Ongoing Child Assessment

A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood
National Centers

Preface

The house framework represents five important elements of quality teaching and learning. Its elements include the following:

1. The first pillar of the house represents screening and ongoing child assessment

2. The second pillar represents research based curriculum and teaching practices

3. The foundation represents nurturing responsive interactions and engaging environments

4. The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning practices

5. It centers around engaging parents and families

This guide helps program leaders learn how to use assessments that are age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and to develop systems that support education staff in collecting and documenting, aggregating and analyzing, and using and sharing high-quality ongoing child assessment data.

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood
National Centers

Who is this guide for?

This guide is meant for program leaders—program directors, education or center directors, disability coordinators, supervisors, and coaches. Other program staff may find it useful too—like teachers, family childcare providers, and home visitors. In short, this guide is for anyone who

- makes decisions about ongoing assessment policies or procedures;
- uses child data to inform decisions; or
- conducts ongoing assessments and interprets the data to guide or individualize instruction or to share data with families, policy councils, or other key stakeholders.

This guide is written primarily for a Head Start audience, and references the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), and program practices. Other early childhood leaders who work in childcare, pre-K, or other programs might also find it useful. In all settings, high-quality ongoing assessment data can inform instruction and improve learning opportunities.

How can I use this guide?

This guide can be used in various ways to support high-quality ongoing assessment practices. Use this guide to

- learn about and understand the use of assessments that are age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate;
- support education staff as they implement ongoing assessment practices; and
- work with other program staff to develop and implement effective, efficient, valid, and reliable ongoing assessment practices.
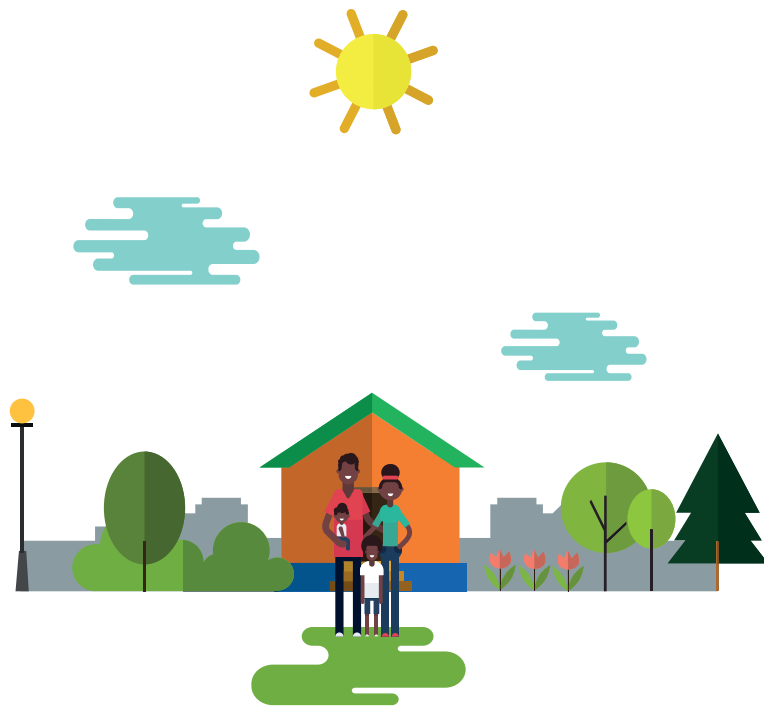
What is in this guide?

- What a comprehensive assessment system is
- Why ongoing child assessment is an important part of this system
- What ongoing child assessment means for program settings

The next section is a step-by-step guide in preparing, using, and sharing ongoing assessment data. It helps program leaders understand what they need to do to help education staff effectively use ongoing child assessment. In addition, it shares how program leaders might use ongoing child assessment information as part of broader program-level assessment. The appendices include a planning worksheet, specific information about assessing children who are dual language learners, a list of print and online resources, and more.

The guide includes several case stories that demonstrate how education staff and programs use ongoing child assessment. It also includes hyperlinks to resources and definitions of terms. It cites relevant HSPPS throughout.

Table of Contents

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood National Centers

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Introduction

A. What Is a Comprehensive Assessment System?

A comprehensive assessment system is a coordinated and integrated system of assessments. The system helps organize information about how and when children are developing and learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). It helps leaders make informed staff- and program-level decisions. A comprehensive assessment system includes developmental screening as well as ongoing child assessment and learning environment quality assessment, including staff and family observations, observations of home visitors, and family engagement information. A comprehensive system dictates how staff conduct assessments, how to organize and interpret assessment data, resources that share assessment results with families and other stakeholders, and outcomes or standards that staff assess (Atkins-Burnett et al., 2014). In Head Start, the staff assess outcomes or standards that are aligned with the goals in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

B. What Is Ongoing Child Assessment?

Ongoing child assessment involves planning, collecting and documenting, interpreting, and using and sharing data about children's development and learning over time (National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, 2014). Ongoing assessment starts when children enroll in a program, and it continues throughout their participation. It helps education staff and families learn about children's unique interests, strengths, and needs. Staff use this information to teach and individualize learning opportunities.

> ### Throughout This Guide
>
> - The term *teachers* includes center-based teachers and teacher assistants, as well as family childcare providers.
> - The term *education staff* includes teachers, assistant teachers, family childcare providers, and home visitors.
> - The term *teaching teams* includes all education staff who spend time interacting with children.

Ongoing child assessment differs from developmental screening, but data from both help to inform a better understanding of children's developmental status and progress. Developmental screening is one or more brief checks on a child's developmental status. Screening is used to help determine whether children might need additional evaluation. Ongoing child assessment involves gathering information repeatedly and over time and using that information to plan for learning experiences and to individualize interactions with children. When ongoing assessment data indicate that a child is not making expected progress, staff may refer the child for additional evaluation, even if the child passed the initial screening.

Regardless of whether staff use observation-based or direct assessments, all staff conducting ongoing child assessment need training and support so the information collected is accurate and useable.

- **Observation-based:** Collect and document information when observing and interacting with children during everyday learning opportunities and routines. Some observation-based assessments include Teaching Strategies Gold (Heroman et al., 2010), Galileo Pre-K (Assessment Technology Incorporated, 2018), the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) 2015 (California Department of Education, 2016), and the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP; Parks,1995).

- **Direct:** Give children structured tasks or activities. The tasks come with specific administration instructions. Use checklists or scoring rubrics to document children's responses to the task. Direct assessments can include standardized, norm-referenced assessment instruments, rating scales, and general outcome measurement.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) 1302.33 outline assessment for individualization requirements for all children. The HSPPS state that a program must "conduct standardized and structured assessments, which may be observation-based or direct," in a way that provides usable information and is frequent enough to support individualization throughout the year. Assessments must be "age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and appropriate for children with disabilities, as needed" (1302.33(b)(1), (c)(1)). In addition, staff should use information from these assessments with informal observations and information from family and other professionals to determine a child's needs and adjust strategies to individualize teaching practices or home visiting strategies.

HSPPS 1302.33 Child screenings and assessments.

(b) Assessment for individualization.

