

**Functional Child & Family Outcomes**  
**Technical Assistance Document**



Developed: April 2015

This document is intended to provide technical assistance in developing “functional” child and family outcomes for the IFSP. This process is used for writing all IFSP outcomes regardless of whether or not the Oklahoma Family Interview (OFI) was completed with a family.

For an outcome to be “functional”, it must meet the following criteria:

1. Reflect the priorities of the family
2. Be useful and meaningful to the family
3. Reflect real-life situations of the family and child
4. Be free of jargon
5. Be measurable

Additional criteria to consider when developing outcomes...

- Outcomes should be able to be addressed by various people at various times through a family’s normal routines and activities... keep outcomes from becoming too specific or narrow.
- Ask yourself... why is the child working on this outcome? Is there an immediately apparent answer?
- Be clear... it should be easily understood by the family

Regarding “jargon” and “measurability”, there are some terms that should be avoided when writing functional outcomes so that outcomes are easily understood by families. The following list identifies some common early intervention terms that are best avoided when writing functional IFSP outcomes:

- Therapeutic terms – utterances, verbal exchanges, minimal physical assistance, etc.
- Improve
- Increase
- Understand
- Tolerate
- Trials (3 out of 5 times)
- Percentages (90% of the time)

### **CHILD OUTCOMES:**

There are seven identified steps used when writing a functional IFSP outcome.

#### **Step 1: Read the Informal Outcome**

The IFSP team will refer back to the prioritized concerns developed by the family during the OFI,

Example – *Austin drinking from a sippy cup*

#### **Step 2: Determine the Routines Involved**

Upon completion of a OFI, it should be easy to identify the routine(s) related to a stated informal outcome. In the example started above, see the following:

Example – Austin drinking from a sippy cup during *all mealtimes and snacktimes*

**Step 3: Write “(The child’s name) will participate in (those routines)...”**

All child outcomes should begin with this phrase. See below for the continuation of the example outcome:

Example – *Austin will participate in all mealtimes and snacktimes...*

**Step 4: Write “...by \_\_\_\_\_ing,” inserting the desired behavior or skill**

Typically this step requires little to no wording changes from what the family said regarding the target behavior or skill. The specifics of the outcome will be addressed in the coming steps. See below:

Example – *by drinking from a sippy cup independently.*

**So far, the example outcome reads...**

*Austin will participate in all mealtimes and snacktimes by drinking from a sippy cup independently.*

*(Note – the original “informal” outcome only said... Austin drinking from a sippy cup)*

**Step 5: Determine a Measurability Criterion**

Determine what frequency, duration or rate would be an acceptable level of behavior? This is the measure by which the family can say that the child has met the outcome. This should be determined in discussion with the IFSP team which includes the family.

Example – *Austin will hold and drink from his sippy cup independently three times per day for two weeks.*

**Step 6: Add a Generalization Criterion**

The next step is to identify the extent to which a child should demonstrate the behavior or skill across time, places, people, situations or materials.

Example – *during all mealtimes and snacktimes*

**Step 7: Add a Time Criterion**

Next, the amount of time over which the behavior or skill needs to be displayed should be determined and added to the outcome. The criterion should answer one of the following... how long, how many times, how often, etc. See example below:

Example – *for 5 consecutive days*

**The final example outcome now reads...**

*Austin will participate in all mealtimes and snacktimes by drinking from a sippy cup independently.*

*We will know he can do this when he drinks a whole cupful, holding the sippy cup independently during all mealtimes and snacktimes for 5 consecutive days.*

### **FAMILY OUTCOMES:**

Generally, a family outcome can be written using the words of the family and adding at least one measurable criterion. Typically, the criterion can be the addition of a date or “deadline” for the outcome to be met.

Example –

Informal outcome: *Eat dinner together nightly at the table as a family*

Formal outcome: *All five family members will eat dinner together nightly at the table as a family by 10/1/2015.*

### **OTHER OUTCOME INFORMATION:**

#### **Outcomes for Other People:**

Outcomes can't be written for people who are not in attendance at the IFSP meeting. For example, if parent #1 is wanting parent #2 to participate in a specific task but parent #2 did not attend the IFSP meeting... an outcome stating that parent #2 is going to do “something” should not be written. An outcome could be written for parent #1 who is at the IFSP meeting to complete an activity that would specify parent #1 addressing the desired behavior with parent #2. See below...

Example – *Jill will have a conversation with Jack about spending more time with the children.*

**Preemies/General Development Outcomes:**

The completion of a OFI should help a family move away from “global” or broad general development outcomes. Through the discussion of the family’s daily activities, more specific skills or behaviors should be identified for the child and the family. Knowledge of basic child development will assist in helping families identify possible outcomes for their child’s future development and skills/behaviors within the family’s existing routines and activities. Although outcomes may still address general developmental milestones, the outcomes should be targeted and “functional” for the child and family within the context of daily routines and activities now and in the coming months.

If a family identifies that they just want their child to grow and develop... it is the responsibility of the IFSP team (RC and Service Provider) to assist the family through conversation in identifying specific, functional skills and behaviors and how those may fit in with the family’s daily life. It is necessary to also look at any other “family outcomes” that may need to be addressed for the parents and/or siblings of the child.

**Writing of Outcomes:**

The task of physically writing the IFSP outcomes belongs to the IFSP team and not to one specific individual or group of individuals. This task should be discussed and planned prior to entering the family’s home so that the process may flow smoothly and effectively. There is no right answer – however, it is a “team” effort when developing the IFSP and it is always best to utilize the strengths of each individual on the team for the good of the child and family being served. There are times when outcomes will be written by one person at an IFSP meeting and there will be times when outcomes are written by several people at an IFSP meeting depending on the situation, the individuals present at the meeting and the skills/knowledge needed to address the development of the outcome.

**Combining Outcomes:**

Generally, outcomes chosen by a family should not be combined into one larger, encompassing outcome. We want to preserve and honor the family’s desire for a specific skill or behavior and combining the skills/behaviors may make it appear as if we are not paying full attention to the individual skills they are seeking. The skills and behaviors may be worked on collectively during intervention visits but for the purposes of writing the outcomes, they should be kept separate on the IFSP document.

An example, could be that a family wants a child to be able to dress and undress independently and also to get in and out of the bathtub on their own.

We would not want to write a goal that addresses the child getting undressed before their bath, getting into and out of the tub and then putting on their pajamas afterwards.

These should be kept as two separate skills (dressing/undressing and getting in/out of the tub) when writing the outcomes but when addressing the skills during intervention visits, all may be worked on as a sequence for the family's bathtime routine.

**Professionals' Concerns Not Addressed by Family Chosen Outcomes:**

The fact that a family does not choose or identify a certain skill as a priority or outcome during an IFSP meeting does not mean that the professional's concern will not be addressed. As a professional, there is an ethical obligation to provide families with information and knowledge that is known regarding the child and family being served by SoonerStart. However, unless the professional's concern for the child or family is life-threatening or places the child, family or other family member in imminent danger or harm... the concern may need to be addressed at a different time once a relationship of trust has been formed with the family. If it is necessary to address it immediately, it should be done so and documented as necessary possibly including a prior written notice.