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Overview

Child and family outcomes are the driving force behind early intervention services. The type and frequency of services as well as who the family's providers will be are determined by the outcomes set by the team with the family at the center. Because they are such an important component of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), it is crucial that the outcomes be functional, participation-based and measurable.

The focus of early intervention is on successful participation in everyday activities. Early intervention provides support to families and caregivers so they can enhance their children's learning and development. This focus reflects a paradigm shift from traditional models of service delivery such as treatment/medical, deficit-based or service-based models, to a new paradigm of focusing on outcomes. New models include capacity-building, strengths-based, family-centered and coaching models.

Research shows that children learn and develop best when they:

- Participate in natural learning opportunities that occur in everyday family and community routines and activities; and
- Are interested and engaged in activities and interactions with familiar caregivers, which in turn strengthens and promotes competency and mastery of skills.

(Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Raab & McLean, 2001; Shelden & Rush, 2001)

Caregivers provide multiple opportunities and support for learning and practicing new skills throughout the day (McWilliam). Service providers support caregivers by suggesting resources and activities that can enhance development in everyday learning opportunities and occur within the context of their relationship with the child. This first relationship (i.e., the relationship between caregivers and child) is the foundation for growth in all areas of development.

Outcomes, based on the team's information gathering, are the heart of the IFSP. High-quality outcomes guide all interactions in early intervention and make it more likely that progress and successes will be achieved for the child and family.

The IFSP Process

The goal of the IFSP process is to develop functional IFSP outcomes for eligible children and their families. Steps in the IFSP process are progressive and interrelated. What is gathered and used in early steps is used and built upon in subsequent steps. Information is revisited and strengthened.

Two key steps of the IFSP process that lead the IFSP team directly to the development of functional IFSP outcomes are:

- 1. Gathering information from each family about their concerns, priorities, resources and routines in a family-directed assessment; and
- 2. Conducting a functional assessment with every eligible child.

IFSP team members should consider the following when reviewing family information and child assessment results:

- What do findings indicate about the child's ability to participate and function in various settings and activities in his/her life?
- How well does the child's environment support his development?
- How might traumatic events or changes in the child's life be impacting their developmental growth?
- Is there anything related to the child's disability or developmental delay that may be impacting their social interactions with their caregivers or peers?

How does this information help identify appropriate IFSP outcomes for both the child and family?

Gathering Information from Families

The purpose of gathering information from families is to identify what is challenging in everyday routines and activities (concerns) and what routines are working well (identifying the child's and families' resources, strengths and interests). This allows the IFSP team to focus on providing support to the child and family within the context of the daily activities that are most relevant to the family. In addition to information from the family, it is essential to gather the same type of information from child care providers or others who spend a significant amount of time with the child. Because a child may have different routines and expectations in different environments, it is important to include those caregivers as members of the team and work together to create outcomes that meet the child and family's needs across settings.

This information also helps parents and caregivers identify their hopes and priorities for the child and family. Priorities are used to determine the focus of the functional assessment and to develop IFSP outcomes. In order to understand how priorities or desired changes impact daily activities, probing questions are needed. Questions may include:

- How would that make a difference in your day or make different times during your day easier?
- When would changes be most helpful and noticeable?
- Describe the ideal situation if all was going well. What would you, your child and others be doing during that time?
- How do you feel when ____?
- How do you think your child feels when
- What do you enjoy about your child?
- What daily routines are going really well/challenging?
- What have you tried so-far?
- How can we arrange things so he will be successful?
- How can we help your family have a successful day?
- What would a successful day look like?

It may also be helpful if practitioners reflect back to information that the parent already shared such as: "At our intake visit you said you wished the boys could play together without having a meltdown" or "you mentioned that you aren't able to go to a restaurant as a family lately because Sarah screams through dinner."

During information gathering, it is critical to identify the child's and family's interests. The questions included in the IFSP form are designed to capture interests, what is currently working well and what is challenging. The information about interests is used to identify the real-life, functional activities that interest and engage the child. Those activities will provide opportunities to learn and practice new skills so the child can enjoy positive social relationships (e.g., reaching for and playing with toys during bath time, playing naming games during car rides). IFSP outcomes that are contextualized within the activities that engage the child will be most effective. Using situations that are going well to introduce, practice and master skills that are challenging can be a good approach. Challenging situations should also be addressed by adapting a routine or activity to help the child gain the skills or equipment needed to participate more successfully.

Exploring family interests also leads to the development of outcomes. Asking questions such as "Are there activities that you would like to do that you are not able to do now?" will yield potential outcome statements (e.g., go out with my husband, go bike riding, take my child to church child care, etc.). Understanding the child's and family's interests also provides valuable information for the selection of intervention strategies.