(1) A program must conduct standardized and structured assessments, which may be observation-based or direct, for each child that provide ongoing information to evaluate the child's development level and progress in outcomes aligned to the goals described in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five.* Such assessments must result in usable information for teachers, home visitors, and parents and be conducted with sufficient frequency to allow for individualization within the program year.
(2) A program must regularly use information from paragraph (b)(1) of this section along with informal teacher observations and additional information from family and staff, as relevant, to determine a child's strengths and needs, inform and adjust strategies to better support individualized learning and improve teaching practices in center-based and family child care settings, and improve home visit strategies in home-based models. See Appendix F for full HSPPS citation.

HSPPS 1302.102(c) Using data for continuous improvement.

(1) A program must implement a process for using data to identify program strengths and needs, develop and implement plans that address program needs, and continually evaluate compliance with program performance standards and progress towards achieving program goals described in paragraph (a) of this section.
(2) This process must:
  (i) Ensure data is aggregated, analyzed and compared in such a way to assist agencies in identifying risks and informing strategies for continuous improvement in all program service areas;
  (ii) Ensure child-level assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least three times a year, including for sub-groups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, except in programs operating fewer than 90 days, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services; and,
  (iii) For programs operating fewer than 90 days, ensures child assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least twice during the program operating period, including for subgroups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services;
  (iv) Use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement; and,
  (v) Use program improvement plans as needed to either strengthen or adjust content and strategies for professional development, change program scope and services, refine school readiness and other program goals, and adapt strategies to better address the needs of sub-groups.

C. Why Is Ongoing Child Assessment Important?

Ongoing assessment is essential to understanding children's progress in the key areas of development outlined in the ELOF or state early learning and development foundations or standards (ELDF, ELDS). Information that staff gather during ongoing assessment helps them adjust their curriculum, learning opportunities, interactions, and instruction to support and individualize for all children.

Ongoing assessment data also helps you make informed decisions about professional development and curriculum.

- The quality of the assessment data can help you understand where your staff need additional training or support when assessing and using assessment tools.
- Trends in ongoing assessment data can help you understand where children have successes or needs. It may help to target training for staff, so they are better prepared to support children.
- Trends in children's development and learning may encourage you to explore your curriculum—its scope and sequence; how it addresses cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity; and whether staff implement it with fidelity.

> ### Resource Highlight
>
> For more information on curriculum fidelity, see Curriculum Fidelity Resources.

Ongoing assessment in a Head Start program is part of a comprehensive assessment system and a coordinated approach to support all children. When staff take time to prepare and implement ongoing child assessment, programs can better meet children's collective and individual needs.

D. Does Ongoing Child Assessment Relate to Aggregating and Analyzing Data Three Times a Year?

The HSPPS require programs aggregate and analyze child data at least three times a year (1302.102(c)(2)), except in programs operating fewer than 90 days.[1] Throughout this process, programs examine data on subgroups, including children who are DLLs or children with disabilities, as part of this process. Aggregating and analyzing data is a type of interim assessment because programs do it a few times a year (Riley-Ayers, 2014). This supports direct, continuous program improvement related to "curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services" (1302.102(c)(2)).

Programs may aggregate information from ongoing child assessments and use it with other data points to evaluate children's progress toward early learning outcomes and your program's progress toward school readiness goals. Because the amount of information aggregated across all Head Start children in a program can be daunting, programs often present interim assessment information as summary numerical scores or percentages.

---

1 "For programs operating fewer than 90 days, child assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least twice during the program operating period, including for subgroups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities" (1302.102(c)(2)).

Ongoing assessment in a Head Start program is part of a comprehensive assessment system and a coordinated approach to support all children.

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood
National Centers

Preparing for and Implementing Ongoing Child Assessment

This section provides a detailed guide to planning and implementing ongoing child assessment. It is organized in a continuous cycle of four activities:

- **Prepare**
- **Collect**
- **Aggregate and Analyze**
- **Use and Share**

This is a common approach to collecting and using data. Many Head Start programs apply this approach to other types of information that they collect (e.g., enrollment and staffing data, family engagement data, languages spoken by children and their families).
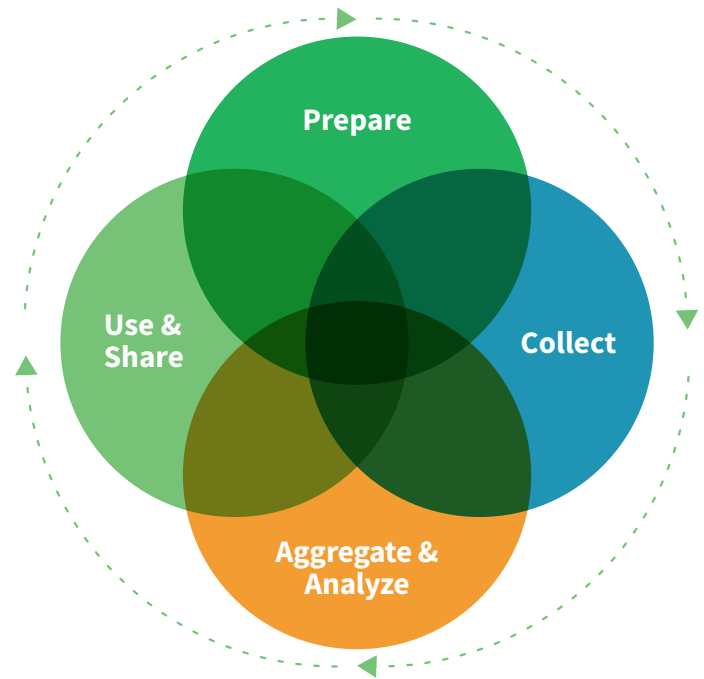
Programs must implement these four activities thoughtfully and intentionally to ensure valid and reliable ongoing assessment data. All program staff engage in this cycle to some extent, from teachers and home visitors collecting child-level data to leaders and leadership teams working with data at least three times a year.

While the four activities stay the same, the individual steps taken within each activity may look different from site to site or across program options (e.g., center-based, family childcare, home-based).

Some factors that impact the cycle include:

- Curricula and assessment tools
- Types of services and supports
- Languages and cultures of the children and families
- Staff's language strengths and cultural knowledge
- Community partnerships and resources
- Local or state collaborations with other early childhood programs and associated child assessment requirements
- Program resources

It is important to remember that the four-step process is not linear—or moving in only one direction. It is a process that sometimes moves forward and sometimes slides backward. For example, you may prepare to collect assessment data, but when you start collecting data, you realize you were not fully prepared. So, you go back and do more preparation before moving ahead. Once you find areas where your program has challenges, you can address them and move smoothly through the process.

Program-Level Supports
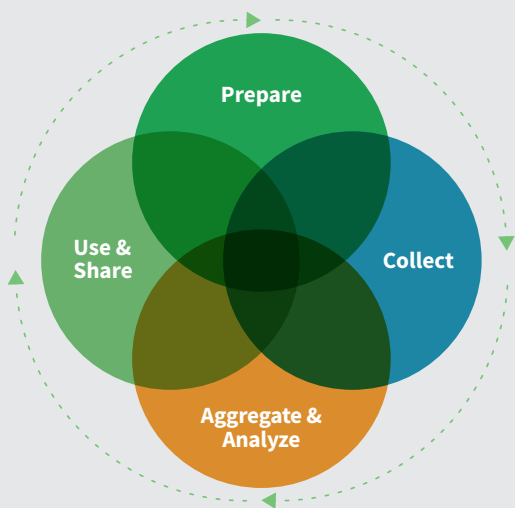
Prepare
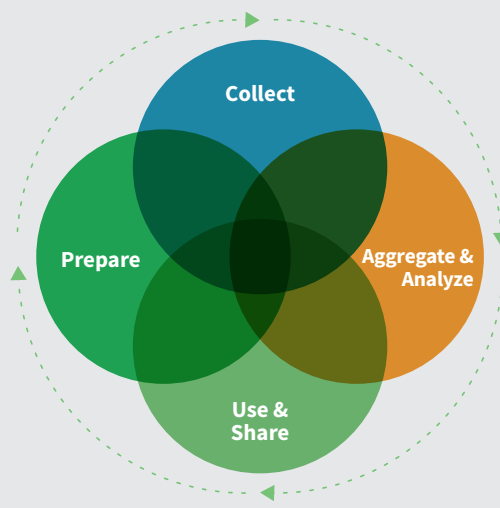
Collect

Aggregate & Analyze

Use & Share

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

This section highlights program-level supports you may need, and expectations for education staff during each stage of the cycle. In Appendix B, use a checklist to identify the parts of each activity where your program is doing well and where you have trouble.

As you think about the cycle, consider parallel ongoing child assessment processes at different levels in your program. As a program leader, you need to support these parallel processes. Education staff need to use the cycle to collect ongoing assessment information about each child in their classroom, their family childcare program, or their home-based caseloads. Program leadership use the cycle as they review center, program, or grantee information abo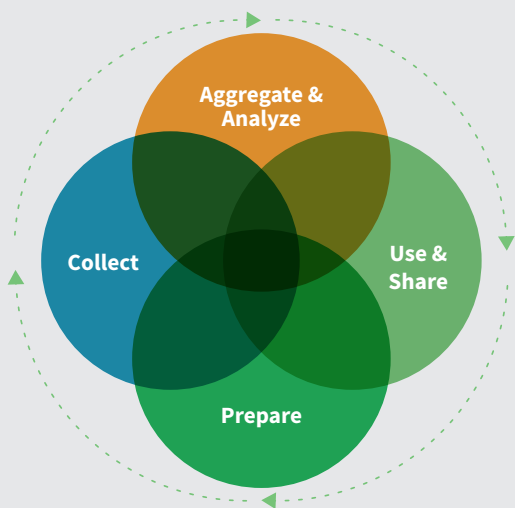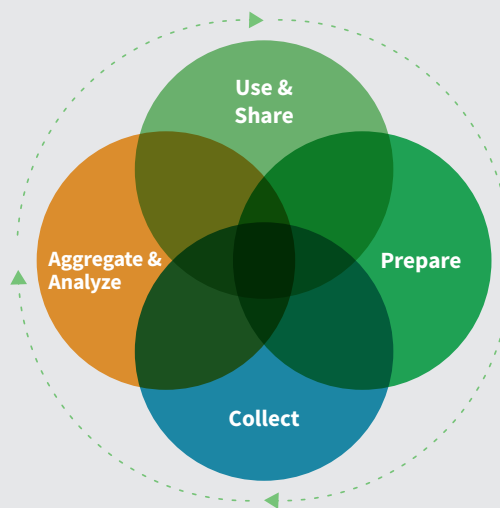ut children's progress in ELOF and school readiness goals. The sections that follow discuss each of the four activities and the parallel processes within each activity.

A. Prepare

Preparing for ongoing assessment is the first and most important activity in the cycle. This is when you develop an overall assessment plan, procedures to implement the plan, and a timeline. Assessment plans address how ongoing child assessment data will be collected and used at different levels, including grantees, sites, classrooms, family childcare homes, and home-based services. Plans should also address variations in assessment practices based on children's ages, their languages and cultures, and their abilities. In the Prepare section of the cycle, your program will develop plans to establish and support an ongoing assessment system to ensure that staff collect valid and reliable data and use that information to teach children, support parents, and inform curriculum implementation and assessment practices.
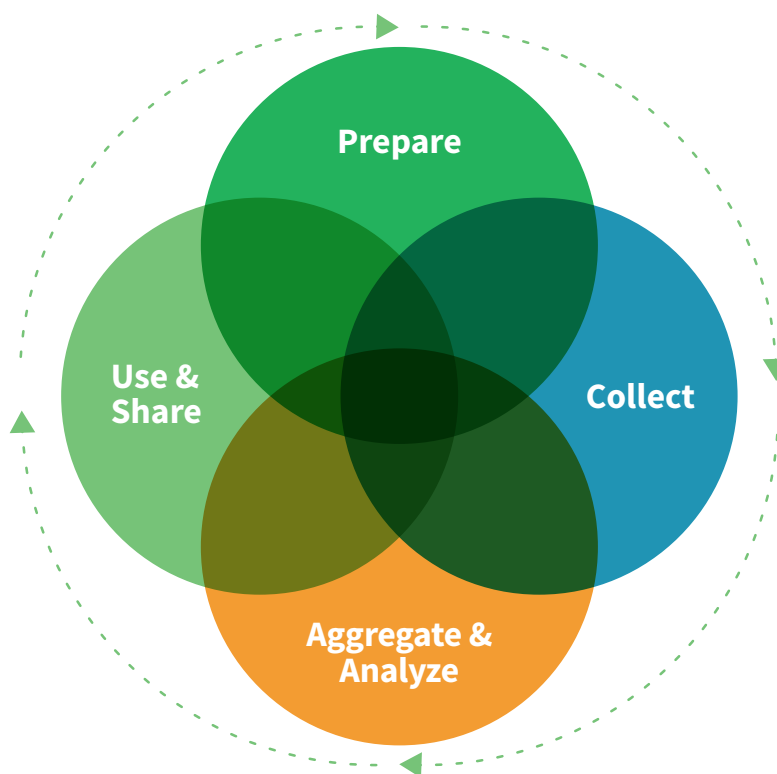
Grantee and Site Preparation

1. Form an ongoing child assessment planning and implementation team.

First, establish a team to plan and implement all preparation activities for grantees and all associated programs. The planning team should include diverse perspectives. For example, you may want to include an education manager, a coach, teachers and family childcare providers who work with children of different ages, a data coordinator, a disabilities coordinator, a home visitor, a child development specialist, and family engagement staff. This team should also include staff who have knowledge of and experience working with children who are DLLs to ensure that assessment practices are culturally and linguistically responsive to the children in the program.

The team will meet periodically to prepare to implement the ongoing assessment system. This team will plan and support implementation of a system of ongoing child assessment for all children in the program, including children receiving home-based services, children in center-based classrooms or family childcare centers, children who are dual language learners, and children with disabilities. It is important for the team to understand the purpose of ongoing child assessment so they can plan appropriately.

> **Resource Highlight**
>
> For more information about preparing to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment practices, see the [Dual Language Learners Program Assessment (DLLPA)](#).

