the same score at both time points have made progress, but not moved significantly closer to age-expected development. The one exception could be children who are very low functioning (e.g., a 1 at both time points). For these children, question b. documents whether or not a child has made **ANY** progress (gained even one new skill or behavior).

Table 1 provides hypothetical data illustrating results for 10 children on Outcome 2. The COSF was completed twice for these children.

The ECO Center recommends that states build outcomes system with the capacity to identify 5 categories of progress. The ECO-recommended categories of progress and how they collapse to the 3 OSEP categories are shown below.

The five ECO-recommended categories of progress:

- 1) Children who maintained age-appropriate development
- 2) Children who achieved age-appropriate development
- 3) Children who made sufficient progress to move closer to age-appropriate development but did not achieve it
- 4) Children who made progress but did not move closer to age-appropriate development
- 5) Children who did not make progress

For OSEP, states are required to report on 3 categories of progress:

- a. Children who maintained or achieved age-appropriate development (ECO #1 + ECO #2)
- b. Children who made progress but were not recorded in category a (ECO #3 + ECO #4)
- c. Children who did not make progress (ECO #5)

PLEASE NOTE: OSEP is considering the addition of ECO category #2 to its reporting categories and may consider other changes in the future. The 7-point rating scale will allow states to calculate percentages of progress in all 5 ECO-recommended reporting categories. Entry and exit data from the rating scale may be summarized in 3, 4, or 5 progress categories, so it will not need to be revised if OSEP changes the number of reporting categories over time.

How the data in the example would be categorized in each system also is shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows the results for this set of data for the three OSEP categories and Table 3 shows the data for the 5 ECO categories. Note that the ECO categories allow one to see that 50% of the children (20% ECO Category 2 + 30% ECO Category 3) made sufficient progress during their time in services to move closer to age-expected development. Table 4 shows additional information that can be learned from the COSF data: the extent of progress children have made.

Table 1
Hypothetical Raw Data for Outcome 2 at Entry and Exit

Child's Name	Entry Summary Number	Exit Summary Number	Progress?	OSEP Category	ECO Category
Tammy	7	7	yes	a	1
Patty	6	7	yes	a	2
Jonas	3	5	yes	b	3
Phoenix	4	4	yes	b	4
Angela	1	1	no	c	5
Juan	2	4	yes	b	3
Terry	1	1	yes	b	4
Leroy	3	5	yes	b	3
Maria	4	7	yes	a	2
Tony	5	5	yes	b	4

Table 2
Summary of Results for OSEP Categories

Category	%
a	30
b	60
c	10

Table 3
Summary of Results for ECO Categories

Category	%	
1	10	} OSEP a
2	20	
3	30	} OSEP b
4	30	
5	10	

Table 4
Change in COSF Ratings

Extent of Change	%
Maintained age-expected functioning	10
Maintained same level function, but not age-expected	40
Gained 3 steps	10
Gained 2 steps	30
Gained 1 step	10

7. Why would a state want to be able to do more with its data than what is required by OSEP?

The investment for the state is in collecting the data on children. Reducing the data to a form that can be aggregated across the state requires a very similar process whether the data are reduced to 2 categories or 7 categories. Using 2 categories as the prior example demonstrates, collapses data across categories losing a lot of what could be potentially valuable information. In data analysis, collapsing information is a one-way street -- one can always collapse to fewer categories but if data are collected already collapsed, it is impossible to obtain greater detail.

We believe that the ECO categories 2 and 3 provide the strongest evidence for the effectiveness of early intervention and early childhood special education and these categories are not available if a state chooses to reduce its data directly to the 3 OSEP categories. Also, as illustrated in Table 4, the COSF information allows a state to examine how much change children are showing.

8. Are there states that do not need the COSF?

Yes, if a state is using a single assessment statewide as the basis of its outcomes system, it has no need for the COSF because there are neither multiple sources of information on the same child nor different measures being used across the state. Also, if a state only wants to analyze its data to produce the 3 OSEP categories, it can use a simpler summary form.

9. What research has been conducted on the use of the COSF?

Only preliminary pilot work has been done with the COSF to date. The ECO Center will be conducting extensive research on the form in the coming months. The COSF may be revised based on this research.

10. Will training materials be developed?

The ECO Center as well as several states, have developed training and guidance materials for use of the COSF. Materials are available on the ECO website. These include a sample training agenda, a power point presentation, and decision trees for use with the COSF's 7-point rating scale. To obtain materials in Microsoft Word format, so that you may tailor them to meet your needs, contact us at staff@the-eco-center.org

11. How much training is required to use the COSF?

Field testing has shown that training is essential to effective and reliable use of the COSF. Sample training materials, available on the ECO website, outline a day-and-a-half training activity that includes general background information on child outcomes measurement, information to promote understanding of the three outcome areas, and references to recommended assessment practices. In addition, field testing has shown that training must include opportunities to "practice" the ratings through case examples. Walking through several cases in a large group discussion format helps to clarify differences between the points on the rating scale, as participants review assessment information about a child, compare that information to age expectations, and then determine a rating. We also strongly recommend states develop opportunities for

periodic feedback sessions with providers, after they have begun to use the summary form, so they might share effective strategies that work with local populations as well as ask questions and share information in an effort to enhance the consistency of approaches used.

12. *Why is the COSF copyrighted?*

States and programs are encouraged to use and reproduce the form. There is no charge to use any materials produced by the ECO Center. We are copyrighting materials to prevent anyone from charging for them in the future.

13. *Why should we contact ECO if we want to use or adapt the COSF?*

ECO would like to keep track of which states are using the form to learn more about how the process is working. We would appreciate a state contacting us so we have an accurate list.

14. *Can a state make changes to the COSF?*

States can change the form to meet their needs but we encourage them to think through the consequences of those changes. Some adaptations are minor and not likely to impact the type of data that will result. Other adaptations (for example, using a 5-point instead of a 7-point scale) are major and mean that the lessons being learned from piloting the ECO form will not apply to this state. We plan to collect considerable data about the use and properties of the summary process and it will be difficult to say how much of that research will apply if a state has made major changes in the COSF or process. We encourage states to contact us to discuss what they would like to change so we can keep track of which states are using the ECO form and which are using their own adaptation.

15. *What if I have a question about the COSF or the related materials? Can states and others comment on the COSF and related materials?*

Yes. Questions and comments are encouraged. Send them to staff@the-eco-center.org.