



## Family Outcomes Surveys

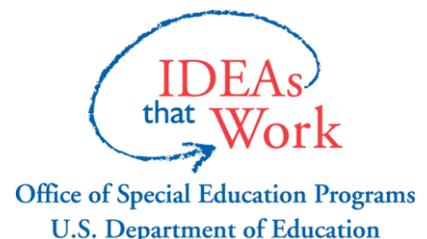
The original Family Outcomes Survey (FOS) was developed and validated by the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center to assess five family outcomes and the helpfulness of early intervention. There were multiple versions of the original Family Outcomes Survey, some for parents of young children with special needs and some for parents of all young children.

In 2010, upon request from states, the ECO Center developed an updated version of the FOS for Part C programs. The Family Outcomes Survey-Revised (FOS-R): Part C was designed to better assist Part C programs in measuring family outcomes and determining the helpfulness of early intervention programs for federal reporting and program improvement purposes. The core concepts in the FOS-R remain the same as in the original FOS, with the addition of more detailed information to guide program improvement activities and a modified survey format. Both the original and revised versions have been translated into Spanish as well as additional languages. Special thanks to our colleagues in Texas, Minnesota, and Washington for assisting with these translations. The ECTA Center supports the use of both the FOS (2006) and FOS-R (2010). These tools have been tested to ensure sound psychometric integrity that can be used to document family outcomes and identify areas for program improvement. If a state would like to adapt these surveys, we encourage you to reach out to staff and the ECTA Center to discuss potential adaptations and implications for producing reliable and valid data.

For more information on the FOS, visit  
<https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/familysurveys.asp>

Please contact staff at the ECTA Center if you wish to adapt the survey:  
<https://ectacenter.org/about/contact.asp>

The ECTA Center is a program of the FPG Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, funded through cooperative agreement number H326P220002 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the Department of Education's position or policy.  
Project Officer: Julia Martin Eile



## **Frequently Asked Questions about the Family Outcomes Survey – Revised Version (FOS-R)**

### 1. What is the revised version of the Family Outcomes Survey?

After a specific request and supplemental funding from Texas, staff at the ECO Center began work on updating the Family Outcomes Survey. A revised version was developed based on feedback from stakeholders to better assist states in measuring family outcomes and determining the helpfulness of early intervention programs. The Family Outcomes Survey-Revised version (FOS-R) consists of two parts: Section A focuses on the 5 family outcomes and contains 24 items, section B focuses on the 3 helpfulness indicators required for OSEP reporting and contains 17 items. While the core concepts measured remain the same as in the original Family Outcomes Survey, the revised version contains more detailed information to guide program improvement activities and uses a modified survey format.

### 2. Why did you make a revision?

The original Family Outcomes Survey was developed with extensive stakeholder input, but after a few years of use states were able to give us additional feedback on how well the survey was working. Three main issues were raised. First, the survey format used a 7-point scale, with descriptors for ratings of 1, 3, 5, and 7 and no descriptors for ratings of 2, 4, and 6 (to allow for “in between” ratings). For some families, this format created a perception of a longer and more complicated survey because of the amount of reading required within each question and the number of pages required to present the items. Second, state staff wanted more detail about the concepts included in the original Family Outcomes Survey. More items were recommended to make the scale more useful for program improvement purposes such as identifying staff development needs or possible changes in policy or practice. Finally, some states and federal officials recommended using more than a single item for each of the three helpfulness indicators because they believed this approach would be more informative and valid.

### 3. What is the new format of the survey?

The Family Outcomes Survey-Revised (FOS-R) uses a simplified format for both the family outcome items and the helpfulness indicators. Section A uses a 5-point rating scale which assess the extent to which families have achieved each outcome item, ranging from 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Almost, and 5 = Completely. Section B also uses a 5-point scale and assesses the helpfulness of early intervention, ranging from 1 = Not at all helpful, 2 = A little helpful, 3 = Somewhat helpful, 4 = Very helpful, and 5 = Extremely helpful. The revised survey is one page, with all of the family outcome items on the front side and the helpfulness items on the back side of the paper. Items are grouped into each of the 5 outcomes and the 3 helpfulness indicators.



4. How many items were added and how many stayed the same?

Of the 24 family outcomes items, 10 items are very similar or identical to items from the earlier version of the survey. The remaining 14 items are new. All 17 helpfulness indicator items are new.

5. How long does it take to complete?

During initial data collection, families generally took about 10 minutes to complete the survey. Although there are more questions, the use of consistent response options without detailed descriptions under each allowed families to answer more quickly. The consistent response options also will be helpful if the survey is administered by phone.

6. Is an online version of the survey available?

To support initial data collection in Texas and Illinois, an online version of the FOS-R was created. Although the ECO Center does not currently support an online version of the survey, we are willing to work with interested states to determine how best to support this.

