COS Process Professional Development:

Guidance for Preparing and Implementing Effective Training and TA

This guidance document is designed to support state and local technical assistance (TA) providers in implementing effective professional development (PD) on the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process with early intervention and early childhood special education practitioners. Provided here is an overview of national resources and materials that are available to support COS training and TA and how they might be incorporated into ongoing PD.

The essential starting place is the *Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process Online Module,* a self-directed eight-session training on the knowledge and skills needed to work with teams to identify accurate child outcomes summary ratings:

- **Session 1**: Introduction - So What's This All About?
- **Session 2**: Overview of the Child Outcomes Summary Process
- **Session 3**: Completing the Child Outcomes Summary Process
- **Session 4**: The 7-Point Scale
- **Session 5**: More Information About Determining a Rating
- **Session 6**: Good Teaming, Good Decisions
- **Session 7**: Documenting the COS Rating
- **Session 8**: The Exit COS Rating

Because the best gains in adult learning come when people have opportunities for real-life application and role-playing[1], it is important that the core knowledge gained from completing the online module be followed by **applied practice**.

Both new practitioners and practitioners who have been using the COS process for many years will benefit from participating in COS professional development activities. Practitioners who have been using the COS process will improve their application of the COS process. New practitioners will get the opportunity to practice their COS skills and learn from their peers and staff more experienced. This training will help ensure that all team members implement the process in the same way.

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[1] Trivette, C. M., Dunst, C. J., Hamby, D. W., & O'Herin, C. E. (2009). *Characteristics and consequences of adult learning methods and strategies* [Winterberry Research Syntheses, Vol. 2, Number 2]. Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

COS Process PD Resources

The following is a comprehensive list of national PD resources developed by the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) and the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy). These PD resources are designed to prepare practitioners to use the COS process. Products in the **basic** category are those that all participants should complete. Products in the **supplemental** category are targeted PD activities that provide additional knowledge or skill-building in a specific topic area.

Basic Resources

Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process Online Module

Description: Online module providing key information about the COS process and the practices that contribute to consistent, meaningful COS decision making

Participant Outcome(s): Participants will have requisite knowledge to complete the COS process.

http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/cos.asp#COSProcessModule

State/Program-Specific COS Process Policies and Procedures Checklist

Description: A checklist of state-/program-specific child outcomes measurement policies that should be communicated to practitioners

Participant Outcome(s): Participants will have the requisite knowledge of state/program policies and procedures related to implementing the COS process.

http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/eco/COS-State-Program-Specific-Info-Checklist.pdf

Applied Practice for COS Skill Building Activity

Description: Activity instructions and written case studies for practitioners' applied practice

Participant Outcome(s): Participants will acquire the basic skills to engage in the COS process.

http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/eco/COS-Applied-Practice_Activity.pdf

COS Competency Check (COS-CC)

Description: Online assessment of the application of COS skills

Participant Outcome(s): Participants will understand their individual competence relative to the COS process. Additionally, programs and states will have documentation of the practitioners who have passed the COS Competency Check.

Available Summer 2018

Supplemental Resources

COS Team Collaboration (COS-TC)

Description: Training materials and online objects supporting self-assessment of COS teaming practices

Participant Outcome(s): Participants will engage in effective COS practices.

http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/costeam.asp

Topical COS PD Activities

Description: A collection of targeted PD activities and materials indexed by topic

Participant Outcome(s): Participants will have skills that address gaps in their competencies related to the COS process.

http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/training_activities.asp

COS Process PD Progression

TA providers can implement and use the *COS Process Learning Sequence* to support practitioners in gaining expertise in the COS process. The PD resources are designed to be embedded into various learning opportunities, such as staff meetings, webinars, and face-to-face trainings. TA providers should adapt, as needed, to build on practitioners' current knowledge and skills.

Of course, there is the recognition that learning does not always follow a straight line. At times, there is a need for individuals or groups to revisit content that was previously covered. The advantage of doing so is strengthening skills and deepening understanding in a particular area. In addition, not all learners need to have the same level of expertise. Some team members may need a high level of mastery to be able to mentor other staff members, whereas other team members may only need the basic skills to participate in the process.

Details on moving through the progression and identifying an appropriate starting point can be found in the next section.

Build Knowledge of the COS Process

Practitioners gain an understanding of essential COS concepts.

Resource:
- *COS Process Online Module*

Practitioners gain understanding of features of the COS in their state.

Resource:
- *State/Program-Specific COS Process Policies and Procedures Checklist*

Develop COS Process Skills

Practitioners gain skills for effective implementation of the COS process.

Resources:
- *Applied Practice for COS Skill Building Activity*
- *Topical COS PD Activities*
- *COS Team Collaboration (COS-TC)*

Assess COS Process Competence

Practitioners demonstrate understanding of the essential concepts and skills needed to participate in the COS process.

