

Child Outcomes Summary Guidance

The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process is a team-based approach used to document a child's progress in key developmental areas while receiving early intervention and preschool special education services. This process helps ensure consistent, meaningful data collection that informs program effectiveness and supports improved outcomes for children and families.

Childhood Outcomes Summary Process:

The goal of early childhood special education services is to enable children to be active and successful participants during their early childhood years and in the future to be active and successful in a variety of settings. To support this goal, there are three early childhood outcomes that all programs are required to measure:

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 behavior to meet their needs.

The three childhood outcomes, measured by early intervention (Part C) and early childhood special education systems (Part B 619), encompass functional skills and behaviors that are meaningful for a child's participation in everyday routines. They cut across developmental domains, representing the integrated nature of how children develop, learn, and thrive. The breadth of these outcomes provides a framework for describing and consistently measuring children's functional skills and behaviors across settings and situations.

The vision for the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process is that every Local Education Agency (LEA) that serves special education preschool children will report accurate outcome data for each child with disabilities ages 3–5. This data provides important information about the impact of preschool special education services, guides decision-making, and supports program improvement. While the main purpose of the COS process is to meet federal requirements, the greatest value of the childhood outcome data is to improve programs and services for preschool children.

What is the general process for completing the Childhood Outcomes Summary?

The COS summarizes information about a child's functioning in each of the three outcome areas using a 7-point scale. With the COS process, a team of individuals (including parents and/or guardians) who are familiar with the child's functioning considers multiple sources of information, including observation data and results from direct assessment.

Additionally, the COS process allows early intervention and early childhood special education programs to synthesize information about children across different assessment tools to produce data that can be summarized and compared at the program, state, and national levels. Team members work together to

reach consensus using assessment results, observations, progress on IEP goals (at Exit), and personal experience with the child.

COS Team Members

Anyone with knowledge of the child in one or more of the three outcome areas outlined in the COS, can be considered a team member. Members should participate in the completion of either the Entry and/or Exit forms. Effort should be made to get information from multiple team members who have knowledge of the child's ability levels in one or more of the three outcomes. Each member is a vital part of the decision-making process and can help clarify areas where further information may be needed.

Only team members working with the child at the time of the Exit COS provide input on the Exit rating form. Those members contribute to the rating for the Exit COS based on relevant updated data.

Possible Team Members and Descriptions:

- **Parent(s)/ Guardian(s)** - Parent(s)/ guardian(s) can provide applicable information regarding the following: the child's physical and emotional developmental progress; health related information; social skills development; as well as early literacy and numeracy skills.
- **Preschool Special Education Teachers** - Teachers will provide observational data, anecdotal data, and informal and formal data associated with the child's ability levels in multiple developmental areas.
- **School Psychologist** - The school psychologist will review the evaluation results and provide input as well as give details surrounding the observational data and assessment data obtained during testing.
- **Related Service Providers** (including Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Speech-Language Pathologists) - Depending on the child's needs as outlined in the initial IEP, one or more related service providers will give detailed information related to the child's strengths and deficit areas. This information may come from the assessments that were given during the evaluation process.
- **Early Interventionist and/or Service Coordinator** (if applicable at transition from Part C to Part B) - The Early Interventionist (EI) and/or Service Coordinator will be able to provide both observational and anecdotal data surrounding the child's skills across the settings of both the home and community. These individuals can provide information that is essential in determining a child's ability levels when compared to typical developmental milestones.
- **Community Child Care Providers/Educators** - Preschool teachers, Head Start teachers, and other child care teachers and staff, can provide observational data, checklist data, screening information, and work samples to generate information about a child's skill levels in a structured environment.
- **Outside Agencies** - These individuals can contribute observational data, evaluation data/screenings (where applicable), and checklist data regarding the child's developmental progress in specific areas.

What steps do team members take in completing a COS form?

