



# Building Futures: Writing Meaningful Functional Outcomes for Early Intervention

Charting the Cs  
Conference 2025:  
*To Literacy and  
Beyond*

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Cooperation  
Communication  
Collaboration

# Goals for today:

- Understand why functional outcomes are essential
- Learn how to write functional outcomes based on caregiver's priorities and concerns

# Using information to Develop Outcomes

- Start with the caregiver's priorities about child's learning/development and/or family's needs
- Consider what's working and what's challenging in everyday routines and activities
- Consider how developmental skills, needs, and disability impact the child's learning and participation in everyday routines and activities

# Relationship of Outcomes to Services

First...

develop IFSP outcomes based on functional, authentic assessment information

Then...

determine services and supports based on what is necessary to meeting outcomes

# Requirements for Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Outcomes

IFSP must include:

- A statement of the measurable results or measurable outcomes expected to be achieved for the child and family (including pre-literacy and language skills as developmentally appropriate for the child)
- The criteria, procedures, and timelines used to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the results or outcomes is being made and whether modifications or revision of the expected results or outcomes or services are necessary

# IFSP Outcomes

- IFSP Outcomes: “What would your family like to see happen for your child/family?”
- Two Types of outcomes
  - **Child** Outcomes
  - **Family** Outcomes

# IFSP Child Outcomes

Two Types of child outcomes

- Participation-based
- Routine/activity-based

Child outcomes should:

- Enhance learning through functional participation in everyday activities (child is learner/actor)
- Be important and meaningful to the family/caregiver (priorities)
- Expand activity setting so child be competent
- Be based on child interests

# IFSP Family Outcomes

Two types of family outcomes:

- Participation-based
- Resource-based

Family outcomes should:

- Enhance capacity (family is learner/actor)
- Support to access community resources and supports
- Be important and meaningful to the family/caregiver (priorities)
- Be based on family's interests

# Developing IFSP Outcome Statements

Steps	Actions/Supports
<b>Step 1:</b> Determine the functional area(s)	Eating
<b>Step 2:</b> What routine(s) does this affect?	Meal time with the family
<b>Step 3:</b> Child will participate in [routines in question]	“Kim will eat with her Family at mealtime...”
<b>Step 4:</b> “by _____ing” (address specific behaviors)	“...eating the foods they eat.”

McWilliam, R.A. (2006). Steps to build a functional outcome. Retrieved from [http://www.siskin.org/downloads/Steps to Build a Functional Child Outcome.pdf](http://www.siskin.org/downloads/Steps%20to%20Build%20a%20Functional%20Child%20Outcome.pdf)

# Third Word Rule

- The third word of IFSP child outcome statement should be a **contextualized action that is functional**.
- **Example:** “Kim will eat with her family at mealtime eating the foods they eat.”

Shelden, M. L., & Rush, D. D. (2009). Tips and Techniques for Developing Participation-Based IFSP Outcome Statements. Briefcase, 2(1). Retrieved from [http://www.fipp.org/Collateral/briefcase/briefcase\\_vol2\\_no1.pdf](http://www.fipp.org/Collateral/briefcase/briefcase_vol2_no1.pdf)

# Developing Criteria, Procedures, and Timelines

- **What** are the ways in which the family and team will work toward achieving this outcome?
- **Who** will help and what will they do?
- **How** will the team know they've made progress or if revisions are needed to outcomes or services?

# High-Quality Functional IFSP Outcomes

- Necessary and functional for child's and family's life
- Reflect real-life contextualized settings
- Crosses developmental domains and is discipline-free
- Jargon-free, clear and simple
- Emphasize the positive, not the negative
- Uses active words rather than passive words

# Criteria Definitions

- Necessary and functional for child's and family's life
- Supports participation in community life and family activities
- Based up on what is important to the family
- Supports child's progress towards outcomes
- It is not based on what the practitioner thinks

# Continued 1, Criteria Definitions

- **Reflects real-life, contextualized settings**
  - Everyday activity settings and routines for the child and family
    - Includes typical routines such as meal time
    - Also includes routines and activities specific to the family.
- ***Test items are not real-life or contextualized***

## Continued 2, Criteria Definitions

- **Integrates developmental domains and is discipline-free**
  - Written to describe the child's participation in routines and activities
    - Promote the child's skill development in multiple domains
    - Addressable by any member of the IFSP team
  - Written so that child and family are the "actors"
- Early interventionists and therapists are not the actors in the outcome