During this process, information about the family's activities, expectations and values might be gathered. This is important information to have when developing outcomes in partnership with the family. While IFSP outcomes are determined by the family, it can sometimes be helpful for them to have a starting point because writing outcomes is not an activity most caregivers are used to. Below are some examples of how this information might be used to write functional outcomes with families:

- If preparing meals is an important activity, it might be a good routine to use.
- If the family's culture does not prioritize independence or self-care skills for toddlers, this may not be an appropriate area for an outcome.
- If the family participates in activities such as dance or music groups they may want an outcome that supports their child's participation.

Functional Child Assessment

Procedural Requirement

A multidisciplinary assessment of each infant or toddler with a disability must be conducted by qualified personnel in order to identify the child's unique strengths and needs and the early intervention services appropriate to meet those needs. Child assessment must also be comprehensive to include all areas of development.

Rationale

Areas of development in infants and toddlers are interdependent and interrelated. Specific developmental problems can be associated with delays or disabilities in multiple areas of development. For example, a low score in the area of communication may be due to hearing loss, cognitive delays that make learning language difficult or social-emotional difficulties that interfere with parent-child interaction. Comprehensive, in-depth information about the child's overall development and participation is essential for developing functional IFSP outcomes, planning appropriate intervention methods and strategies and monitoring progress.

Functional Child Assessment Practices to Consider

- Each team member must share with the entire team useful information collected from the family, starting at referral.
- The functional child assessment must be comprehensive and include information about the child's functioning in all developmental domains.
- Observe the child in the context of their daily routines and interactions with peers and caregivers to determine areas of successful participation and current challenges.
- Use skill sequences and data protocols from curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) to better understand unique strengths and needs in all areas of development. Use observational procedures and parent assessment components of CBAs to enhance understanding of the relationship between the child's development and their participation in everyday life.
- Synthesize all information on the child's development and functional participation in family routines and activities into the Summary of Functional Performance on the IFSP.
- Use initial child assessment information as a point of comparison for monitoring progress toward IFSP child outcomes, for selecting and modifying intervention strategies and for selecting Child Outcome Summary Descriptor Statements.

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires qualified personnel to use informed clinical opinion as a regular component of every evaluation and assessment procedure.

Functional IFSP Outcomes

IFSP outcomes answer the question: What would your family like to see happen for your child/family?

Functional IFSP Outcomes for Children and Families

- Enhance the child's learning through functional participation in everyday activities (child is learner)*
- Enhance the capacity of the family to meet the needs of their child (family is the learner)*
- Are important and meaningful to the family/caregiver (priorities)*
- Address desired functioning in the context of a relationship or social interaction (e.g., using words to communicate with peers at child care during play)
- Expand activity settings in which the child can be competent and successful*
- Are based on the child and family's interests and cultural values*
- Promote parent-child interaction

^{*(}Sheldon and Rush, 2009)

Table 1 provides examples of using what the parent states to develop a high-quality outcome for children and families (view attachment C for an example of a complete IFSP outcome):

Table 1: Functional IFSP Outcomes for Children and Families							
What the Parent States	What the Parent States This is the Outcome						
It is frustrating that we can't eat and play together because Emmanuel struggles with sitting up.	Emmanuel will play with toys and eat meals with his family by sitting on his own.	Emmanuel will improve muscle tone for sitting.					
I want to go to the bathroom without Jordan crying at the door.	Jordan will play independently for up to three minutes while Sasha is in the bathroom.	Jordan will learn to self- soothe.					
I want to feel connected to Nelly. Right now I feel like she doesn't know I'm there, especially when she focuses on one toy so closely.	Nelly will enjoy face-to-face games and songs with Marie-Noel while they are playing together.	Nelly will give eye-contact to her mom 3 out of 4 attempts.					
I can't take Caia to the grocery store without her having a meltdown.	Caia will be able to enjoy going to the grocery store with Tiffany.	Caia will behave herself in the grocery store.					

Functional IFSP Outcomes Supported by the FRC Related to Accessing Community Resources and Supports

- Support accessing community resources and supports; and*
- Are important and meaningful to the family/caregiver (priorities)*

Table 2 provides examples of using what the parent states to develop a high-quality outcome for accessing community resources and supports:

Table 2: Functional IFSP Outcomes Supported by the FRC Related to Accessing Community Resources and Supports							
What the Parent States	This is the Outcome	Not This					
We just moved to the area and we don't have a pediatrician. We have been using the E.R. when Ethan has an asthma attack.	Family will find a primary care provider so Ethan receives quality medical care.	Family will find a doctor instead of going to the E.R.					
I wish I had someone to talk to who understands what I'm going through.	Mike will call the local Parent to Parent Coordinator and ask about support group options.	Mike will talk to other parents.					
We want to be able to take Cole with us in the car but we don't have a car seat.	Karen and Mark will be able to travel in the car safely with Cole.	Staff will explore options for financial assistance for car seats.					

