

# Early Support for Infants & Toddlers



## PRACTICE GUIDE: DEVELOPING FUNCTIONAL, PARTICIPATION-BASED IFSP OUTCOMES

### Overview

“The purpose of the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers program is to build upon family strengths by providing coordination, supports, resources, and services to enhance the development of children with developmental delays and disabilities through everyday learning opportunities.” (ESIT Mission Statement)

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 models, deficit-based models, service-based/special education models, to a new paradigm of focusing on outcomes. New models include capacity-building models, strengths-based models, family-centered models, 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 (McWilliams). Service providers support caregivers by suggesting resources and activities that can enhance development in everyday learning opportunities. This paradigm shift requires a shift in the TYPE of outcomes the team creates.

Outcomes, based on the team’s information gathering, are the heart of the Individualized Family Service Plan (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, participation-based IFSP outcomes for eligible children and their families. Steps in the IFSP process are progressive and inter-related. 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, participation-based 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?
- What are some mismatches between this child’s abilities and environmental demands?
- How does this information help identify appropriate IFSP outcomes for both the child and family?

Table 1 Suggests how information gathered on these important topics during the IFSP process might be used to write the different elements of a functional, participation-based IFSP.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>Info from IFSP Process</b>	<b>Determine Eligibility</b>	<b>Develop Outcomes/ Goals</b>	<b>Select Routines, Activities, Settings</b>	<b>Develop Strategies/ Objectives</b>	<b>Determine People and Resources (Services)</b>	<b>Determine Frequency Intensity Length Duration</b>	<b>Determine Criteria to Measure Progress</b>
Family Wishes, Hopes and Dreams		√	√	√	x		
Family Concerns and Priorities		√	x	x	x	√	√
Family Resources			√	√	√	√	x
Child Needs	√	√	√	x	x	√	√
Child Strengths		√	√	√	x	√	
Child Interests, Preferences and Favorite People		√	√	√	√		x
Behaviors (of child and others) in Activities and Routines	x	√	√	√	√	x	√
Desired Activities	√	√	√	√	√	x	√
<b>IFSP Content</b>	<b>Who we serve</b>	<b>What we want to accomplish</b>	<b>When and where we work on outcomes</b>	<b>How we do it</b>	<b>Who/ what helps</b>	<b>How often; how long</b>	<b>How we know we are making progress</b>

## 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.

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 as shown in the table above. 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?

It may also be helpful if practitioners reflect back to information that the parent already shared such as: "Earlier you explained that you would like Johnny to let you know what he wants during mealtime;" or "You previously indicated you would like Johnny to let you know what toy he wants to play with, without him having a meltdown".

During information gathering it is critical to identify the child's and family's interests. The questions included on 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 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 family 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 childcare, etc.). Understanding the child's and family's interests also provides valuable information for the selection of intervention strategies.

## 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 interventions 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 problems 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.
- Begin functional child assessment after comprehensive evaluation has been completed or a diagnosed condition has been established.
- Observe the child in the context of their daily routines 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 about 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 Outcome Descriptor Statements on the COS.

IDEA Part C 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? There are two types of functional IFSP outcomes, child-focused outcomes and family-focused outcomes.

### Child-focused Outcomes

- Enhance the child's learning through functional participation in everyday activities (child is learner);
- Are important and meaningful to family/caregiver (priorities);
- Expand activity settings in which child can be competent and successful; and
- Are based on the child and family's interests.

Child-focused, participation-based IFSP outcome statements center on child interests that provide opportunities for learning and development within the context of daily routines and activities. IFSP outcome statements also focus on routines and activities that parents want or need to go more smoothly.

### Family-focused Outcomes

- Enhance the capacity of the family to meet the needs of their child (family is the learner);
- Support accessing community resources and supports (FRC supported);
- Are important and meaningful to the family/caregiver (priorities); and
- Are based on the family's interests;
- Enhance parent-child interaction

Access to informational, material, or social supports that the family wants can be the basis for a resource-based family outcome. If these outcomes are supported by the FRC they are documented on the IFSP outcomes page: *Functional IFSP Outcomes Supported by the Family Resources Coordinator Related to Accessing Community Resources and Supports*.

## 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 attitudes include: valuing families priorities, feeling comfortable interviewing families, knowing how to probe to clarify information, especially about daily routines and activities, as well as 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 of are interest to the child and family.

### Outcomes/Strategies before Services

- Develop IFSP outcomes/strategies before identifying services and supports
- 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 two examples of using what the parent states to develop a participation-based, high quality outcome:

**Table 2**

<b>What the Parent States</b>	<b>This is the Outcome</b>	<b>Not This</b>
It is frustrating that we can't eat and play together because Romeo struggles with sitting up.	Romeo will play with toys and eat meals with his family by sitting without much support.	Romeo will improve muscle tone for sitting.
We want to be able to take Romeo with us in the car; we need a travel car seat.	Karen and Mark will be able to travel in the car safely with Romeo.	Staff will explore options for financial assistance for travel chairs.

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 same table to rate outcomes in their IFSPs. The criteria used to rate the outcome statements are:

- **Necessary/Functional** – Outcomes are functional and are necessary, based on the family's priorities.
- **Real-life Contextual Settings** – Using the family's real-life context as the focal point is essential. Listening to families and other care providers discuss everyday successes and challenges as well as observing them and the children in their care during real-life activities are key strategies for writing participation-based IFSP outcome statements.
- **Discipline Free** – An IFSP document should not contain separate occupational therapy goals, physical therapy goals, speech-language therapy goals, or education-based goals. The outcome statements are identified by family priority and based upon child participation in current or desired activity settings or a needed resource or support.
- **Jargon Free** – The statements are written in words that all team members can understand and as close to how the parent or care provider actually stated the outcome as possible.
- **Positive** – Outcomes state what the child or family will do. Avoid stating what the child or family will not do.
- **Active** – Avoid passive words including tolerate, receive, increase or decrease, improve, and maintain. These words are generally descriptors of passive types of activities (e.g., tolerate a certain position; tolerate something being done; receive a specific service or treatment; maintain range of motion; and maintain eye contact) or are reflective of some type of skill enhancement or physical trait (e.g., increase range of motion; decrease spasticity; improve behavior; increase attention span; decrease tantrums; and increase oral-motor control). For quality child-focused IFSP outcomes to reflect enhanced participation, words that describe action, engagement, enjoyment, and involvement are required.

(Shelden & Rush, 2009)

**Table 3**

Sample Child-Focused IFSP Outcome	Is it Participation-Based and High Quality?					
	Necessary/ Functional	Real-life Contextual Settings	Discipline- Free	Jargon- Free	Positive	Active
Lily will go fishing with her family and hold her own fishing pole.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Davis will talk more and pronounce words better.	√			√	√	√
Bonnie will use a pincer grasp to flip a switch.					√	√
Romeo will go visit grandma and ride in his car seat all the way to her house.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Kimmie 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.			√		√	
Leroy will play together with his brother and express himself without hitting.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Miguel will improve his sleeping patterns 4 out of 5 times.	√		√		√	
Kamika will sleep through the night.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Marcus will stack 4 blocks.			√	√	√	√
Lanesha will gradually stop eating baby food and eat more solid foods.	√		√	√		√
Walker will make some friends at story time at the library.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Phu will eat enough food so he can gain weight and not have to have surgery.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Robin will stop having tantrums at separation.	√		√			√
Miles will be happy and relaxed when his mom leaves him at child care.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Thomas will tolerate lying on his stomach for 10 minutes without crying.			√	√	√	

## Completing the IFSP

See Section IV of the ESIT IFSP Process and Resource Guide for more information on completing the IFSP. (<http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/Default.aspx>)

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

What is happening now?

- Clarifies outcome and guides intervention planning.
- 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.
- Support learning that occurs in context of activities that have high levels of interest and engagement for 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.

### Services to Meet the Functional IFSP Outcomes

Only after the outcomes have been 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 WA 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

Shelden and Rush, "Tips and Techniques for Developing Participation-Based IFSP Outcome Statements"  
[http://www.fippcase.org/briefcase/briefcase\\_vol2\\_no1.pdf](http://www.fippcase.org/briefcase/briefcase_vol2_no1.pdf)

McWilliams, "Steps to Build a Functional Outcome"  
[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)

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

*ECTA* Center <http://ectacenter.org/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals.asp>

*ECTA* Center on writing functional outcomes <http://ectacenter.org/topics/families/famresources.asp>

## Videos

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ifsp+meeting&q=AS&sk=&FORM=QBVR&pq=ifsp%20meeting&sc=8-12&sp=1&q=AS&sk=#view=detail&mid=A82E223BCDDFABBDDF72A82E223BCDDFABBDDF72>

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ifsp+meeting&q=AS&sk=&FORM=QBVR&pq=ifsp%20meeting&sc=8-12&sp=1&q=AS&sk=#view=detail&mid=36CC8CDFA7018658ED3D36CC8CDFA7018658ED3D>

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ifsp+meeting&q=AS&sk=&FORM=QBVR&pq=ifsp%20meeting&sc=8-12&sp=1&q=AS&sk=#view=detail&mid=F5DC4F5E77FFAF875F5CF5DC4F5E77FFAF875F5C>