2. Create teaching teams who plan and implement ongoing assessment together.

All education staff who spend time interacting with children should complete training for ongoing assessment. This includes teachers, teaching assistants, family childcare providers, home visitors, and other service providers such as special educators and speech language pathologists. Everyone who works with children should attend training. Have education staff work in teams as they plan and implement ongoing child assessment. Classroom teachers can organize teaching teams that include all staff in their classrooms, coaches, and other service providers who collect and analyze ongoing child assessment. Home-based staff teams might include multiple home-based providers working together as a team, their coaches, and other service providers. Family childcare staff may organize a cohort of providers and include coaches, child development specialists, and assistants.

3. Decide what to assess, when to assess, and how to assess.

Ongoing child assessment systems include a few related components. The planning team will identify the parts of the system they need to assess—including the knowledge and skills, schedule, and methods and [instruments](#)—so they can develop training and implementation plans.

3a. What to assess.

As early education services for children have grown, so has the need for assessment information to guide these services. As a result, Head Start has developed the ELOF. The ELOF serves as the foundation for what to teach. The HSPPS require Early Head Start and Head Start programs to align curriculum and ongoing assessment with the ELOF. Programs should also consider the foundations in their state ELDS and how they align with the ELOF.

The ELOF includes five central domains for infants and toddlers—including Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Language and Communication; Cognition; and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development. The domains for preschool are very similar to the domains for infants and toddlers. They only differ in Language and Communication—which includes Literacy—and Mathematics Development and Scientific Reasoning—which replaces Cognition. Each ELOF domain breaks into sub-domains, and sub-domains break into goals. The goals offer a three-tier developmental progression for infants and toddlers (birth to 9 months, 8 to 18 months, and 16 to 36 months) ending in a list of indicators. The developmental progression for preschool is divided into two levels (36 to 48 months and 48 to 60 months), also ending in a list of indicators.

> **Resource Highlight**
>
> For more information on aligning curriculum to the ELOF: Using the ELOF to Inform Curriculum Planning and Implementation

3b. When to assess.

The HSPPS provide guidance for programs developing assessment schedules and require staff to gather child-level data and then aggregate and analyze it three* times a year. This establishes a yearlong assessment cycle. Data from the first assessment cycle help staff decide what practices to implement and what data to collect during the second cycle. Data from the second cycle helps staff decide what practices to implement and what data to collect during third period and year-end. Managers use the data to identify program strengths and needs, develop and implement plans to address those needs, and evaluate their compliance with HSPPS and goals.

Programs need to finish gathering data so they can aggregate and analyze their assessment results three* times each year. Home visitors should plan with families when the best times will be for their child to conduct any direct assessments the program uses.

Education staff will also plan when to assess based on the classroom schedule. If using an observation-based assessment instrument, staff should observe and document children's knowledge and skills when children are most likely to use them. For example, staff might observe gross motor skills during outdoor play. They might observe language skills during free play and literacy skills in the literacy corner.

3c. How to assess.

Identify the assessment strategies that staff will use. Observation-based assessment instruments require an observation system and records of children's skills during familiar routines and learning opportunities. Assessment strategies that staff typically use in classrooms, family childcare settings, or in home-based settings include collecting anecdotal records, checklists, work samples, and videos or photos. In addition, staff should gather information from families. It is important that programs train staff in all these strategies and offer supports, such as job aids or coaching, so staff can implement these strategies effectively.

---

* Except in programs operating fewer than 90 days

Observation-based assessment is also referred to as authentic assessment. As defined by Snyder, McLaughlin, & McLean, staff use authentic assessment when they observe and interact with children during routine activities—gathering information to document their knowledge and skills (Snyder et al., 2014a). Typically, an authentic assessment instrument covers a range of development indicators. Based on ongoing assessment data from observations and interactions with children in a classroom or home, assessors rate children's levels of development across major development domains. Authentic assessment instruments compare current skill levels to normative data, so staff can see how children's current levels relate to other children. Staff measure individual growth and development over time. They can summarize information and provide data about program goals, as required by the HSPPS [1302.102 (a)–(c)]. Staff can also summarize data for specific populations–such as children with suspected delays or identified disabilities, children in specific age ranges, or children who are dual language learners–or for individual classrooms and settings.

If your program is not already using an authentic assessment tool, the planning team might investigate authentic assessment and direct assessment tools to determine which will meet the program's needs. The planning team might investigate which authentic assessment instrument meets the program's needs. Regardless of whether they use an authentic or direct assessment instrument, the team must ensure that it will yield valid and reliable scores for the children in the program. They must also make sure that the content is aligned with ELOF domains and domains in the state ELDS.

Validity and Reliability

When deciding on an assessment tool, it is important to consider its validity and reliability.

Validity: Evidence that supports the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences made or actions taken from scores derived from an assessment (AERA et al., 2014; Messick, 1993; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

Reliability: The consistency or accuracy of assessment scores over time, raters, items, or people (AERA et al., 2014; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

HSPPS related to assessing children who are dual language learners.

HSPPS §1302.33(c)

(2) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English, a program must use qualified bilingual staff, contractor, or consultant to:

(i) Assess language skills in English and in the child's home language, to assess both the child's progress in the home language and in English language acquisition;

(ii) Conduct screenings and assessments for domains other than language skills in the language or languages that best capture the child's development and skills in the specific domain; and,

(iii) Ensure those conducting the screening or assessment know and understand the child's language and culture and have enough skill level in the child's home language to accurately administer the screening or assessment and to record and understand the child's responses, interactions, and communications.

(3) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English and qualified bilingual staff, contractors, or consultants are not able to conduct screenings and assessments, a program must use an interpreter in conjunction with a qualified staff person to conduct screenings and assessments as described in paragraphs (c)(2)(i) through (iii) of this section.

4. Special considerations when preparing for ongoing assessment.

One−third of children in Early Head Start and Head Start are dual language learners (DLLs), meaning that they are learning their home language and learning English at the same time. The planning team will need to ensure that staff use the ongoing child assessment system appropriately with children who are DLLs. The HSPPS include standards about assessing children who are DLLs. See Standards §1302.33(c)(2) and (3) in the box above and in Appendix F.

4a. Gather information from families.

Before assessment of children who are DLLs, it is important to understand their language and cultural backgrounds. The DLLPA provides guidance to support programs in implementing culturally and linguistically responsive assessment practices. Programs can also use the resource Gathering and Using Language Information That Families Share, which includes questions for families related to their language backgrounds and their children's language experiences.

4b. Find staff or interpreters who can speak the home languages of children who are DLLs and their families.

Interpreters should understand cultural differences that may exist for families and children. For example, in some cultures, it's unusual for adults to ask children "what is this?" when pointing to objects or pictures in a book. Children from those cultures may not answer these questions—not because they don't know the answer—but because it's strange for an adult to ask that. Find more information in the Inviting and Supporting Cultural Guides and Home Language Models Tip Sheet.

Published home language surveys from curriculum developers or community partners (e.g., school districts) can also provide language information. These language surveys are usually brief. They offer preliminary information on children's experiences with their home languages and English. The program may also develop its own intake forms to collect in-depth information on children's language and learning experiences.

4c. Gather child assessment information in the child's home language and in English.

To gain a full understanding of children's learning, it is important to collect ongoing assessment information in their home language when possible. Bilingual and bicultural staff or interpreters can help with the collection of ongoing assessment data. They can work together with education staff in the learning environment to plan for and implement culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment practices. They can also support interpretation of assessment questions and communication of assessment information to families.

