

State Child Outcomes Measurement System (S-COMS) Framework

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<https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/childoutcomes-framework.asp>

Acknowledgments

The S-COMS is based on the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center's *Child Outcomes Measurement System (COMS)*. It was first published in 2017.

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State Child Outcomes Measurement System

The State Child Outcomes Measurement System (S-COMS) identifies seven key components of a high-quality child outcomes measurement system at the state level.

State Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs can use the S-COMS to evaluate and improve their child outcomes measurement system. It applies to all states, regardless of [child outcomes measurement approach](#).

The S-COMS is comprised of three components:

- **State Child Outcomes Measurement System (S-COMS) Framework** – Contains background information and the framework’s 7 components, 18 quality indicators and their associated elements of quality. It provides an easy way to review the content of the S-COMS.
- **S-COMS Self-Assessment** – An Excel-based tool that provides an automated scoring form for states to rate their child outcomes measurement system on the 18 quality indicators and associated elements and to set priorities for improvement.
- **S-COMS Self-Assessment Guide** – Presents general guidance for the self-assessment process and detailed instructions on use of the self-assessment.

S-COMS Components and Quality Indicators

Purpose

- **PR1.** State has articulated the purpose(s) of its child outcomes measurement system (COMS).

Data Collection and Transmission

- **DC1.** Data collection procedures are carried out efficiently and effectively.
- **DC2.** Providers, supervisors, and others involved in data collection have the required knowledge, skills, and commitment.
- **DC3.** State’s method for entering, transmitting, and storing data is effective and efficient.

Analysis

- **AN1.** State identifies accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes.
- **AN2.** Local programs identify accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes.
- **AN3.** State agency analyzes data in a timely manner.
- **AN4.** Local programs analyze data in a timely manner.
- **AN5.** State agency ensures completeness and accuracy of data.

Reporting

- **RP1.** State agency interprets, reports, and communicates information related to child outcomes.
- **RP2.** Local programs interpret, report, and communicate information related to child outcomes.

Using Data

- **UD1.** State agency makes regular use of information on child outcomes to improve programs.
- **UD2.** Local programs make regular use of information on child outcomes to improve programs.

Evaluation

- **EV1.** State evaluates its COMS regularly.

Cross-system Coordination

- **CC1.** Part C and Part B 619 coordinate child outcomes measurement.
- **CC2.** Child outcomes measurement is integrated across early childhood (EC) programs statewide.
- **CC3.** Child outcomes measurement is aligned with state’s early learning guidelines/standards.
- **CC4.** State has a longitudinal data system to link child outcomes data from EC program participation to K–12 data.

Purpose

PR1: State has articulated the purpose(s) of its COMS.

Elements of Quality

- a. Written statement addresses why data are being collected and how data will be used. Statement specifies who will use the data and for what purposes.
- b. Purposes include meeting reporting requirements and providing ongoing information for data-based decision-making for program improvement.
- c. Statement is easily accessible to local administrators, providers, and general public.
- d. Stakeholders are involved in development of the purposes.
- e. Families receiving services are fully informed of the purposes of collecting data on outcomes.

Data Collection and Transmission

DC1: Data collection procedures are carried out efficiently and effectively.

Data collection refers to the set of activities resulting in good outcomes data, e.g., administration and scoring of assessment tool(s) either as stand-alone data or as a data source for the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) rating, discussion of multiple sources of information to select COS rating.

Elements of Quality

- a. State has comprehensive written policies and procedures describing the data collection and transmission approach.
- b. Policies and procedures are clear and readily accessible.
- c. Procedures are revised as necessary based on needs of field or state agency; systematic process exists for communicating changes in timely manner.
- d. Families are fully informed about the data collection.
- e. State data collection procedures have the capability to produce valid and reliable data.
- f. Processes are available to facilitate efficient and complete data collection.
- g. State has evidence that the data collection procedures are being implemented with high fidelity.
- h. Data collection procedures are institutionalized throughout the state; implementation remains stable through staff changes.
- i. There is no duplication in the collection of data elements.
- j. Ongoing support and technical assistance for data collection issues are readily available; problems are addressed in a timely fashion.
- k. Overall state monitoring includes monitoring of outcomes data collection procedures.
- l. If state is sampling, sampling procedures produce a representative sample of sufficient size. (Select “Not applicable” if not sampling.)
- m. Data collection methods are aligned with the purposes the state wants to address.
- n. Stakeholders are involved in deciding on the data collection methods.

DC2: Providers, supervisors, and others involved in data collection have the required knowledge, skills, and commitment.

Good assessment procedures are essential for valid child outcomes data. Examining the quality of assessment procedures is beyond the scope of this scale but state and local staff are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the principles of good assessment and examine the extent to which these principles are being consistently applied.

