



This component has been excerpted from the complete **System Framework**.

Glossary terms appear underlined. The glossary of terms, their definitions and references for this and other **System Framework** components are online at:

<http://ectacenter.org/sysframe>

The ECTA Center is a collaborative effort between the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute; SRI International; PACER Center; University of Colorado, Denver; University of South Florida; Puckett Institute; RTI International; University of Nebraska Medical Center; and Walsh Taylor Associates. Additional information about the ECTA Center can be found at ectacenter.org

Suggested citation: Early Childhood TA Center. (2015). *A System Framework for Building High-Quality Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Programs*. Retrieved from <http://ectacenter.org/sysframe>

The contents of this document were developed under cooperative agreement numbers #H326P120002, #H325B120004 and #H373Z120002 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Project Officers: Julia Martin Eile, Dawn Ellis, Meredith Miceli & Richelle Davis.

System Framework Accountability & Quality Improvement (AC) Component

The purpose of the Accountability & Quality Improvement component of the System Framework is to guide state Part C and Section 619 Coordinators, their staff and partners in an ongoing process of reviewing and evaluating the Part C and Section 619 systems to identify areas for statewide improvement. The process provides direction on determining strategies that achieve a quality, effective, and efficient system to support implementation of evidence-based practices leading toward improved outcomes for children and their families. This component assists state leaders in assessing and improving all other components of the framework.

States have a responsibility, under federal law, to utilize a system of general supervision that monitors the statewide implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), identifies and corrects noncompliance, and works toward improved outcomes for children and families. True accountability holds states responsible for a sustainable process that ensures ongoing quality and improvement.

The overall focus of this component is to assist a state in having an accountability and quality improvement system designed to facilitate the achievement of positive results for children and families. The component can be used to support improvement through a variety of methods such as State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), ongoing system evaluation, local program evaluation, and monitoring.

This component includes: planning for accountability and improvement; collecting and analyzing performance data; and using results for continuous improvement. Planning for accountability serves as the basis for documenting the need for change, tracking progress and demonstrating improvement. “The accountability plan” is assumed to be in writing and should include all details necessary to implement a sound and effective statewide accountability and improvement system. The plan may be a stand-alone description or included in one or more state documents (e.g. policies and procedures, monitoring and accountability manuals, the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), including the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), Request for Application (RFA) for program or system evaluation). Methods used for collecting and analyzing performance data ensure that adequate information is available at the state, regional and/or local levels to determine the quality of the systems and services and if results are being achieved. Leadership at all levels of the system use strategies to support continuous improvement and achieve expectations. State leadership works to enhance capacity at all levels to use data-informed decision-making practices to implement effective accountability and improvement systems.

Subcomponent 1: Planning for Accountability and Improvement

Quality Indicator AC1: Ongoing statewide planning for accountability and improvement at all levels is informed by data and reflects strong leadership and commitment to positive outcomes for children and their families.

Elements of Quality

- a. Planning for accountability and improvement is aligned with the vision, mission and purpose of Part C or 619.
- b. An accountability and improvement plan is used to inform policy decisions and actions related to the accountability and ongoing improvement of the system.
- c. Stakeholders are engaged on an ongoing basis to inform development, implementation and revisions to the accountability and improvement plan.
- d. The accountability and improvement plan is readily available and accessible (e.g., other formats, languages) to the public.
- e. State leadership ensures that each element of the accountability and improvement plan is executed in a timely, efficient and effective manner.
- f. The accountability and improvement plan is aligned with and informed by other quality improvement initiatives within and across agencies.
- g. The accountability and improvement plan is reviewed and revised as necessary based on how well the plan monitors the implementation and effectiveness of the system.

Quality Indicator AC2: A written accountability and improvement plan includes details necessary to implement an ongoing effective statewide accountability and improvement system at all levels.

Elements of Quality

- a. The goals of the accountability and improvement system are defined in the written accountability and improvement plan.
- b. The accountability and improvement plan includes mechanisms for implementing informal and formal dispute resolution procedures (e.g. administrative complaints, due process hearings, mediation) as needed as part of the accountability and improvement system.
- c. Expectations for systems performance (e.g. targets, benchmarks, indicators) are clearly identified and described in the accountability and improvement plan.
- d. The accountability and improvement plan includes performance measures to collect data that can be used to make data-informed decisions related to accountability and improvement.
- e. The accountability and improvement plan includes mechanisms for collecting valid and reliable data (e.g. record review, surveys, self-assessment, electronic child records) for accountability, program evaluation and quality improvement.
- f. The accountability and improvement plan includes processes and timelines for collection, analyses and making data-informed decisions based on performance data.
- g. The accountability and improvement plan addresses the use of data to measure performance and identify trends, root causes and improvement strategies at the state, regional and/or local levels of the system.
- h. An accountability and improvement plan includes processes that allow for necessary adjustments to strategies (e.g. professional development, incentives, sanctions) based on data to enhance accountability and improvement.

Subcomponent 2: Collecting and Analyzing Performance Data

Quality Indicator AC3: Part C and 619 state staff and representatives collect adequate data to determine the quality and results of the systems and services.

Elements of Quality

- a. Quantitative data and qualitative data collection methods are used to provide data to answer questions that measure progress toward the identified outcomes.
- b. Stakeholders are involved in the development of data collection tools or instruments as necessary.
- c. Data collection methods are designed to address what is needed to meet federal and state requirements.
- d. Data are collected to monitor the appropriateness of outcomes/goals, services, frequency, intensity and settings/environments.
- e. State Part C and 619 staff implement procedures to ensure data collected are verified and are of high quality (e.g. valid, reliable, accurate, timely).
- f. Data are collected on a regular basis and the type and amount collected is intentional based on priorities included in the accountability and improvement plan for accountability and improvement.
- g. Data collection methods measure fidelity of interventions and determine quality and/or the effectiveness of intervention approaches/strategies.
- h. Individuals collecting performance data possess required knowledge and competence in data collection and have access to ongoing support and training in this area.
- i. Selected data collection methods are coordinated across early care and education programs, are integrated with each other and do not duplicate effort.
- j. State Part C and 619 staff review and revise data collection methods as necessary to meet changing circumstances and ensure collection of needed data.

Quality Indicator AC4: Leadership at all levels have sufficient information to make accountability and improvement decisions.

Elements of Quality

- a. Leaders at all levels analyze data quality (e.g. valid, reliable, accurate, timely) to make informed decisions for accountability and improvement.
- b. Leaders at all levels analyze and disaggregate data by programs/agencies, demographics and other variables to make conclusions about performance in relation to the targets.
- c. Data collected assist stakeholders and leaders at all levels in making data-informed decisions about how to enhance progress towards the intended results.
- d. Conclusions about local, regional and state performance are available for developing strategies that yield sustainable improvement.

Subcomponent 3: Using Results for Continuous Improvement

Quality Indicator AC5: Leadership at all levels, as appropriate, communicate and publicly report data and information through a variety of methods to document performance and evaluation results.

Elements of Quality

- a. The state Part C and 619 systems have effective and efficient procedures in place to report data that adhere to applicable laws and regulations including timelines, content requirements, and privacy requirements.
- b. Performance data and desired messages (e.g. Annual Performance Report (APR), publicly reported data, legislative reports, monitoring reports, dispute resolution data) are accessible to relevant stakeholders using clear and concise reporting methods.
- c. Monitoring and dispute resolution reports communicating data-informed conclusions are issued to programs identifying regional and/or local performance, including findings of noncompliance and actions needed to make improvement and ensure correction.
- d. Leaders at all levels evaluate methods used to communicate data-based conclusions on an ongoing basis and revise as necessary.

Quality Indicator AC6: Leadership at all levels use strategies to support continuous improvement to achieve expectations, as articulated in the accountability and improvement plan.

Elements of Quality

- a. Part C and 619 state staff use data-informed decisions to target state resources and support (e.g. fiscal, human resources, technical assistance and professional development) for effective accountability and continuous improvement.
- b. Improvement planning processes incorporate evidence-based practices to achieve intended results.
- c. Part C and 619 state staff support continuous improvement by local educational agencies/early intervention service (LEAs/EIS) programs, through a variety of strategies (e.g. technical assistance, corrective action or improvement plans, IDEA determinations, sanctions) designed to meet federal and state requirements and move toward achieving the goals of the accountability and improvement plan.
- d. Leaders at all levels use data on fidelity of implementation to improve intervention practices.
- e. Continuous improvement activities are aligned with existing early childhood and education initiatives whenever appropriate.
- f. Part C and 619 state staff verify timely correction of noncompliance to support overall systems improvement leading to improved access and outcomes for children with disabilities.
- g. Strategies that are used to support improvement are reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure improvement occurs and is maintained.

Quality Indicator AC7: Leadership at all levels work to enhance capacity to use data-informed practices to implement effective accountability and improvement schemes.

Elements of Quality

- a. Technical assistance and/or professional development activities are targeted toward the knowledge and skills needed at the state and local level to use data-informed practices, including identifying and correcting noncompliance and improving results performance.
- b. Multiple professional development activities and supports (e.g. coaching, mentoring, training, peer to peer support) are aligned to enhance knowledge and skills related to using data to make program improvements.
- c. State and local leaders use mechanisms to track and inform improvement to practices and results over time.
- d. Technical assistance and professional development activities designed to enhance capacity at all levels are reviewed and revised as necessary.