

Early Childhood Outcomes: Best Practice

The goal of early childhood special education is to enable children to be active and successful participants in their homes, schools, and communities (from Family and Child Outcomes for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education, Early Childhood Outcomes Center, April 2005). One way Oklahoma tracks progress towards this goal is through Early Childhood Outcome ratings. Each three- through five-year-old child receiving special education services is required to have Early Childhood Outcomes (ECOs) documented.

ECO data is important because it demonstrates the progress children make while receiving services and it can be used to improve programs so that students with disabilities experience improved outcomes. The three child outcome areas required to be reported are:

- **Outcome 1: Positive social-emotional skills**
- **Outcome 2: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills**
- **Outcome 3: Use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs**

Who participates in ECO ratings?

Members of the IEP team complete ECOs. The team may consist of:

- General and special education teachers
- Service providers like speech and motor therapists
- Family members and caregivers
- Administrative representatives
- Others, including Head Start personnel, daycare providers, and more

The team discusses a child's current levels of functioning across these broad outcome categories, using multiple sources of information, including observation and assessments.

What are some questions that can help the team complete the ECO?

To complete the ratings, it may be helpful to ask questions about the child's functional skills in their everyday settings. Next, the team considers these skills in the context of child's age expected skills and progressions. The [Child Outcome Summary \(COS\) Process Discussion Prompts](#) are examples of questions that encourage conversation about how a student is functioning in each outcome area. Teams may want to use [ECTA Outcomes Breadth](#) to support discussion about the full range of skills in each outcome area.



How is each ECO area scored?

Each ECO area is measured with a [Child Outcome Summary \(COS\) 7-Point Scale](#) where the team uses criteria to assign ratings from 1 to 7 based on age expected skill development. A rating of 7 most closely aligns with age expected levels, while 1 most closely aligns with foundational skills often observed in much younger children.

When determining a child's rating in each ECO area, the team will need to discuss the child's functional skills, analyze different types of data (i.e., observation data, family feedback, evaluation data, etc), and age anchor skills to identify where the child's current skills fit in the developmental progression expected for the chronological age. Using the [Decision Tree for Summary Rating Discussions](#) can assist with rating discussions.

What are the required timelines for completing ECOs?

- Entry ECOs are required to be completed during the initial IEP process for all children not yet in kindergarten.
- At exit, all children who received an entry rating should be given an ECO exit date. This date should reflect the end of preschool services. All children who receive an entry rating must be given an exit rating if they receive at least **180 days** of services from the date of the IEP to the last day of IEP services/end of year. If a child has received **less** than 180 days, only an exit date is required; no rating or data is necessary since the child received less than six months of early childhood services.
- This includes children who are exiting special education after being determined ineligible, caregivers declining further services, or students moving out of Oklahoma.
- For children advancing to kindergarten or turning six over the summer, ratings will be completed in late spring.

Tips for Teachers

- Explain ECOs for all involved in the child's education. Interpret formal scores (standard, scales, etc.), discuss functional skills observed, and explain scores and observations in language that is understandable to all IEP team members.
- Use [crosswalks](#) that relate assessment items to the three outcome areas to consider how information from assessments tools informs the understanding of child functioning for each outcome.
- Include data from different sources to measure ratings on ECO (data and input from assessments, family observations, formal observations by staff, previous testing, IEP goal progress, and more).
- Involve the **entire IEP** team in the process. Make sure to include parents, families, and other service providers in discussing the child's functioning and their ECO ratings. Check for team consensus.

For additional information about Early Childhood Outcomes,
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<https://sde.ok.gov/special-education-early-childhood-outcomes>