## Continued 3, Criteria Definitions

- **Is jargon-free, clear and simple**

MUST be understandable by family and the general public

- **Doesn't include professional jargon or practitioner "speak"**

## Continued 4, Criteria Definitions

- **Emphasizes the positive, not the negative**
  - Focus of the whole outcome is positive
  - States what the child and family will do
- **Doesn't state what the child will not do or will stop doing.**

Any negative words creates a negative statement

## Continued 5, Criteria Definitions

- **Uses active rather passive words**
  - Words encourage the child and family's active participation
  - Words indicate what the child or family will do
- **Passive words reflect a state of being or a change or lack of change in performance**

# High-Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes

**If available, the child's complete record can reveal if an IFSP outcome is based on:**

- Information gathered from the family (e.g., priorities and concerns)
- Evaluation and functional assessment of child (e.g., skills, degree of participation, behaviors across settings, strengths, and needs)

# Developing Child Outcomes

## What parent states:

*“I wish he could sit without as much support when he eats and plays – it is hard work holding him all the time.”*

## Child Outcome: Example

### This

“Romeo will play with toys and eat meals with his family by sitting without much support.”

### Not This

“Romeo will improve muscle tone for sitting.”

# Developing Family Outcomes

What the parent states:

“We want to be able  
to take Romeo with us in the car;  
we need a travel car seat.”

## Family Outcome: Example

**This**

“Karen and Mark will explore options for financial assistance for car seats and secure one.”

**Not This**

“Staff will explore options for financial assistance for travel chairs.”

# Criteria Defining High Quality, Participation-Based IFSP Outcomes

The outcome is necessary and functional for the child's and family's life.

The outcome reflects real-life contextualized settings.

The outcome crosses developmental domains and is discipline-free.

*"Place Card Here"*

When the child's contextual information is available, the following IFSP outcome criteria can also be evaluated:

- The outcome is based on the family's priorities and concerns.
- The outcomes described both the child's strengths and needs based on information from the initial evaluation and ongoing assessment.

The outcome is jargon-free, clear and simple.

The outcome emphasizes the positive, not the negative.

The outcome uses active words rather than passive ones.

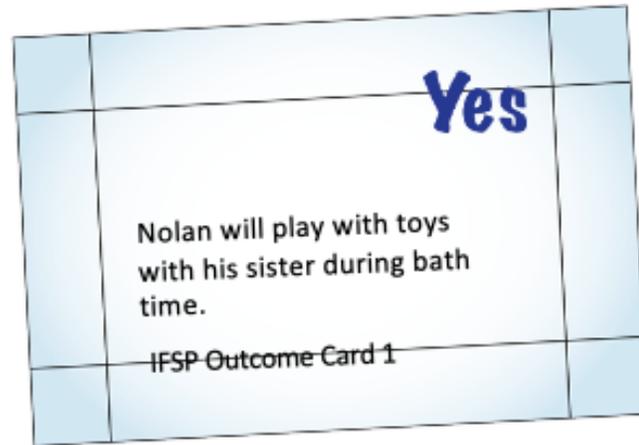
[ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf](http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf)

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[ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf](http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf)

# References and Resources

- Agreed Upon Practices For Providing Early Intervention Services In Natural Environments.  
[http://www.ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/AgreedUponPractices\\_FinalDraft2\\_01\\_08.pdf](http://www.ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/AgreedUponPractices_FinalDraft2_01_08.pdf)
- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA)  
[ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf](http://www.ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf)
- ECTA Center website <http://www.ectacenter.org/topics/families/famresources.asp>
- McWilliam, R.A. (2006). Steps to build a functional outcome. Retrieved from [http://www.siskin.org/downloads/Steps to Build a Functional Child Outcome.pdf](http://www.siskin.org/downloads/Steps_to_Build_a_Functional_Child_Outcome.pdf)

## References and Resources, continued

- Rush and Shelden. Tips and Techniques for Developing Participation-Based IFSP Outcomes Statements, BriefCASE, Vol 2, No. 1  
[http://www.fippcase.org/briefcase/briefcase\\_vol2\\_no1.pdf](http://www.fippcase.org/briefcase/briefcase_vol2_no1.pdf)
- Shelden, M. L., & Rush, D. D. (2009). Tips and Techniques for Developing Participation-Based IFSP Outcome Statements. Briefcase, 2(1). Retrieved from [http://www.fipp.org/Collateral/briefcase/briefcase\\_vol2\\_no1.pdf](http://www.fipp.org/Collateral/briefcase/briefcase_vol2_no1.pdf)