Outcomes Development

As described above, outcomes development begins with sensitively gathering information from families and conducting a functional assessment of the child. Necessary team skills and

^{*(}Sheldon and Rush, 2009)

attitudes include: valuing families' priorities, feeling comfortable interviewing families, knowing how to probe to clarify information about daily routines and activities, knowing how to conduct an authentic assessment and observing and collecting data across settings and team members. The IFSP team must understand and believe that children learn best when participating in naturally occurring activities that are of interest to the child and family.

Outcomes/Strategies Before Services

- Develop IFSP outcomes/strategies before identifying services and supports; and
- Identify services and supports based on what is necessary to meet the outcomes

(Dunst & Bruder, 1999; Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby, Raab & McLean, 2001; Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Raab & McLean, 2001; Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab & Bruder, 2002;)

The following are components of high-quality, functional outcomes. See Attachment A for definitions of each component as well as rationale and examples.

- Necessary/Functional
- Real-life contextual settings
- Discipline-free
- Jargon-free
- Positive
- Active
- Context of a relationship

Table 3 below lists sample child-focused IFSP outcomes and indicates whether each outcome meets the standards for being participation-based and high quality. The high-quality examples have a check in each column. Providers may find it helpful to use the worksheet in attachment B to rate outcomes in their IFSPs.

Table 3: Sample Child-Focused IFSP Outcomes							
	Is it Participation-Based and High-Quality?						
Sample IFSP Outcome	Necessary/ Functional	Real-Life Contextual Settings	Discipline- Free	Jargon- Free	Positive	Active	Context of a Relationship
Lily will go fishing with her family and hold her own fishing pole.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
David will talk more and pronounce words better.	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Rafael will go visit grandma and ride in his car seat all the way to her house.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ava will play with her toys so grandma can cook breakfast and get the older kids off to school.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Angel will participate in reciprocal turn taking during one-to-one facilitation.			✓		✓		
Colton will play together with his brother and express himself using gestures and words.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Isaiah will improve his sleeping patterns four out of five times.	✓		✓		✓		

Natalia will sleep through the night.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Marcus will stack four blocks.			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Aisha will gradually stop eating baby food and eat more solid foods.	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Walker will greet friends at story time at the library.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phu will eat enough food so he can gain weight and not have to have surgery.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leila will stop having tantrums at separation.	✓		✓			✓	
Jayden will tolerate lying on his stomach for 10 minutes without crying.			✓	✓	✓		
Ethan will be able to calm and soothe himself when he is dropped off at childcare.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Completing the IFSP

See Section IV of the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) IFSP Process and Resource Guide for more information on completing the IFSP:

https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/esit/IFSP_Resource_Guide.pdf

After the outcome statement has been determined, the IFSP team will complete the following:

What is happening now?

- Clarifies outcome and guides intervention planning; and
- Is a summary of previous information

This includes both what the child is able to do and what parents and other caregivers are doing currently related to the stated outcome. This section should include the child and family strengths as well as current skills and behaviors related to the outcome.

Team Strategies and Methods

The strategies and methods describe the ways in which the family and team will work toward achieving this outcome. They detail the roles of the providers, parents and other team members—who will help and what they will do. Strategies and methods:

- Help achieve the outcome;
- Are aligned with functional child assessment results;
- Are based on how all children learn throughout the course of everyday life, at home, in early care and education settings and in the community;
- Are developmentally appropriate;
- Focus on naturally occurring learning opportunities;
- Support primary caregivers to provide children with everyday learning experiences and opportunities that strengthen and promote a child's competence and development; and
- Support learning that occurs in the context of activities that have high levels of interest and engagement for the child and family.

How we will know we've made progress?

This includes the criteria that will indicate progress to the team and the procedure the team will use to determine progress and a realistic timeline. It is acceptable for this section to include more clinical language such as "75% of the time" or "3 out of 4 attempts". See attachment C for more examples.

Services to Meet the Functional IFSP Outcomes

Only after the outcomes are determined should decisions be made about the services and supports needed to meet those outcomes. The IFSP must include the length, duration, frequency, intensity and method of delivering each service. Those decisions need to be based on the amount of support the family/caregiver needs to successfully use natural learning opportunities throughout everyday routines and activities at home, in community settings and in preschool (Jung, 2003; Dunst, 2004).