Resource:
- *COS Competency Check (COS-CC)*

Encourage Continuous Improvement on the COS Process

Provide opportunities for ongoing support to continue to improve practitioners' COS process skills.

Resources:
- See resources available under "Build Knowledge" and "Develop Skills" sections.

COS Process Learning Sequence

1. Build Knowledge of the COS Process

The first step of the COS Process Learning Sequence is for participants to build knowledge of the COS process. During this step, participants gain an understanding of the following concepts through the *COS Process Online Module*:

- Why child outcomes data are collected
- The functional skills included in each of the three child outcomes
- Age-expected child development
- How to use the 7-point rating scale
- Team rating discussion and decision making
- State-specific policies and procedures

State-specific policies related to child outcome measurement also should be communicated to participants. The *State/Program-Specific COS Process Policies and Procedures Checklist* provides a list of the types of state-specific and program-specific policies that should be conveyed to participants as they build knowledge of the COS process.

Bringing participants together periodically as they work through sessions of the module reinforces what they are learning. By attending virtual or in-person meetings, participants can engage each other in conversation and practice their skills. These meetings can be an opportunity to share reflections, ask questions, discuss misconceptions with those who have already participated in the COS process, or reinforce or deepen knowledge of the concepts covered in the module. The activities included in *Topical COS PD Activities* could be used for this purpose.

2. Develop COS Process Skills

After participants complete all eight sessions of the *Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process Online Module*, they should be provided with opportunities for development and real-life application of the concepts. This real-life application serves two purposes:

1. Gives participants an opportunity to integrate their skills across the areas of team decision-making, age anchoring, and selecting a rating.
2. Serves as a checkpoint for participants to assess what they know well and what they need to understand better.

The *Applied Practice for COS Skill Building Activity* provides activity instructions and written case studies for practitioners' applied practice. Alternatively, participants can share case studies about children and families from their own caseload. Practitioners use the case studies to apply their COS process skills to determine one or more outcomes ratings and have an opportunity to ask questions and reflect on the COS process.

The Child Outcomes Summary Team Collaboration (COS-TC) materials support understanding of quality team collaboration on the COS process, including fostering meaningful family involvement and team interactions. The *COS-TC* materials include a trainer's guide with full- and half-day training

agendas, a presentation, and suggestions for how to use video clips of COS meetings to improve practitioners' understanding of the quality practices contained in t*he COS-TC.*

After completing the *COS Process Online Module* and *Applied Practice for COS Skill Building Activity*, participants may identify gaps in their knowledge around topics such as age-expected functioning or determining a rating. If gaps are identified, it is recommended that TA providers refer participants to the *Topical COS PD Activities* which will help to extend their learning.

3. Assess COS Process Competence

Once participants have mastered the content of the *COS Process Online Module* and have completed the *Applied Practice for COS Skill Building Activity*, TA providers should refer them to the *COS Competency Check (COS-CC).* This online assessment of COS process knowledge and skills includes a screener to ensure that participants have the basic skills. When participants pass this screener, they continue to the competency check where they review a case study, answer a series of applied questions, and assign a rating on each of the three outcomes. This is a pass/fail assessment, and participants will have multiple opportunities to retake it if they do not pass on their first attempt. Results of the assessment are available to the local administrator and the state. Participants who do not pass the competency check should access additional PD by either going through the *COS Process Online Module* a second time or extending their learning through the *Topical COS PD Activities.*

4. Encourage Continuous Improvement on the COS Process

After practitioners have completed the COS process learning sequence, it is important to provide them with ongoing opportunities to reflect on their COS practices and refresh their knowledge and skills. These opportunities could include team discussions after COS meetings, open discussion at staff meetings, or one-on-one meetings with a mentor. These reflections should result in suggested activities that the practitioner will complete to improve his/her practice. These types of continuous improvement activities are ongoing for all COS team members. Practitioners with expertise in the COS process should be offered opportunities to mentor new learners. This mentorship will support skill development in the new learners and deepen the knowledge of the mentor.

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Where to start planning a PD sequence?

As TA providers plan their professional development sequence, they should identify areas of need in their program. The following table shows which resources TA providers can use to support their participant's areas of need.

COS Products to Support Planning a PD Sequence

Area of need	Products					
	COS Process Online Module	State/Program-Specific COS Process Policies and Procedures Checklist	Applied Practice for COS Skill Building Activity	Topical COS PD Activities	COS Team Collaboration (COS-TC)	COS Competency Check (COS-CC)
My program is requiring that practitioners complete the COS Process Online Module. What else do we need to do?						
How can we best support practitioners who **have never participated in the COS process**	✔	✔	✔			✔
How can we best support practitioners who **have previous experience** with the COS process	✔	✔	✔			✔
We have completed the COS Process Professional Development Training, but practitioners in our program would like *additional support* to master the following areas:						
Assessing functional skills	✔			✔		
Age anchoring	✔			✔		
Using the 7-point scale	✔			✔		
Effective teaming and engaging families	✔				✔	