

Results Matter: Improving Preschool Outcomes for Children with Disabilities

Treating the First Assessment Period as Baseline



Capturing True Baseline Data

A child's very first assessment rating period serves as a baseline for measuring and comparing subsequent progress. This initial portfolio of observations and documentation demonstrates where a child is along the continuum of development before any instruction and intervention has been provided. *A true baseline is important for measuring growth, particularly in the context of preschool special education assessment and Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Preschool Outcomes reporting, where child growth is measured from entry to exit of preschool special education services on several outcomes.*

To reflect baseline information and subsequently show the greatest amount of progress, ratings for a child's first assessment period should be based on the earliest observations and information available. Teachers are encouraged to enter ratings in the first period as soon as they have sufficient documentation for any objective. They do not need to wait for the standard checkpoint rating window (i.e., two week-window before the deadline) in the child's baseline period to finalize their baseline data. This does not mean, however, that teachers should rush to score all objectives in the first few weeks, which is not feasible given the overall number of assessment objectives. Rather, an assessor's mindset should be to score as soon as baseline evidence becomes available.

After finalizing ratings in the first checkpoint period, staff can continue capturing documentation to be considered in the following period. For children who have been determined eligible for special education and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place, information from formal evaluation reports may be used as documentation and should be entered into the online tool as soon as practicable. As with other formative assessments, special educators and general educators are expected to partner closely to document initial evaluation information into the online system.

Children Placed on an IEP Mid-Year

Children may be placed in preschool with an IEP after the start of the school year, sometimes well into the second or third checkpoint periods. In these cases, teachers should keep what has already been rated during the period corresponding to the child's IEP entry date instead of waiting until the following checkpoint rating window, following the baseline guidance above for the objectives that are still un-scored.

Family Communication and Individual Learning Plans

Preschool-aged children with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) according to federal requirements in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will also receive an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that addresses Colorado's preschool academic standards (C.R.S. § 22-7-1014 (1)(a)). IEPs should be the basis for the ILP ensuring that general educators and special educators can effectively collaborate to meet the learning needs of children

Definitions

Assessment Rating Window - During this window, providers make final determinations about how to rate the child on each of the assessment indicators. Observation and documentation continue to be collected during this window. There are three assessment rating windows - fall, winter, and spring.

Baseline ratings - The results of the first assessment rating a child receives in Results Matter. This initial portfolio of observations and documentation demonstrates where a child is along the continuum of development before any instruction and intervention has been provided.

Checkpoint deadline - Assessment data on every indicator is expected to be finalized in the online assessment system for each child NO LATER THAN the checkpoint deadlines, which are specified dates (published annually). Please see the [Results Matter Calendar](#) for current dates.

Documentation window - During this window, providers observe and document observations of assessment indicators for each child.

Rating Finalization - The process of determining final assessment ratings for each objective at the end of the Assessment Rating Window. For the baseline ratings, the finalization will be whenever sufficient data has been collected and may or may not correspond to the end of the Assessment Rating Window.

with disabilities. The ILP relies on valid and reliable assessment documented in the child’s IEP and during initial baseline assessment using Results Matter assessment. Progress is monitored through the ongoing use of Results Matter assessment with the goal of improving preschool outcomes for children with disabilities.

Programs may be concerned with not having the most up to date assessment scores at the time of family conferences that show children’s current development if entry ratings had been finalized early in the Fall. Educators always have the ability to customize the information selected for the conference to include more recent developmental information by using preliminary ratings as new observation data continue to be added after the initial finalization.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How do we collect all the assessment information in the first two weeks of school?*

We are not expecting all baseline data to be collected in the first two weeks of school. Rather, we are expecting that ratings be finalized as soon as evidence for each objective becomes available. This might occur in the first few weeks for some objectives but may take until the end of the checkpoint period for other objectives.

2. *May we begin collecting observations upon the child’s enrollment?*

Yes. Begin collecting observations upon the child’s enrollment. The team may have access to observational information that was collected just prior to enrollment that could also be utilized, for example, from screening or evaluation data that informed the eligibility determination.

3. *Can we use previous screening, family interview, and Child Find evaluation data to support baseline ratings?*

Yes. Teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings are encouraged to enter data in the online system as soon as they have sufficient documentation for any objectives. It is important to collaborate with special education teams. This data can be gathered through various data sources such as a developmental screening, information gathered through an interview with the family, and data from the initial eligibility evaluation for special education services.

4. *When can we finalize baseline ratings in the online system?*

We expect that teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings will complete baseline ratings for children as soon as possible, using the earliest pieces of documentation that demonstrate a child’s development prior to access to instruction and intervention.

5. *Should we continue to collect documentation after finalization of the baseline data?*

After determining ratings in the first checkpoint period, staff can continue capturing documentation to be considered in the following period.

6. *How do we handle baseline ratings for a child with an IEP who enters preschool special education services near the checkpoint deadline?*

It is important to enter a baseline rating for children as soon as initial evidence for each objective becomes available. This is especially important for children on IEPs. However, if teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings truly do not have enough documentation for all objectives, our guidance would be to use “not yet” in cases where the child is not demonstrating any knowledge, skills or abilities for that dimension and leave objectives blank where there is insufficient data. Note: If teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings finalize any baseline ratings with “not observed,” it will interfere with the OSEP baseline calculation in the OSEP Mandated Report. Keep entering data and finalize all ratings as quickly as possible in the next documentation window to establish a baseline as close as possible to the IEP date.



7. Does CDE support districts in setting their own checkpoint deadline for teachers and other staff to assign baseline ratings (e.g., within the child's first 12 days)?

While a compressed assessment rating window is not encouraged, CDE does encourage local procedures that underscore the importance of and provide support for teachers and other staff to enter baseline ratings as soon as they have sufficient documentation for any objectives.

8. Instead of setting baseline ratings, why doesn't CDE just move up the checkpoint deadline in the first Assessment Rating Window?

It may still take some time to collect evidence for all assessment objectives, therefore the assessment window reflects an appropriate amount of time. Further, children's baseline periods do not always occur in the fall and some children return to preschool the following year.

9. How much documentation is needed to set a baseline rating?

There must be sufficient documentation to support ratings no matter when the rating is made. As noted in the [Results Matter Handbook](#), the expectation is simply that teachers have some form of high-quality, objective documentation that can inform all assessment ratings. Documentation can include typed notes, digital photos (of work samples or activities), voice recordings, video recordings, and other vendor-supported resources. Photos and work samples should include context statements to illustrate how they relate to the chosen objectives.

10. If we finalize baseline ratings early in any checkpoint period, what should we do from that point until the checkpoint deadline?

Continue to collect documentation. Documentation and baseline ratings should inform your instruction, intervention, and ultimately your next rating. The data that is collected after finalization will go into the next documentation window.

11. How do we put this policy in practice with GOLD® by Teaching Strategies and CORAdvantage®?

This baseline scoring process means treating the scoring process in GOLD® and CORAdvantage® a bit differently in the first assessment period.

For teachers using GOLD®, it is not just about using preliminary ratings. While preliminary ratings are still helpful, determining the earliest possible baseline score means moving more quickly from entering preliminary ratings to finalization. When preparing for family conferences, teachers could draw from more recent preliminary ratings that do not necessarily need to be converted into new finalized ratings for the period.

For teachers using CORAdvantage®, this means not entering scores more than one time for the same objective in the baseline period, since the online system stamps whatever the highest rating was within a period regardless of the order in which they were entered (teachers do not “finalize” in this system).

For More Information Contact:

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