



# Characteristics

## Characteristics Of Functional Participation-based IFSP/IEP Outcomes/Goals

A PRACTITIONER'S RESOURCE



*What do functional participation-based IFSP/IEP outcome/goals look like for children birth to age 5 in Nebraska?*

### Research Says...

Learning and development occur more rapidly when young children are participating in activities of interest to them, thus creating opportunities for them to practice existing skills, explore the environment and learn new skills (Dunst, 2001; Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab, & Bruder, 2000).

Functionally-worded outcomes/goals allow teachers and care providers to easily integrate targeted behaviors into daily classroom/home activities (Notari & Drinkwater, 1991). Finally, families report that functionally-worded outcomes, void of jargon, facilitate the IFSP process for them (DeGangi, Royeen, & Wietlisbach, 1992) and are a key component of family-centered plans (Jung & McWilliam, 2005).

### Outcome/Goal Characteristics

In order for the outcomes/goals for Individualized Family Service Plans or Individual Education Plans (IFSP/IEP) to be functional and participation-based for children and/or their families, each should reflect the following characteristics:

#### *Appropriate Content*

- The outcome/goal reflects the parents' and other IFSP/IEP team members' stated concerns, priorities, and desires for the child and the family.
- The outcome/goal reflects recent assessment/interview information and is justifiably applicable to this child and/or family. (e.g., Family reports Joey is unable to go on weekly family shopping trips – Joey will ride in the shopping car.)
- The child and/or parent/care provider is the actor(s) in the IFSP/IEP outcome/goal statement. (e.g., Sasha will assist with taking her clothes on or off...OR...Kelly will secure respite care at least monthly for an afternoon or evening outing with friends.)
- The outcome/goal reflects function rather than discipline- or domain-specific skills. (e.g., Jill will walk to the car with one hand held...OR...When reading stories, Jill will talk about pictures in the story.)
- The outcome/goal is functional and meaningful within the child and family's everyday routines. (e.g., Patti and Dan will be able to take Sasha with them on their bike rides...OR...Sasha will be able to travel by car or bus safely.)
- The child's participation in an activity or setting is the focus of child outcome/goal statements. (e.g., Sasha will tell adults what she wants or wants to do when in sandbox, pool, house/ kitchen or other area at preschool or home.)

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# Outcome/Goal Characteristics

## Appropriate Context

- The outcome/goal reflects the child's participation in natural and participation-based learning environments. (e.g., at story hour... OR... when grocery shopping)
- The child's and/or adult's interests and strengths are the basis for the child's participation in an activity and/or setting. (e.g., Jack will be able to be understood when ordering a snack at his brother's baseball game)
- Family-focused outcomes (IFSP) reflect family-identified routines/activities as a basis for the outcome. (e.g., during his brother's gymnastics practice... OR... during Sunday school)
- The outcome/goal has a possible and logical time frame for achievement. (e.g., Within the next month.....; by the time the family takes summer vacation; by May)

## Appropriate Quality

- The outcome/goal is observable in natural interactions/activities (does not need to be "tested"). (e.g., When singing the fish song at circle time, Sasha will say her /f/ clearly enough that words are understood by teacher and peers.)
- The outcome/goal is measurable. (e.g., Jay will walk between the couch and the chair in the family living room.)
- The outcome/goal wording is precise and easily understood by family and providers. No one need ask, "What does that look like?" (e.g., Sasha will tell adults specifically which object or action she wants, or how many she wants with speech or sign language that adults can understand.)
- The outcome/goal avoids acronyms and jargon. No one need ask, "What does that mean"?

Words to avoid: ambulate, range of motion, articulate, MLU, pincer grasp, supinate, cognitive, quantitative, qualitative, temporal relation, spatial, tacts, appropriate. (e.g., Sasha will successfully grab for toys slightly beyond her immediate reach and place them in containers in front or behind her without falling over.)

- The outcome/goal is active and states what child and parent or care provider will be able to do by a target date. (e.g., Sasha will take turns blowing bubbles with Mom by her second birthday.)

## Functional, Participation-based Outcome/Goals are NOT:

- Failed test items
- Developmental ages for the child
- Discrete de-contextualized child skills
- The team's preferred intervention approaches or services to be delivered



# Outcomes in Action

The following are examples that reflect the characteristics of functional participation-based outcomes/goals for an IFSP/IEP. Final wording for an IFSP/IEP will be the decision of the team members.

## Functional Participation-based:

- IEP: Jeff will stay in his seat at the table during snack time without bothering his neighbor for at least 10 minutes for 10 consecutive school days by December 1st of this year.
- IEP: Krista will independently play for at least 10 minutes with familiar toys/objects at home or school during specified "quiet times" at least 5 different days in a 2-week period.
- IFSP: By the end of August of this year, Jake will stay in his chair during mealtimes at home without bothering his sister for the duration of the meal.
- IFSP: Carl will secure a car seat by November 30 of this year that fits Jerad and also fits in both the family's van and small car.
- IFSP: Kay will say the "m" sound in the words "milk" and "mom" at mealtimes and be understood by family members by her third birthday.

## NON-Functional, NON-Participation-based:

X IEP: Jeff will safely walk up and down steps with a reciprocal pattern without holding on to a rail 75% of the time by (date).

X IEP: Krista will improve communication skills by meeting the following benchmarks.

X IFSP: Jake will be able to pick up a small pellet with a pincer grasp and release it into a bottle with a narrow opening 75 % of the time by (date).

X IFSP: Services coordinator will explore options of respite for family.

X IFSP: Kay will say initial /m/ sounds in 50 words with 100% accuracy over 5 days by (date).

## Remember...

The purpose of an IFSP/IEP is to document the focused discussions that families and early intervention providers (for children birth to 5 years) have for a particular child with developmental disabilities. The intent is to focus everyone's efforts toward the child being an active and successful participant in family life, community activities, and school, despite current delays or challenges. The outcomes/goals should reflect what the team (i.e., family, teachers, and other care- and service-providers) prioritizes for a period of time as they collaborate to promote a child's social competence, safety, quality independence and eventual school success in everyday interactions with peers and family in desired home, classroom, and community activities.

NOTE: Information about Nebraska's rationale for functional, participation-based outcomes/goals can be found in the Preamble. This is one of a series of four documents. These documents and references can be found at <http://www.education.ne.gov/ECH/> , <http://ectc.education.ne.gov/> , <http://www.education.ne.gov/edn/> , <http://www.pti-nebraska.org/>