- Frequency and intensity mean the number of days or sessions that a service will be provided, and whether the service is provided on an individual or group basis;
- Method means how a service is provided (see the ESIT IFSP Process and Resource Guide for Washington's defined methods);
- Length means the length of time the service is provided during each session; and
- Duration means projecting how long the service will be provided (start and end dates).

Resources

Rush, D., and Shelden, M. (2009). Tips and Techniques for Developing Participation-Based IFSP Outcome Statements. *BriefCASE*, 2(1).

http://fipp.org/static/media/uploads/briefcase/briefcase vol2 no1.pdf

McWilliam, R. (2006). Steps to Build a Functional Outcome. https://marylandlearninglinks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Steps_to_Build_a_Functional_Child_Outcome.pdf

ECTA Center. IFSP Process: Planning and Implementing Family Centered Services in Natural Environments. http://ectacenter.org/topics/ifsp/ifspprocess.asp

ECTA Center. Developing High-Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes and IEP Goals: Training Package. Retrieved from http://ectacenter.org/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals.asp

ECTA Center. Resources for Writing Good IFSP Outcomes. http://ectacenter.org/topics/ifsp/ifsp.asp

Gillaspy, K., Lucas, A., Peters, M., and Hurth, J. (2014). Enhancing Recognition of High Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes: A training activity for infant and toddler service providers. Retrieved from http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-ifsp.pdf

Attachment A: Components of a High-Quality, Functional Outcome

Component	What?	Why?	Looks Like	Doesn't Look Like	Tips and Questions for Families	
Necessary/ Functional	This means that the outcome focuses on ways to support the child and family's participation in community life and family activities that are important to them. It should help the family improve participation	If outcomes are necessary and functional to the family, they will be more meaningful to the family. Families are more likely to practice strategies that are	Brady will crawl from his mom's lap to the toy box to get a toy during morning and evening playtime with his mom. Niko's parents will feel	Brady will roll, sit, crawl and walk. Niko will reach the next	When would changes be most helpful and noticeable? Are there activities that you used to do before your child was born that	
	in chosen actives and should not be based on what the provider feels is necessary/functional.*	chosen actives and based on their confident talking with hould not be based on hat the provider feels is confident talking with their child care provider about how to		developmental milestone of playing cooperatively.	you would like to do again?	
Real-Life Contextualized Settings	statements reflect the everyday activity settings and routines for the child life context as the focal point makes it easier for families to		life context as the focal to feed himself during sepoint makes it easier dinnertime with his to		What types of things or activities do you and your child like to do (e.g., hiking, cooking, reading books)?	
	mealtime, bathing and riding in the car, as well as routines and activities that are specific to the individual family. Specific isolated skills (e.g., test items that were missed during evaluation) are not considered real-life or contextualized.*	g and into their everyday as well as routines. vities that e individual solated ems that ing ot	Walker's twin and older sisters will enjoy back and forth play with her.	Walker will interact more with peers.	How would that make a difference in your day or make different times during your day easier?	
Discipline-Free	This means that the outcome is written to describe the child's participation in routines and everyday activity settings, promoting skill development	In early intervention, service providers work as part of an interdisciplinary team along with families. Any team member can	Davis will use words at mealtime to let his family know what he would like to eat and drink.	Davis will talk more and pronounce words better.	A parent should be able to easily see their role in meeting the outcome. How would you explain	
	across multiple domains, which can be addressed by any member of a child's IFSP team. It also means that the outcome should be written so that the child and/or family are the "actors" or persons doing something rather than the occupational therapist or early interventionist.*	contribute to the child's progress regardless of the area of concern.	Jonah's brother Josiah will find and show toys to Jonah to encourage him to walk.	Jonah will walk with a steady gait.	what we have been discussing today?	