Elements of Quality

- a. Professional development is consistent with and incorporates information in policies and procedures addressing outcomes data collection.
- b. State has written requirements/expectations for professional development for data collection and supervision of data collection.
- c. State has articulated competencies related to data collection for all those involved in child outcomes measurement.
- d. Professional development for data collection is integrated into overall professional development for service delivery.
- e. New staff members are trained in data collection procedures before they are expected to provide data.
- f. State has process for ensuring staff have been trained and have the requisite competencies.
- g. State has evidence that all or almost all staff have the competencies.
- h. State has procedures in place to address questions or issues when they arise.
- i. State has ongoing feedback loop to evaluate and revise professional development.

DC3: State’s method for entering, transmitting, and storing data is effective and efficient.

Elements of Quality

- a. Data elements to be used for outcome analyses are entered efficiently and accurately.
- b. Systematic checks on data entry are in place.
- c. Those entering and transmitting data have access to necessary hardware and software and know how to use them.
- d. Technology support is effective.
- e. Procedures in place to communicate updates to data system.
- f. State and locals have real-time access to the data. Data system is web-based.
- g. Child-level outcomes data can follow child across programs/districts electronically as needed.
- h. All data elements are entered only once (no duplication of data entry).
- i. Those handling data understand and protect confidentiality.
- j. Data system protects confidential information.
- k. Protocols for archiving data are in place.

Analysis

AN1: State identifies accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes.

Elements of Quality

- a. State has a written set of publicly available accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes.
- b. The questions were developed with broad stakeholder input, including families.
- c. The questions are consistent with purposes of the state's child outcomes measurement system.
- d. The questions address how outcomes relate to child, family, service, and system characteristics and family experiences with the service system.
- e. Answers to the questions will provide useful information for accountability and program improvement.
- f. A process is in place for regularly reviewing and revising the questions.
- g. State has policy or guidance that addresses local program responsibilities with regard to the development of accountability and program improvement questions.
- h. State helps to build the capacity of local programs to develop accountability and program improvement questions.
- i. The questions address key components of the service delivery system.

AN2: Local programs identify accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes.

Does the state have a process for systematically collecting information from local programs about are identifying accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes?

If yes, complete the element ratings; otherwise, select "no".

Elements of Quality

- a. Local programs have a written set of publicly available accountability and program improvement questions related to child outcomes.
- b. The questions were developed with broad stakeholder input, including families.
- c. The questions are aligned with the vision and purposes of the state's outcomes measurement system.
- d. The questions address how outcomes relate to child, family, and service characteristics.
- e. Answers to the questions will provide useful information for accountability and program improvement.
- f. A process is in place for regularly reviewing and revising the questions.

AN3: State agency analyzes data in a timely manner.

Elements of Quality

- a. State has sufficient resources to conduct data analyses in a timely and accurate manner.
- b. State can access all data elements necessary to address state-level questions.
- c. State conducts analyses to address accountability and program improvement questions at least annually.
- d. State conducts additional ad hoc analyses as needed.
- e. State thoroughly documents analyses so they can be independently replicated.
- f. State provides support to local programs to build capacity to analyze data.
- g. State has policy or guidance that addresses local program responsibilities with regard to data analysis.

AN4: Local programs analyze data in a timely manner.

Does the state have a process for collecting information from local programs about whether local programs are analyzing information related to child outcomes?

If yes, complete the element ratings; otherwise select "no".

Elements of Quality

- a. Local programs can access all the data elements necessary to address their accountability and program improvement questions.
- b. Local programs conduct analyses or work with another entity to conduct analyses in a timely and accurate manner.
- c. Local programs keep records as to how the analyses were conducted.

AN5: State agency ensures completeness and accuracy of data.

Elements of Quality

- a. State implements a process for checking the completeness and accuracy of the data.
- b. Results of process provide evidence that the data are high quality for the intended purposes.
- c. Local programs implement a process for checking the completeness and accuracy of their own data.
- d. State regularly tracks missing and incomplete data and has implemented a plan for reducing missing and incomplete data.
- e. Levels of missing or incomplete data are less than 5% of cases.
- f. The data are representative within all local programs.

Reporting

RP1: State agency interprets, reports, and communicates information related to child outcomes.

- a.** RP1a. State has developed a comprehensive plan for interpreting, reporting, and communicating evidence related to child outcomes to relevant audiences, including families.
- b.** RP1b. State has procedures in place to address confidentiality issues raised by analyses that produce cells with small numbers.
- c.** RP1c. State agency conducts systematic and comprehensive review of analyses including consideration of possible interpretations about child outcomes and the relationships between outcomes and child, family, service, and system characteristics per the state's questions.
- d.** RP1d. Representative stakeholders are included in the process of review and interpretation. Interpretation reflects stakeholder input.
- e.** RP1e. State agency leadership is knowledgeable about the child outcomes and can explain results to relevant audiences.
- f.** RP1f. State communicates results to target audiences for intended purposes in appropriate formats.
- g.** RP1g. State provides support to local programs related to interpreting and reporting child outcomes data.
- h.** RP1h. State has policy or guidance that addresses local program responsibilities with regard to interpreting and reporting child outcomes data.