7. What are the psychometric properties of the revised survey?

The revised survey exhibits excellent psychometric properties Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency, is noted for each subscale below:

- Outcome 1: Understanding your child's strengths, needs, and abilities,  $\alpha = .73$
- Outcome 2: Knowing your rights and advocating for your child,  $\alpha = .78$
- Outcome 3: Helping your child develop and learn,  $\alpha = .87$
- Outcome 4: Having support systems,  $\alpha = .78$
- Outcome 5: Accessing the community,  $\alpha = .91$
  
- Indicator 1: Knowing your rights,  $\alpha = .90$
- Indicator 2: Communicating your child's needs,  $\alpha = .74$
- Indicator 3: Helping your child develop and learn,  $\alpha = .94$

For additional information about the psychometric properties of the tool, see:

Bailey, D. B., Raspa, M. R., Olmsted, M. G., Novak, S. P., Sam, A. M., Humphreys, B. P., Nelson, R., Robinson, N., & Guillen, C. (2011). The development and psychometric validation of the Family Outcomes Survey-Revised Version: Findings and recommendations for early intervention. *Journal of Early Intervention, 33*, 6–23.

The Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center is interested in continuing to collect data on the psychometric properties of the scale and/or relationships between the FOS and the FOS-R in states that choose to implement it. For more information about participating in this effort, please contact Melissa Raspa at [mraspa@rti.org](mailto:mraspa@rti.org).

8. How do I report data to OSEP using the revised survey?

Since the revised version of the survey contains more than 1 item for each of the OSEP helpfulness indicators, we are recommending that states calculate a mean score for each indicator. If the mean score for a family is 4.0 or above, then that family will have met that indicator. For example:

Score for a family who has met Indicator 1: Knowing your rights

- Item 1 = 5
- Item 2 = 5
- Item 3 = 3
- Item 4 = 4
- Item 5 = 4
- Mean score = 4.2

Score for a family who has **not** met Indicator 1: Knowing your rights

- Item 1 = 5
- Item 2 = 2
- Item 3 = 5
- Item 4 = 3
- Item 5 = 2
- Mean score = 3.4

First, count the number of families who meet the criteria for each indicator (i.e., mean value  $\geq 4.0$  on associated items). Then, divide the number of families who meet the criteria for each indicator by the total number of families who completed the survey and multiply the result by 100 to get the percentage of families to report to OSEP. For example If 90 families meet the criteria for Indicator 1 and 100 families completed the survey, the percentage reported to OSEP would be 90% (or  $90/100 = .90 \times 100$ ) for Indicator 1.

Note: In order to calculate a mean score for each family, and thus the percentage who met the Indicator for reporting purposes, item-level data needs to be entered for each family who completed the survey. For example, if using Excel the entries should look like this:

Family ID	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Mean Score Indicator 1	Met Indicator?
10001234	5	5	3	4	4	4.2	1
10001345	5	2	5	3	2	3.4	0
10001567	4	4	5	3	4	4.0	1

This allows you to calculate the mean score for the family on each indicator by using the AVERAGE formula in Excel. You can also calculate the percentage who met the indicator by using the IF function in Excel. For more information on this, please contact Melissa Raspa at [mraspa@rti.org](mailto:mraspa@rti.org).

9. Can states alter the FOS-R by using a *Not applicable* option?

Some states have asked whether they could include a *Not applicable* option for Item 4 (How helpful has early intervention been in giving you useful information about available options when your child leaves the program?) on Section B: Helpfulness of Early Intervention. If you only distribute the FOS-R to families at or near transition out of the program, we would recommend **not** adding in a *Not*



*applicable* option for this item. However, if surveys are sent to families who have just entered the program, then it is acceptable to add in the *Not applicable* option. Programs **should not** use the *Not applicable* option for any other items as this would alter the psychometric validity of the data which would be reported to OSEP and, more importantly, would provide less information to the program for improvement activities.

10. How should states handle missing data?

It's fairly likely that a family may forget to answer a question on the FOS-R or skip it intentionally. States are encouraged to use the data from these families as long as they have not skipped **more than 1** item per outcome or indicator. For example, if a family does not complete item 4 in Section B, you would calculate their mean score on Indicator 1 using the 4 other scores:

Item 1 = 5  
Item 2 = 3  
Item 3 = 4  
Item 5 = 5  
Mean score = 4.25

This family would still meet the criteria for this indicator. The same logic applies if you use the *Not applicable* option for Item 4: If a family selects the *Not applicable* option, do not include this score when calculating the mean. However, if a family does score this item, continue to include all 5 items in the mean score.

11. Can the FOS-R be used with families in general early childhood programs who are not receiving early intervention?

The items are written for use with families in early intervention programs. Most of the items also are broadly applicable to the broader early childhood population. States interested in a modified version of the survey for use with a broader population of families should contact Melissa Raspa at [mraspa@rti.org](mailto:mraspa@rti.org)].

12. Are translations available for the FOS-R?

At this time, ECO has only an English version of the FOS-R. However, we are working with states who are interested in translating the survey into other languages. For more information, please visit the ECO web site at [www.the-eco-center.org](http://www.the-eco-center.org).

13. Can states continue to use the original Family Outcomes Survey?

The original FOS was shown to have good psychometric properties and remains a viable option for states who prefer that format. We will continue to house resources related to the original FOS on the ECO web site.

Additional information about the FOS-R will be posted at [www.the-eco-center.org](http://www.the-eco-center.org) as it becomes available.

***Suggested Citation:*** *The Early Childhood Outcomes Center (2014). Frequently asked questions about The Family Outcomes Survey – Revised (FOS-R). Version 2: June 27, 2014. Menlo Park, CA: Author.*

***Report available at:*** [http://ectacenter.org/eco/assets/pdfs/FOS\\_FAQs.pdf](http://ectacenter.org/eco/assets/pdfs/FOS_FAQs.pdf)

