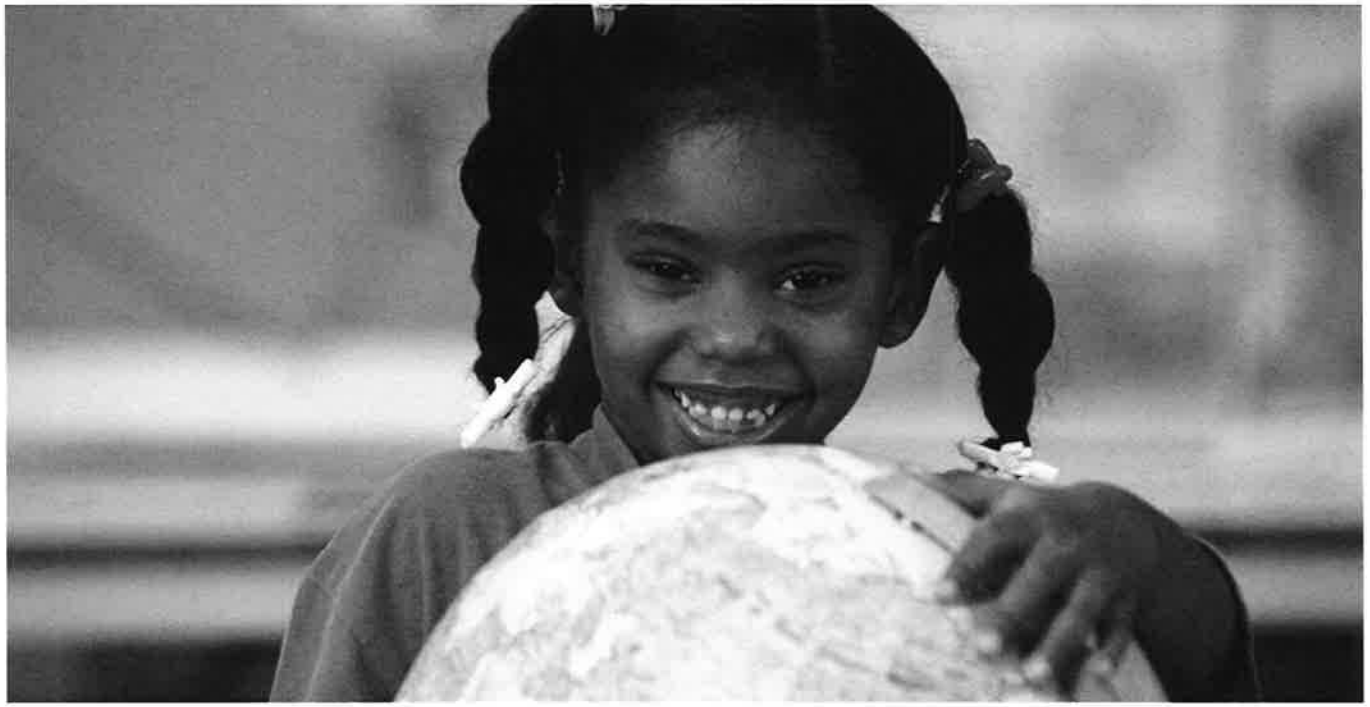
Local Contributing Factor Tool for SPP/APR Indicator C-3/B-7

Collecting and Using Valid and Reliable Data to Determine Underlying Factors Impacting Local Performance to Develop Meaningful Improvement Plans

October 2012



The Early Childhood Outcomes Center
http://www.the-eco-center.org

Purpose and Background

Through technical assistance work in a number of states, this tool has been developed to assist local programs in collecting valid and reliable data to determine contributing factors impacting performance on State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators C-3 and B-7.

The purpose of this document is to provide ideas for the types of questions a local team would consider in identifying factors impacting performance. General questions that are applicable to all indicators are included as well as questions specific to each indicator. Suggested questions are categorized into two main areas: 1) *Systems/Infrastructure* and 2) *Practitioner/Practice*. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of questions. Some questions are designed to determine adequacy of local agency management and oversight while others are geared for gathering information from service coordinators and practitioners and about actual practices. Data collected from this investigation should be used to identify contributing factors that relate to local infrastructure, policies and procedures, funding, training and technical assistance, supervision, data, personnel and practitioner practices. These factors, once identified, can lead to the development of meaningful strategies for improvement. Based upon the results of the investigation and analysis of data, it is expected that strategies would only be developed in those areas impacting current performance.

States' accountability systems use a variety of off-site and on-site methods to monitor the performance of Local Early Intervention Programs (EIPs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in their implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Such methods may include:

- data system reports
- self-assessments
- parent surveys
- child outcomes data
- complaints
- focus groups
- timely correction of noncompliance logs
- record reviews

Regardless of the monitoring methods used, performance challenges may be identified by the state agency.

If monitoring identifies noncompliance, the state must issue a written finding. Correction of the identified noncompliance must be verified as soon as possible but in no case more than a year. If the monitoring identifies performance issues within a results indicator, States use a variety of methods, including the use of local Improvement Plans (IPs) to ensure improvement at the local level. Improvement planning should involve investigating the underlying factors contributing to current performance.

Instructions

It is recommended that local agencies use a team of parents, practitioners, administrators and other relevant stakeholders to collect and analyze data in order to determine the factors impacting performance. This analysis will help in the development of meaningful improvement activities designed to improve performance and reach state established targets. Data collection can include review of local program data, review of local policies and procedures, review of child records, and interviews with parents and practitioners. The depth or scope of the analysis should be based upon the degree of challenges with current performance. Local programs/LEAs may need state technical assistance to develop meaningful CAPs/IPs and this tool can assist in that process. The state agency may have relevant data in the state database that can contribute to the local analysis and save time for the local planning team.

For each indicator, worksheets are provided including indicator specific questions for both Systems/Infrastructure and Practitioner/Practice, summary questions from the analysis, and an improvement plan framework. A local program/LEA would complete the worksheet and analysis on only those indicator(s) for which the program/LEA has been found performing below expected targets as designated by the state. Throughout the investigation, however, consideration should be given to the fact that many of the factors and solutions identified for one indicator may in fact impact performance in other indicators.

The results of the local agency investigation of contributing factors related to performance issues can also assist the state in completing its analysis of statewide factors contributing to performance issues for each SPP/APR compliance indicator. Additional resources, including state level investigative questions for each indicator, are available on The Right IDEA: IDEA Technical Assistance and Guidance website.

General Questions Applicable to All Indicators

The following are general questions applicable to all indicators. The questions are categorized into two main areas: 1) *Systems/Infrastructure* and 2) *Practitioner/Practice*. These general questions provide an overview of the indicator specific questions included in each of the Indicator Worksheets.

Systems/Infrastructure

- Did we identify a performance issue with this Indicator before others did?
- Do we have clear policies and procedures in place for this results Indicator?
- Do we have valid and reliable data available about performance on this Indicator?
- Do our contracts/agreements have incentive or sanctions in place to facilitate improved performance in this Indicator?
- Do we have routine supervision/monitoring processes in place to measure improved performance in this Indicator?
- Do we develop and implement data-driven performance improvement plans to address continuous improvement in this Indicator?
- Do we have adequate numbers of qualified personnel and an effective recruitment/retention process?
- Do we target training and technical assistance to the needs of the staff in relation to this Indicator?
- Do we have effective collaborative relationships with community partners to support continued improvement in this Indicator?

Practitioner/Practice

- Do our disaggregated data (from database or child record) show patterns of performance based on specific practitioners, ages of children, zip codes, etc.?
- Do our data (from database or child record) show trends that are useful in determining the root cause(s) of the performance issue?
- When interviewed or observed, do our service coordinators/practitioners:
  - Know there is a performance issue with this Indicator?
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the requirements and evidence-based practices related to this Indicator?
  - Have ideas about what barriers are contributing to the performance issue in this Indicator?
  - Have suggestions regarding possible strategies would be helpful in improving performance in this Indicator?
- When interviewed, do our community partners:
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the requirements and evidence-based practices related to this Indicator?
  - Know there is a performance issue with this Indicator?
  - Have ideas about what barriers are contributing to the performance issue in this Indicator?
  - Have suggestions regarding possible strategies would be helpful in improving performance in this Indicator?
- When interviewed, do parents:
  - Know there is a performance issue with this Indicator?
  - Have ideas about what barriers are contributing to the performance issue in this Indicator?
  - Have suggestions regarding possible strategies would be helpful in improving performance in this Indicator?

Indicator Specific Worksheets

SPP/APR Indicator C -3 and B-7: Percent of children with IFSPs/IEPs who demonstrate improved (a) positive social-emotional skills, (b) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and (c) use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Systems/Infrastructure	Practitioner/Practice
Section 1: Questions related to collecting and reporting quality child outcomes data	
Are our local administrators and practitioners informed of the purpose(s) of the child outcomes measurement system? Is there a written statement (by the state or local program) about why we collect the data and how it will be used? Do we have comprehensive written policies and procedures describing the data collection and transmission approach? If so, are the policies and procedures clear and readily accessible? Have they been updated to reflect any changes over time? Is there evidence that the policies and procedures are being followed with high fidelity across the program? Do we have a process for ensuring and tracking that practitioners are trained and have the requisite competencies for conducting data collection? Is training and technical assistance readily available to all professionals involved in the process? Is it consistent with policies and procedures addressing data collection? Are there written expectations for data collection and supervision of the data collection? Does the system support accurate and timely entry and transmission of data? Do individuals have access to the necessary hardware and software? Does the system allow practitioners to review data and enter changes efficiently and effectively? Are they provided relevant training?	Do our practitioners have the competencies needed for measuring child outcomes? If not, why not? E.g. Do they have access to and understand the written policies and procedures for measuring child outcomes? Are they accessing ongoing technical assistance and support needed to implement the outcomes measurement procedures with fidelity? Do they understand the purpose of measuring child outcomes? Do they see value in the data collection and the resulting information? ▪ What solutions would address problems related to collecting quality outcomes data (e.g. procedures for tracking missing data, need for more practitioner training)? ▪ What solutions need to be implemented related to specific data collection practices? Do those who are entering the data have the competences and resources needed for entering and transmitting the data? Do they receive the necessary training? Do our supervisors oversee and ensure the quality of the child outcomes measurement process? Do they have the competencies needed? If not, why not? E.g. Do they have access to and understand the written policies and procedures for collecting and reporting child outcomes? Do they understand the purpose of the child outcomes data? Do they see value in the data collection and the resulting information? Do they have

Systems/Infrastructure	Practitioner/Practice
Do we have a process for ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the data? Do we have evidence that the data are high quality for the intended purposes (low missing data; high accuracy of data)? • Do we implement strategies for reducing missing data? • Do we analyze the data for accuracy (e.g. pattern checking) and implement strategies for improving the accuracy of the data? Do we have an effective and efficient method for entering and transmitting data? Are there system checks in place on data entry? Are those entering and transmitting data well trained and do they have access to the necessary hardware and software? Do we evaluate the effectiveness of our system for collecting and reporting child outcomes data to ensure it is accomplishing its intended purpose(s)? Do our monitoring and quality assurance processes include monitoring of child outcomes data collection process (data collection, entry, transmission)? Do we coordinate across our local Part C and Section 619 programs to support the quality and usefulness of the child outcomes data? Do we coordinate across our local early childhood programs? Do we have policies or procedures in place to inform stakeholders, including families, about all aspects of the outcomes measurement system? E.g. Are families fully informed about the data collection?	access to the data? ▪ What solutions related to supervising the data quality would address problems (e.g. more consistent supervision; criteria for quality that can be used by supervisors)? ▪ What solutions need to be implemented related to the role of supervisors? Are there other issues that our supervisors and practitioners identify as possible reasons why there are problems related to the measurement of child outcomes?

Section 2: **Questions related to improving performance related to child outcomes**	
Do we have a process for ensuring that IFSP/IEP services and supports are high quality and aligned with individual child and family needs and priorities? • Are children and families receiving an appropriate amount and types of services? • Are children and families receiving services and supports individualized to their needs? • Are children receiving services delivered in natural environments/least restrictive environments? If not, why not? Is the program effectively supporting key adults in the child's life (family members, child care providers, early intervention providers, preschool teachers, therapists, etc.)? If not, why not? Do we have a process for supporting practitioners and tracking that they are implementing effective practices (e.g. collaborative teaming, quality assessment, ongoing use of data for progress monitoring, effective interventions adapted for the cultural, linguistic and individual needs of the child and family, communication with families)? If not, why not? If practitioners are not implementing effective practices, why not? • Are there systems barriers that prevent our program from implementing effective practices? • Do we have written competencies that reflect effective practices? • Is training, technical assistance and supervision related to the competencies readily available to all professionals involved in providing services and supervising practitioners? • Do practitioners have adequate time and resources? • What is our process for tracking that staff have the requisite competencies? • Does the funding structure support the implementation of	Do practitioners collaborate effectively with families to develop quality IFSPs/IEPs including functional outcomes/goals, appropriate amount of services, type of services, and settings for services? Do practitioners effectively support families to carry out interventions and support their child's development? Are the practitioners implementing effective practices (e.g. collaborative teaming, quality assessment, ongoing use of data for progress monitoring, effective interventions adapted for the cultural, linguistic and individual needs of the child and family, communication with families)? If not, why not? • Do our practitioners understand that the mission, values and beliefs of the program and that the purpose of the program is to promote positive outcomes for children and families? If not, why not? • Do our practitioners know what competencies are expected in their position? If not, why not? • Do our practitioners have knowledge and skills related to implementing effective practices? If not, why not? • Do our practitioners' attitudes reflect the values and beliefs of the program? If not, why not? • Do practitioners have adequate time or resources? If not, why not? • Do practitioners have adequate support from their local program/leadership? If not, why not? What reasons do our practitioners identify for why our child outcomes data indicate that children are not making adequate progress?

effective practices? • Are there clear policies and procedures that promote the competencies defined for practitioners? • Are the mission, values and beliefs of the program articulated and shared with staff? Do we have adequate numbers of qualified personnel? If not, why not? What systems issues (e.g. financial) are preventing the program from recruiting and retaining adequate numbers of staff? Does our monitoring and supervision of the program adequately look at the program performance related to improving child outcomes?	What barriers do our practitioners identify to implementing effective practices and improving child outcomes? What possible solutions do our practitioners identify to address barriers and improve program practices to improve child outcomes?

For a detailed self-assessment of state child outcomes measurement system, the ECO Center has developed a framework and self-assessment tool: *Scale for Assessing State Implementation of a Child Outcomes Measurement System* http://projects.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/assets/docs/selfassessment.doc

Summary From Indicator C-3 Analysis

- Based on the data/ information identified above and data provided by the state, what categories of factors/reasons (e.g. procedures, infrastructure, practice, training, technical assistance, data and supervision) relate to our current low performance?

- What strategies related to these categories of factors/reasons should we include in our Improvement Plan?

For each strategy, include who is responsible and the timeline for completing the strategy.

Contributing Factor Area	Strategies	Who is responsible?	Timeline
Policies and Procedures			
Infrastructure			
Data			
Training/ Technical Assistance			
Supervision			
Practitioner Practices			