

Including Families in the Rating Discussion

What is the role of the family when using the Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF)?

The family plays several important roles in the child outcomes measurement process, including the family as 1) team member, 2) child information provider, 3) rating participant, and 4) consumer.

The family as team member

Just as families are members of IFSP and IEP teams, they are critical to the assessment team. DEC Recommended Practices (2005) tell us

“Early childhood assessment is a flexible, collaborative decision-making process in which teams of parents and professionals repeatedly revise their judgments and reach consensus....”¹

The family as information provider

COSF ratings rely on information about a child’s functioning across situations and settings. Parent input is crucial: family members see the child in situations that professionals do not. The rest of the team will need to learn what family members know about the child -- what the child does at home, at grandma’s house, in the grocery store, etc.

As participant in the COSF rating discussion

As members of the IFSP or IEP team, families are natural participants in the COSF rating discussion. Their role in the rating is child expert, while other members of the team will know child development and the skills and behaviors expected at various age levels. Programs and individual teams not including the family in the rating process will need to maximize the role of family as information provider in order to make the COSF rating.

As consumers

Whether or not families participate in the rating discussion, professionals will need to be able to explain why the rating is being done and what it means. Several states and programs have developed brochures and letters that describe the outcomes measurement system for families. Please go to our website: www.the-eco-center.org and look under “State-developed materials” and “Informing parents about outcomes”.

Discussion questions

- What are your program’s policies for including parents in the COSF rating discussions?
- Does your program have materials that inform families about outcomes?
- What resources will you need to support your efforts to involve families in the child outcomes measurement process?

Was this handout useful? Please share comments, suggestions, or questions with us at staff@the-eco-center.org.

¹ From Bagnato and Neisworth (1991), as quoted in DEC Recommended Practices (2005)