Component	What?	Why?	Look Like	Doesn't Look Like	Tips and Questions for Families	
Jargon-Free	This means that the outcome is written so that it is understandable by the family and the general Outcomes that are written with clear, simple language are understood by all team		Amani will pick up and hold a toy during morning playtime with her mom.	Amani will cross midline to use a pincer grasp to pick up a toy.	Check for the family's understanding or preferred wording.	
	public, and does not include professional jargon or practitioner "speak". *	members.	Marie will enjoy singing songs and playing face-to-face games with her baby Angel.	Angel will participate in reciprocal turn taking during one-to-one facilitation.	What do you know about this topic?	
Positive	This means that the focus of the whole outcome statement is positive. It also means that the outcome	Focusing on the positive can help motivate the family as they identify what they	Miles will be happy and relaxed when his mom leaves him at childcare.	Miles will stop having tantrums at separation.	What makes your child happy, laugh and/or smile?	
	states what the child and/or family will do, rather than what they will not do or stop doing. If there are any negative words within the statement, it is not a positively worded outcome.*	want to see their child do. A strengths-based approach leads to a focus on wellbeing for the child and family.	Letty's grandma, Marguerite, will be able to support Letty in safely trying new foods with different textures.	Letty will gradually stop eating baby food and eat more solid foods without gagging.	What do you enjoy about your child that you'd like to see more of?	
Active	This means using words that encourage a child and/or family's active participation or	Using active words encourages a child and/or family's active participation or	Miguel will sleep through the night.	Miguel will improve his sleeping patterns 4 out of 5 times.	Describe the ideal situation if all was going well. What would you, your child and others be	
	engagement. Active words include eat, play, talk, walk, etc. and indicate what the child or family will do. Passive words reflect a state of being (e.g., tolerate and receive), or a change or lack of change in performance (e.g., increase, decrease, improve and maintain).*	Active words engagement in activities and helps will le for sit vill do. progress. read storie (e.g., tolerate or a change nge in (e.g., rease,		Thomas will tolerate sitting independently.	doing during that time?	
Context of a Relationship	This means that each outcome should address when interacting with		Lily will go fishing with her family and hold her	Lily will be able to hold her own fishing pole.	How do siblings interact? How could they be	
	skills within the context of a relationship. Whether that is with the parent, childcare provider, other children or other family members. IFSF outcomes should support the caregiver's understanding that social-emotional development is foundational for all other learning.	important people in their lives. Also, Including another person allows the team to support the child's social-emotional development through each IFSP outcome.	own fishing pole. Isabel will be comfortable sitting with her sister during story time at the library while mom sits at the back of the room.	Julia will be comfortable joining story time while mom sits at the back of the room.	included in outcomes and strategies? Who does your child respond well to during (name routine for desired outcome)?	

^{*(}Shelden & Rush, 2009)

Attachment B: IFSP Outcome Review Sheet

Using outcome examples from your program, check the boxes of the components met in each one. If they do not meet all the components, use the space below to revise the outcome.

Sample IFSP Outcome	Outcome Does it Have the Required Component					ts?		
	Necessary/ Functional	Real-Life Contextual Settings	Discipline- Free	Jargon- Free	Positive	Active	Context of a Relationship	
Lily will go fishing with her family and hold her own fishing pole.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
David will talk more and pronounce words better.	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Current Outcome:								
Revision:								
Current Outcome:								
Revision:								
Current Outcome:								
Revision:								
Current Outcome:								
Revision:								

Attachment C: Functional IFSP Outcomes for Children and Families

Functional outcomes must reflect the changes families would like to see happen for themselves and their children and be based on family priorities and the developmental needs of the child.

Outcome # 1 Start Date: Target Date:

What would your family like to see happen for your child/family? (The outcome must be functional, measurable and in the context everyday routines and activities.)

Nelly will watch Marie during face-to-face games while they are playing together.

What's happening now related to this outcome? What is your family currently doing that supports achieving this outcome? (Describe your child and/or family's functioning related to the desired change/outcome.)

Nelly briefly responds when her name is called and then brings her focus back to the toy she is playing with. When Marie is playing with Nelly, she is able to get her attention by holding her up to eye level and talking to her but it is very brief. When they are playing peek-a-boo, Nelly doesn't wait for Marie's face to reappear, she loses interest the moment her face is covered.

What are the ways in which your family and team will work toward achieving this outcome? Who will help and what will they do? (Describe the methods and strategies that will be used to support your child and family to achieve your outcomes within your daily activities and routines. List who will do what including both early intervention services and informal supports, including family members, friends, neighbors, church or other community organizations, special health care programs, parent education programs.)

The special educator will share strategies to support eye contact such as using high affect, holding a favorite toy at mom's eye level and other DIR Floortime strategies. The service coordinator will also arrange for a hearing screening to learn more about Nelly's hearing levels.

How will we know we've made progress or if revisions are needed to outcomes or services? (What criteria [i.e., observable action or behavior that show progress is being made], procedures [i.e., observation, report, chart], and realistic timelines will be used?)

- Nelly will respond with eye contact when called 4 out of 5 attempts as observed during a
 weekly home visit
- Nelly will stay engaged with Marie for 5 minutes during play as observed consistently over the course of 4 home visits
- Marie will report that she has learned 3 new strategies for getting and maintaining eye contact with Nelly

How did we do?	(Review of progress	statement/Criteria	for Success)
Date:			

Explanations/Comments: