

EI: Child Assessment Practices for IFSP Outcomes

In a Nutshell.....

The words “child assessment” and “child evaluation” are often used interchangeably. They are not the same. Federal and state regulations define “evaluation” as the determination of eligibility for services, often using a standardized tool. Evaluation allows us to determine if the child has a delay or disability, but does not provide “assessment” information. Assessment for the purpose of developing child outcomes must describe how children participate in everyday routines at home, childcare, preschool, or any other setting in which they spend significant time. While a “test” may identify a delay in a developmental domain (e.g. lack of a pincer grasp), assessment about everyday routines tells us when and how the skill is called for during a child’s day, the potential learning opportunities to practice the skill, and the way in which to monitor progress in everyday activities. Standardized tests do not necessarily reveal a problem in functioning....not every delay impacts a child in the same way and not every family will choose to prioritize the same skill. We need to know what each child and family do during the day if we are to capture assessment data that will truly guide us in writing functional outcomes for individual children and their families.

Key principles to consider...

1. **Evaluation for eligibility.** Standardized tests are designed to determine eligibility.
2. **Assessment for programming.** Assessment practices that promote functional outcomes involve family or teacher interview and observation of the child’s participation in everyday routines and activities.
3. **Participation to determine outcomes.** Failed test items are not functional child outcomes. Delays in development, in and of themselves, do not necessarily impact a child’s participation in everyday routines and activities.

Why are child assessment practices so important?

We know that young children learn primarily through repeated opportunities to practice within their everyday environments, with people they know and materials with which they are familiar. They do not learn from “lessons” or sessions once or twice a week (McWilliam, 2010). Logically then, assessment that facilitates functional IFSP outcomes would come from gathering information from the family, childcare provider, and/or preschool teacher. Each has unique knowledge about the child’s participation and engagement with materials, other children and activities in everyday routines.

Reference Documents/Materials

- [McWilliam video](#)
- [RBI 102 FAQ](#)
- [McWilliam MEISR](#)

Samples

- [EDN MDT report samples](#)

Tools

- [RBI demo](#)
- [ABC Matrix](#)
- [Interest-Based Everyday Checklist](#)
- [SATIRE](#)
- [RBI Implementation Checklist](#)
- [Secondary Interviewer Checklist](#)
- [RBI Handout for Families](#)