4d. Ensure that standardized or normed assessments have appropriate procedures.

If your program is planning to use a standardized or normed assessment instrument, determine whether the children who are DLLs in your program are included in the normative sample. If not, interpret scores carefully. Additionally, staff should follow different procedures when administering to children with different language or cultural backgrounds than those of the normative sample. The instrument should specify those procedures in manuals or other accompanying documentation. For more information on using assessments with children who are DLLs, see Appendix C.

> ### Resource Highlight
>
> For more information about screening dual language learners: Screening Dual Language Learners in Early Head Start and Head Start: A Guide for Program Leaders

4e. Prepare for ongoing assessment for children with suspected delays or identified disabilities.

At least ten percent of children enrolled in each Head Start program are children who qualify for disability services under IDEA. These children have individualized education programs (IEPs) or individualized family service plans (IFSPs). The planning team must ensure that staff can appropriately gather assessment information for children with IFSPs or IEPs. At the beginning of the year, when education staff review children's information, they should be aware of the child's current skills, the child's disability, and the child's performance levels as described in the IFSP or IEP.

Children with IEPs or IFSPs may need accommodations at home or in the classroom to be independent. The early interventionist or early childhood special educator can work with physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, or other special education personnel to identify individualization strategies for the classroom or home. Learn more about learning environments at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/environment.

Talk with each child's family and carefully review the goals in their child's IEP or outcomes in their IFSP. Break down IEP goals or IFSP outcomes so the child's learning targets are challenging, but achievable. Most IEP goals are skills the child could attain within 12 months. IFSP outcomes are skills the child could attain within 6 months. Staff need to break down IEP and IFSP skills into smaller steps so they can begin assessing and teaching. When the child acquires the first skill, staff begin working the next step.

Have staff observe for learning targets from the IEP or IFSP continuously, rather than periodically throughout the year. More information about identifying and using learning targets for children with disabilities is in Appendix D.

5. Plan to involve families.

Families observe and interact with their children every day. They are an essential source of information about what their children typically do at home or in other community-based settings. Support education staff in engaging families in the assessment process by creating systems for regular communication between families and education staff about children's knowledge and skills. Intentionally including families in the ongoing assessment process helps them learn to advocate for their children. Encourage education staff and families to share information about children's development related to the domains in the ELOF and their interests at home and at school. For children who are DLLs, gather information about the child's language experiences. Learn more in the resource [Gathering and Using Information That Families Share](#). For children who have disabilities, gather information about the child's disability, goals or outcomes in the child's IFSP or IEP, and any information specific to the child's disability.

Education staff should communicate with the family about their child's skills, interests, and needs throughout the year. Share information about the child's initial status and progress with the family after each formal assessment. Staff training should include ways to facilitate ongoing, bidirectional communication with families. For example, it is important to know what communication mechanism is best for each family. You may choose to text, e-mail, call, keep a "traveling" notebook, or other options. Communication between staff and the families about their children's growth and development is a valuable piece of the ongoing assessment process.

For home-based programs, it is especially important to engage families in the ongoing assessment process. Between home visits, families can observe and document the knowledge and skills their children use at home throughout the day. This information can be shared during home visits and can be documented by home visitors as part of their ongoing assessment data.

6. Plan professional development, ongoing implementation support, and fidelity checks.

The planning team also develops a professional development system and include implementation supports needed by the education staff to conduct ongoing assessment.

6a. Professional development should include the skills needed to conduct ongoing assessment.

- **What to assess:** The planning team can develop a system to help staff identify what to assess. They include the system in professional development. It is important to start ongoing assessment when children first enter a program or move to a new setting. Education teams review existing information to determine each child's developmental level relative to the ELOF. After the initial cycle of ongoing assessment, staff focus on children's most advanced skills in each goal to establish learning targets. These initial learning targets are the basis for instruction and assessment.

- **How to assess:** When using an observation-based assessment instrument, staff observe and interact with children. Staff may use anecdotal notes, checklists, tally marks, work samples, and video or pictures to document what they observe. Staff also engage families in the assessment process by regularly sharing documentation and asking families to contribute their own observations. Everyone on an education team should be able to use these strategies in early learning settings and during socializations. Only trained staff should use a direct assessment.

- **Where and when to assess:** Home visitors and education teams need to be strategic in planning where and when to assess children. Developing a planning matrix might help teams identify what targets to assess in which children during which activities and routines.

- **How to enter data:** Staff collect written notes, tally marks, checklists, and pictures. Then staff carefully encode and enter them into a data collection system. The data helps them find instruction targets for groups and individual children.

6b. Provide professional development and follow-up implementation supports.

After staff receive training, introduce a personalized implementation support system that includes resources and coaching. A knowledgeable and skilled coach or child development specialist who understands ongoing assessment might regularly spend time in each classroom or with each family childcare provider or home visitor to help them bring ongoing assessment from workshop training into their settings.

6c. Implement fidelity checks.

For staff to be effective, programs need to provide training and implementation supports, such as coaching, and systematically making sure staff use assessment instruments with fidelity. While training, explain and establish a system of fidelity checks to ensure that staff monitor fidelity throughout the year. Supervisory staff and coaches who have recurring visits with teaching teams, providers, and home visitors are in the best position to implement fidelity checks. These staff need to be trained in the assessment process. To conduct a fidelity check, the supervisor observes the assessor to make sure he or she has appropriately recorded the child's behavior and correctly scored the assessment tool.

6d. Data entry and storage.

The planning team should develop a plan for entering and storing data. Planning for data entry is important and contributes to higher quality data. When education staff have adequate time to enter data into an online ongoing assessment system, they are more likely to enter accurate and relevant data. Planning for storage includes ensuring that data are secure and that there are policies in place for archiving data once children leave the program.

- **What materials and time do you need?** Consider the materials teachers and home visitors need to collect and organize data (file folders, stick-ems, cameras, computers, etc.). Include adequate time for staff to implement assessment strategies, organize data, and enter data.

- **How will you enter and organize data?** Train staff on data entry, security, and privacy as specified in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Include expectations for ethical collection and use of data. Coach staff on data entry, if they would benefit from additional support. Check fidelity for each person who is entering data.

- **What will your timelines look like?** Include a timeline with observation phases, data entry deadlines, and a timeline for fidelity checks. The timeline should mark periodic program-wide data analysis dates and review meetings.
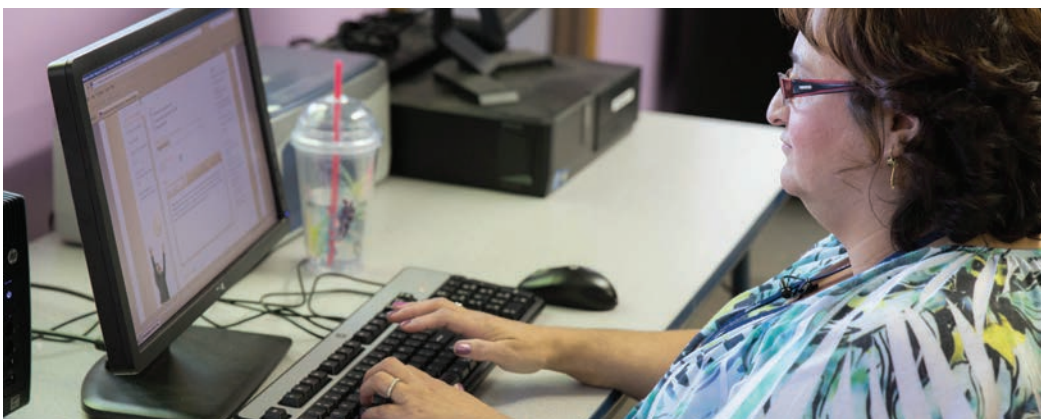
While training, explain and establish a system of fidelity checks to ensure that staff monitor fidelity throughout the year.

Case Story

Juanita is the director of the Westcott Head Start program, which serves preschool children in center-based settings and uses home visiting for children from birth to age 3. Since becoming director, Juanita has been working with program directors and education managers to establish a grantee-wide ongoing child assessment system. They have a meeting schedule where they plan for and discuss ongoing child assessment practices. Meetings include monthly video calls, quarterly in-person meetings, and between-meeting e-mails when questions pop up. Everyone is working together to plan the system. They will start work on it in the spring, so everything will be ready when the new year starts in the fall. A grantee-wide planning team (which includes program directors, education managers, coaches, a data coordinator, a disabilities coordinator, teaching and home visiting staff, and family engagement staff) will begin meeting in February to plan ongoing child assessment for the following year. The planning team decided it was important to invest in an observation assessment instrument that is closely aligned with the ELOF.

Westcott Head Start has four preschool centers and home-based services for infants and toddlers. While all programs are in the same rural area, the programs are different depending on staff's specific needs. Juanita identified teaching teams within her program. Teams consist of the teaching staff in each classroom and the home-based staff, plus additional staff who serve the children and families, like the family engagement specialist and disabilities services manager. Juanita established a series of meetings throughout the year that include individual team meetings and all-staff meetings. This system helps Juanita support her staff.

Education staff receive training on ongoing assessment strategies each year. Training includes records, checklists, work samples, and videos. The staff also received training on partnering with family members to collect ongoing assessment information in the home. Two years ago, staff received additional professional development on assessing children who are dual language learners (DLLs). Juanita established a DLL assessment team, which coordinated assessments and bilingual staff that assisted with ongoing assessment. Last year, staff received extra training about ongoing assessment with children with disabilities. Staff practiced breaking down IFSP outcomes and IEP goals into smaller steps.

In addition to training on documentation strategies, staff receive yearly training on their ongoing assessment tool. This training includes technical aspects—updates to the online tool and app, data entry, and planning to set up, manage, and use data. They also learn to accurately score children based on the documentation they collect. Home-based staff worked together to design protocols for collecting and documenting assessment information, based on their home visit and socialization schedules. This training is key, and Juanita encourages her education staff to use data to support the scores and attribute them to the correct learning domains.

B. Collect

The Collect stage is when you and your staff put plans into action. This stage is important, because data need to be relevant, accurate, and timely in order to be useful for decision making and individualizing. Paying close attention to what is being assessed, when, how, and by whom, will help ensure collection of high-quality data that are meaningful and useful.

Complete the following activities (items 12–16 on the worksheet in Appendix B) as part of the Collect stage:

✔ Review children's existing records.

✔ Identify what to assess based on the assessment instrument. This instrument must align with the ELOF and the state's ELDS.

✔ Gather information about children from their families. Make sure to ask about their routines and what children typically do at home.

✔ Ask families about DLL's language history.

✔ Review children's IFSPs or IEPs.
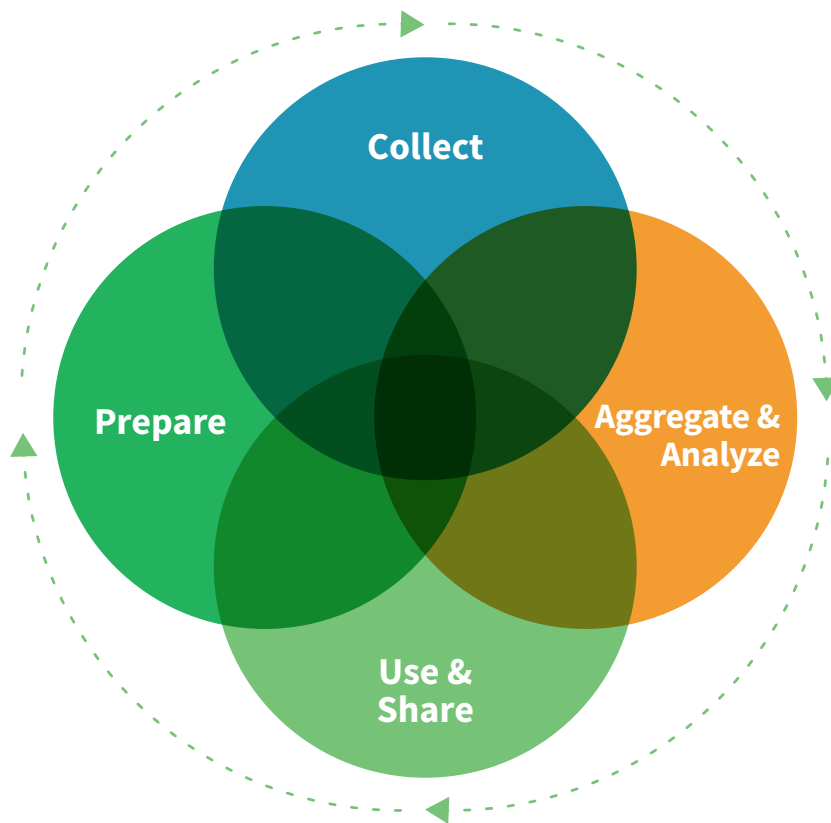
1. What to assess.

Review the assessment tool, curriculum materials, and the information in the bullets listed on page 21. Then have education teams identify assessment targets before children begin receiving services.

Staff should determine what to assess based on what they know about each child. Home-based staff should work with families to determine what to assess. For example, staff need to assess children with IEPs or IFSPs for skills in their IEP goals or IFSP outcomes as well as skills identified in the assessment tool. See Appendix D for more information about deciding what to assess when working with children who have IFSPs or IEPs.

2. When to assess.

Staff conduct observation-based assessments when they observe and interact with children as they do familiar activities with familiar people in familiar settings. Have the education team plan to assess knowledge and skills during daily learning opportunities and routines. Home visitors can ask parents to observe children as they engage in daily activities and routines and share information during regular visits or socializations.

3. How to assess.

To collect ongoing assessment information, staff might make anecdotal notes, use checklists, collect work samples, and review video. Staff can learn more about ongoing child assessment strategies on the Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC) at https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/screening-assessment-evaluation-observation.

3a. Anecdotal records.

An anecdotal record is a written note about what a child said or did during a typical routine or activity. Records share progress about the child's knowledge or skill in an ELOF or curriculum goal. An anecdotal record is a factual description only—without an assumption or judgement. Include the date, time, and location where the observation happened to help you track progress.

THE BASICS: ANECDOTAL RECORDS

Date and time: *January 24, 2014*

Setting: *Outdoor play area*

Curriculum area/domain: *Gross Motor*

Child: *Jackie N.*

Objective description:
Jackie pedaled a tricycle 10 feet in a straight line.

Observer: *Miriam S.*

From: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/ongoing-child-assessment.

3b. Checklists.

Staff can use a checklist while observing a group of children to gather information about goals in a domain or sub-domain. The items on the checklist must be observable and measured with a "yes" or "no" response. Staff might write checklists in a variety of ways based on the information they need. Checklists work better for some content than others. For example, staff can document physical skills with a "yes" or "no" response. Social and emotional skills require more information, such as anecdotes and observations in different settings or during different parts of the day. The example below shows a physical development checklist used in a toddler classroom.

Domain: Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development						
Sub-Domain: Gross Motor						
	SARAH	JUAN	THOMAS	ADRIAN	MATEO	MARIANA
Walks and runs, adjusts speed when needed	Yes 3/20					Yes 3/20
Throws, kicks, jumps, climbs	Yes 3/20		Yes 3/20	Yes 3/20		
Experiments with moving the body in different ways, such as dancing	Yes 2/18					
Maintains balance and posture while sitting and concentrating		Yes 2/22		Yes 2/22		
Adjusts position of body to fit through or into small spaces		Yes 2/12				Yes 3/16

3c. Work samples.

Work samples are products (or pictures of products) that children have created. Staff organize work samples in a physical or digital portfolio that they review periodically to track children's progress. Home-based staff can ask families to keep or take pictures of any artwork they create at home and then review them together during regular visits. Home visitors can also collect work samples and video during socializations.

Share portfolios with families regularly so they can see how their child is progressing. Samples and photos are a great way to engage families, since they can see evidence of what their child is doing.

PLAN TO COLLECT WORK SAMPLES

From: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/ongoing-child-assessment.

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

3d. Video.

Staff can collect and review video clips that show a child performing ELOF-related skills. These videos often show progress children have made and, with adequate permission, teachers can share them with families during a conference, through electronic applications (apps), by e-mail, or through text messages. Home-based staff can ask families to record children demonstrating ELOF-related skills, or staff can record during socializations and view and discuss with parents during the next home visit.

From: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/ongoing-child-assessment

4. Strategies for documentation.

In classroom and family childcare settings, use a matrix to plan where and when to document, as well as which staff members will observe and collect documentation. Include what to observe, where to observe, when to observe, and how to observe (checklists, anecdotal records, etc.) in their lesson plans. Home visitors should plan observations with families during home visits and socializations.

It is important to document:
- during observations and interactions throughout the day or during a home visit
- when entering data into a physical or digital portfolio, so staff can summarize and access it over time

Regular documentation is important to ensure that staff collect accurate data. Without a documentation system, it is easy to forget what you observed and even which children you observed. For example, if staff use anecdotal records, they will need materials to make notes, either on paper or digitally.

If staff use checklists, make sure they are developed in advance and available during observations. Checklists need to fit the observation. These forms include the date, activity, and children's names. To use work samples, staff must keep the product that the child constructed or take a picture of it. Physical work samples should include the child's name, date, activity, and a description of what the child said or did.

Many teachers and home visitors use file folders or bins with children's names on them to avoid misplacing documents. At the end of the day, staff can enter information into a computer.

4a. Data storage and summaries.

Develop a data storage system so staff can enter information from ongoing child assessments and store them physically or electronically over time. Some authentic assessment instruments provide a system for entering and storing data that staff can use to report children's progress. Other software programs that are not connected to an assessment instrument also allow staff to enter and summarize data. Staff should make sure they have a system in place before collecting data.

4b. Fidelity.

Programs need a system for checking the fidelity of data collection during ongoing assessment. Supervisors might check the fidelity of data collections when working with teachers in classrooms and during home visits. Here are some ways you can check fidelity:

ORGANIZING INFORMATION GATHERED FOR ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT

From: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/ongoing-child-assessment.

- Observe and collect data at the same time as the teacher or home visitor. Then compare documentation to see if he or she documented the same observations you did. If a teacher has difficulty collecting data, provide additional implementation support.
- Review the process that staff use to record observations to be sure they assess all children across all domains. If there are gaps in the system, help develop a focused assessment plan so that staff can collect all data for all children.
- Review the assessment instrument scoring to be sure that staff score the tool correctly. If there are errors, review the scoring system to determine where there is a misunderstanding.

4c. Monitor data collection.

Programs need systems for ensuring that data collection is happening according to the timeline created in the Prepare phase. The timeline should specify dates for each phase of observation and data entry, as well as fidelity checks and data entry.

Programs should:

- monitor teams' progress toward meeting these timelines,
- learn how staff use the information with children,
- identify skill gaps to inform professional development, and
- consider supports to enhance staff's capabilities (including technology supports and time to enter data).

Case Story

The Westcott Head Start program provided professional development workshops on ongoing child assessment at the end of the summer. Education teams met regularly as they started implementation. For three years, Westcott has been using an authentic, ongoing child assessment instrument that aligns with the ELOF. This instrument helps staff identify what to assess in groups of children and individual children. Teachers include a plan for conducting ongoing assessment in their weekly lesson plans. In the pre-K classrooms, teachers use checklists and observation recording forms to collect assessment data during planned learning activities. The forms include the developmental skill progression for the child development goals most aligned with the activity's learning objectives. During less structured play and exploration, including outdoor play, teachers document children's knowledge and skills with digital cameras, anecdotes, and observations. Teachers document observations during daily routines and play times. They also ask families for their insights on their child's skills and behaviors. Home visitors work together with families to set goals for children and then observe and document during and between visits and during socializations.

Center-based staff find time in their weekly planning meeting to look across these data and determine which key information about children's development they need. Then they plan to introduce learning activities or enhance learning centers to encourage children to use these skills. They also reflect on whether they are using their ongoing assessment instrument with fidelity and check in with each other to make sure they are documenting and scoring the assessment tool accurately.

The program's home visitors focus on helping parents observe and understand their child's development. They work jointly—from planning for assessment, to ongoing observations, to planning home visits that use the information. The assessment process is an ongoing part of each visit and each planning session. Parents record what they observe during the week in daily routines, play, and everyday activities. They assess often enough to help them stay on top of the child's development, so they learn what to expect at different age levels and have a planning framework. Recording and documenting assessment information is ultimately the responsibility of the home visitor. Socializations also offer opportunities to observe social skills.

Supervisors and coaches work with classroom teachers and home visitors each year to help them implement ongoing child assessment. It has been especially helpful to have someone observing and providing feedback to all staff members as they conduct ongoing assessment. The coaches have also been instrumental in checking fidelity, scoring the assessment instrument, and providing support when needed. Over time, the fidelity of observation, scoring the instrument, and data entry have all improved. The planning team for Westcott Center is meeting to review the first cycle of ongoing assessment. This team includes the education manager, a coach, the data coordinator, disabilities coordinator, a preschool teacher, and a home visitor. The planning team looks at the data they collected for all classrooms and home-based services. They will identify any missing data, and develop a plan for staff to collect missing data and enter it before summarizing the data from the first cycle. The team will report data about fidelity for the center. Members of the planning team will reflect on how things have been going and list any changes that might be helpful for the second phase of ongoing assessment.