RP2: Local programs interpret, report, and communicate information related to child outcomes.

Does the state have a process for systematically collecting information from local programs about interpreting, reporting, and communicating information related to child outcomes?

If yes, complete the element ratings; otherwise, select “no”.

Elements of Quality

- a.** Local programs interpret, report, and communicate information related to child outcomes in a manner appropriate to the size of the program.
- b.** Local programs have procedures in place to address confidentiality issues raised by analyses that produce cells with small numbers.
- c.** Local programs conduct systematic and comprehensive review of analyses including consideration of possible interpretations about child outcomes and the relationships between outcomes and child, family, service, and system characteristics per the program’s questions.
- d.** Local programs include representative stakeholders in the process of developing interpretations. Interpretations reflect stakeholder input.
- e.** Local programs have staff who are knowledgeable about the child outcomes and can explain results to relevant audiences.
- f.** Local programs communicate results to target audiences for intended purposes in appropriate formats.

Using Data

UD1: State agency makes regular use of information on child outcomes to improve programs.

Elements of Quality

- a. State regularly implements a stakeholder process that includes families for considering the implications of child outcomes and other data.
- b. As appropriate, state identifies some local programs for targeted support and then works with these programs to jointly develop action plans.
- c. State identifies statewide systemic goals for improvement.
- d. State develops a comprehensive plan for program improvement.
- e. State implements and evaluates program improvement activities on a regular cycle.
- f. State provides support to local programs related to use of child outcomes data.
- g. State has policy or guidance that addresses local program responsibilities with regard to use of data for program improvement.

UD2: Local programs make regular use of information on child outcomes to improve programs.

Does the state have a process for systematically collecting information from local programs about making regular use of data to improve child outcomes?

If yes, complete the element ratings; otherwise, select “no”.

Elements of Quality

- a. All local programs regularly implement a stakeholder process that includes families for considering the implications of child outcomes data and other data.
- b. Local programs use data to develop a comprehensive plan for program improvement.
- c. All local programs implement and evaluate program improvement activities on a regular cycle.

Evaluation

EV1: State evaluates its COMS regularly.

Some quality indicators include elements that address evaluation: DC2, UD1, and UD2.

Elements of Quality

- a. State regularly develops/updates a comprehensive evaluation plan addressing whether the individual components of COMS are being implemented as planned/with fidelity, each component is producing its intended results, and the outcomes system as a whole is accomplishing its intended purposes.
- b. State implements its evaluation strategies according to plan.
- c. State regularly uses evaluation results to improve COMS components and improve the effectiveness of the outcomes system and to revise the evaluation plan.

Cross-system Coordination

CC1: Part C and Part B 619 coordinate child outcomes measurement.

Elements of Quality

- a. State has policies about Part C and Part B 619 outcomes measurement coordination at local and state levels.
- b. Part C and Part B 619 regularly communicate about outcomes data issues.
- c. Part C and Part B 619 use the same approach for measuring child outcomes or have a process for cross-walking different approaches to a common metric.
- d. Part C and Part B 619 jointly conduct COMS activities.
- e. Procedures are in place so that local Part B 619 programs have access to the Part C child outcomes exit data.
- f. Data from Part C can be linked to data from Part B 619, and both Part C and Part B 619 have access to longitudinal analyses.

CC2: Child outcomes measurement is integrated across early childhood (EC) programs statewide.

Elements of Quality

- a. EC programs use the same approach for measuring the same outcomes or have a process for cross-walking different approaches to a common metric.
- b. EC programs use common data standards so that data can be linked across programs.
- c. EC programs routinely share outcomes measurement resources.
- d. With appropriate safeguards, stakeholders have access to de-identified data to examine issues related to child progress over time.

CC3: Child outcomes measurement is aligned with state’s early learning guidelines/standards.

Elements of Quality

- a. The COMS captures child progress on the state’s early learning guidelines/early childhood standards.

CC4: State has a longitudinal data system to link child outcomes data from EC program participation to K–12 data.

Elements of Quality

- a. State has a longitudinal data system to track outcomes for children in EC programs (including Part C and Part B 619) through K–12.
- b. Child outcomes data for most or all EC programs are linked to K–12 data.
- c. Child outcomes data within longitudinal data systems are analyzed and used for improving programs.
- d. With appropriate safeguards, stakeholders have access to de-identified data to examine issues related to child progress over time.