1. Best practice is for the Entry COS to be completed at the time of initial placement when all team members, including parents, are in attendance.
2. Team members should work together to bring the appropriate data to the table in order to complete the COS.
3. The case manager should ensure the active participation of each member in the decision-making process and the adequacy of the data used as evidence of the child's skills in one or more of the three outcomes.
4. The team should engage in rich discussions around the data that represents each of the three outcome areas as outlined in the COS.
5. The case manager should provide information where applicable to those members who are not well versed in typical developing milestones for young children. The case manager is responsible for ensuring the team uses age-anchoring.
6. The Decision Tree and the 7-Point Scale are valuable as the team determines an accurate rating for each of the three child outcomes.
7. The team should collaborate to complete the rating on the electronic COS form in the IEP system.

The COS and IEP Timelines

The COS and IEP do not follow the same timelines for completion. The Entry COS ideally should be completed at the time of the initial eligibility determination. However, it should be completed no later than 15 business days after the eligibility determination or within 30 days if the child has transferred to the LEA. If a child transfers in from out of state or from a district in state that does not use EDPlan SC, enter the COS data provided by the previous LEA into the IEP system. If COS data is not provided, the receiving LEA must complete an Entry COS within 30 days. If a child transfers in from another South Carolina school district that uses EDPlan SC, the COS data should transfer with the child.

Exit Childhood Outcomes Summary

An Exit COS should be completed when:

- The child exits Part B services because they are no longer eligible.
- The child moves out of state.
- The child is deceased.
- Before the child enters kindergarten.

The Exit COS should be completed no sooner than three weeks before the end of the school year prior to the start of kindergarten. This is done regardless of age or disability. If the child exits special education services prior to the end of the school year, the Exit COS should be completed at the time of exit from special education.

An Exit COS must be completed by the team (including input from the parent/caregiver) but does not have to take place as part of or as a separate IEP meeting.

Data collection should begin upon completion of the Entry COS. By utilizing ongoing data collection when it comes time for the Exit COS, the data is extensive and should give a true representation of the skills of each of the three outcome areas. There should be growth from the time the Entry COS was completed to the time of the Exit COS.

The “Yes/No” progress question is independent of the 7-Point Rating Scale. In other words, a child may not have a change in their rating, but the team can still report that “Yes”, the child has made some progress. If a child has shown even one new skill or behavior incorporated into their functioning, the team should answer “Yes” to the progress question. When answering the “Yes/No” progress question, the team is comparing the child’s current skills and behaviors to their own previous skills and behaviors (unlike the 7- Point Rating Scale which is comparing the child’s skills and behaviors to those that are expected for their age).

Special Circumstances

If ESY services are provided during the summer and it is also time for the Exit COS, the Exit COS will still need to be completed within three weeks of the end of the school year. The district should use the end of service date (end of ESY services) as the exit date, even though the meeting was held in May. This allows the team that knows the child best to complete the Exit COS, which will lead to more concise ratings.

In a situation where a child is placed but has received less than six months (180 days) of services, there is a flag that should appear in the EDPlan SC report if the district is using EDPlan SC. However, it is also recommended, regardless of IEP system utilized that the entry and exit dates only be entered into the workspace to ensure that all children are accounted for. Only those children who meet the length of time requirement will be included in the data results calculated by the SCDE. If the child receives less than 180 days of service, the SCDE will exclude the record from the Indicator 7 data/calculation.

If a child is determined to be eligible and an IEP is created, but the child moves before receiving services, it is recommended to complete an Entry COS so that the receiving school will have the entry data.

Resources

- [COS Quick Reference Guide](#): This comprehensive guide includes information about COS, the process and ratings.
- [COS Decision Tree for Summary Rating Discussions](#): The Decision Tree is a tool to guide team discussions regarding COS ratings.
- [Breadth of the Three Child Outcomes](#): This is a framework for describing and consistently measuring children’s functional skills and behaviors across settings and situations.
- [Age Anchoring Information](#): Age anchoring provides the COS team with concrete examples of the child’s functioning relative to age expectations to use in the discussion and documentation of COS



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ratings. It is the process for how to examine a child's functional abilities, skills, and behaviors and determine how close that functioning is to the functioning expected for the child's chronological age.

- [South Carolina Early Learning Standards](#): The South Carolina Early Learning Standards is a resource that provides a common set of goals and developmental indicators for children from birth to kindergarten entry.