**Information courtesy of the** [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA)](http://ectacenter.org/default.asp)**.**

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**Why are states measuring outcomes for programs serving young children with disabilities?**

In this age of accountability, policymakers are asking questions about the outcomes achieved through participation in programs supported by public funds. Judging the effectiveness of any program requires looking at results, not simply at the process of providing services. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education now requires states to report outcomes data for children and families served through Part C and Part B Preschool of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as part of their Annual Performance Report (APR). Many states have begun to use data on child and family outcomes in many different ways to improve their programs.

**States must report the percentage of infants and toddlers with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) or preschool children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who demonstrate improved:**

1. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication [and early literacy\*])
3. Use of appropriate behavior to meet needs

**Are states required to report on a child's progress for any outcome in which the child does not have a delay?**

Yes. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires that states provide data on all three outcomes for every child leaving Part C or Part B Preschool services.\* Data are required for all outcomes even if there are no concerns about a child's development in an outcome, or if the child has delays only in one or two outcome areas. This includes children receiving only a single service such as speech therapy.

Some of the key components of a quality approach to informing families about the collection of child and family outcome data include the following:

* Program staff invite family engagement through multiple options and formats for collecting information about their child and family (e.g., interview guides, checklists, etc.).
* Program staff use a strengths-based approach to gather information about the child and family.
* Program staff use an individualized approach to gather information from families. Examples include communicating in a family’s home language and scheduling visits based on the family's schedule.
* Program staff obtain information about the child in their natural environments, for example at home or child care, with familiar adults present.
* Program staff use multiple sources to gather information about the child’s functioning, which may include direct observation using assessment tools, and structured or informal family interviews.
* Programs engage families in the outcomes measurement process in an ongoing manner throughout their time in the program.