C. AGGREGATE AND ANALYZE

The term aggregate means to combine information into a unified whole. Analyze means to question, explore, and investigate aggregated information—or to "dig into" data (National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, n.d.a, n.d.b). Aggregation and analysis occur on multiple levels. For example, education staff regularly aggregate and analyze information they have collected about individual children to help inform curricular decisions and interactions. They also aggregate and analyze child assessment information for all children in their setting on an ongoing basis. An education specialist might aggregate and analyze child assessment information for all children enrolled in a delegate agency program. A grantee-level leadership team would aggregate and analyze child assessment information, typically three times a year. All staff need support to learn how to compile and interpret the ongoing assessment data they have collected.
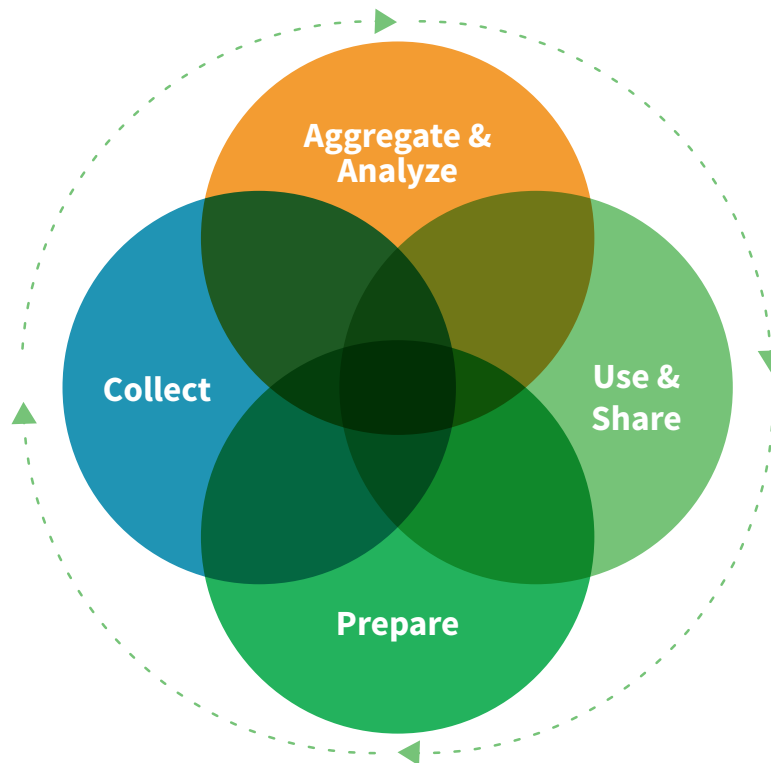
Disaggregate means breaking combined data into smaller subsets or subgroups. Staff create subsets or subgroups based on characteristics of children, families, or programs. For example, subgroups might be children who are DLLs, children with disabilities, children in different age groups such as infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, or programs that are half-day versus full-day. Disaggregated data can help staff compare information about subgroups and determine if they need more assessment information or professional development, resources, or implementation supports. For example, if a teacher compares communication outcomes for her children who are dual language learners versus those who are not dual language learners, she might decide to communicate with families about children's progress in their home language so she will have a complete view of how children are developing their communication skills.

A data aggregation and analysis plan can provide a roadmap to help conduct Aggregate and Analyze activities (National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, n.d.a, n.d.b). Aggregate and Analyze activities should be occurring at multiple levels (e.g., child, classroom, caseload, site, grantee).

1. Aggregation and analysis of ongoing child assessment information.

Table 1 shows an example of one teaching team's data aggregation and analysis activities. The teaching team implements these activities, as designed by the leadership team in the ongoing assessment plan.

Table 1. Aggregation and Analysis Activities: Ongoing Child Assessment Data

Step	Data Source	Example Questions to Guide Analysis
1. Compile ongoing child assessment documentation for each child	• Observations, child work samples, videos, checklists, information from families	• Have I compiled all the relevant documentation for each child? • If data are missing for a child, have I indicated what data are missing and why?
2. Use a scoring rubric, spreadsheet, or assessment instrument scoring system to enter data	• Scoring rubric, spreadsheet, or assessment instrument scoring system • Child-level information compiled in Step 1	• Have I entered all data for each child using the rubric, spreadsheet, or assessment instrument scoring system? • Have I entered all data within the timelines established by my program? • If data are missing for a child, have I indicated what data are missing and why?
3. Analyze—examine data for individual children and for the group of children and have focused conversations with other staff	• Scoring rubric, spreadsheet, or assessment instrument scoring system	• How is each child progressing in the goals, associated development progressions, and indicators from the ELOF? • Are there patterns or trends I see in the data for the children with whom I work?
4. Analyze—examine data for different ELOF sub-domains and have focused conversations with other staff	• Scoring rubric, spreadsheet, or assessment instrument scoring summaries	• How are the children doing on the math subdomain of the ELOF? • Which children might need additional instruction on key math skills? • Do we have enough documentation related to language and literacy? If not, what additional strategies might we use?
5. Analyze—examine data for subgroups of children and have focused conversations with other staff	• Scoring rubric, spreadsheet, or assessment instrument scoring system summaries	• How are children who are DLLs doing relative to children who are not DLLs? • How are children who have IFSPs or IEPs doing relative to other children?

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Case Story

Lydia is a teacher in a three-year-olds' classroom in the Westcott Head Start program. She and her teaching assistant have ten children in their classroom. Her class has two children with IEPs and three children who are dual language learners. The teaching team includes a special educator and a speech-language therapist, who are there occasionally to support the children with IEPs. Lydia and her teaching team collected ongoing assessment data during the first two months of the school year using their program's observation-based assessment instrument. They received training on the instrument and procedures last year and periodically have ongoing implementation support from one of the coaches in the program. The program leadership team used the data report from the observation-based assessment instrument to develop a summary data sheet. Education staff used the sheet to aggregate and analyze ongoing assessment information. This data sheet is available in both a paper-and-pencil format and as an electronic spreadsheet. Lydia is not completely technologically fluent, so she prefers to use the paper-and-pencil format. One of her professional development goals for the coming year is to fluently use the electronic spreadsheet to enter and analyze her data. For now, she and the teaching team aggregate and analyze their data by hand.

Table 2 shows an example of the aggregation and analysis for the ELOF sub-domain Writing, Goal P-Lit 6. The data in Table 2 are from the report the observation-based assessment system produced after staff entered it in the online system. The summary data sheet includes the indicators on the observation-based assessment system that align with Goal P-Lit 6. The team analyzes the data and notes that 40% children make controlled scribbles, 30% can write a few letters or letter-like forms, 20% of the children are scribbling, and one child (10%) is writing letter strings. The team also notes that two of the three children who are drawing and scribbling are children with IEPs and the third child is a DLL whose home language uses characters rather than letters. The other children who are DLLs can either write a few letters or letter strings. Information from the **aggregation and analysis** activities that Lydia and her team have conducted will be very useful as they plan lessons.

Table 2. Data Sheet from Observation-Based Instrument Data to Support Aggregation and Analysis

ELOF			Observation-Based Assessment Instrument Used by Program (Aligned to ELOF)			
ELOF Sub-Domain: Writing Goal: P-LIT 6. Child writes for a variety of purposes using increasingly sophisticated marks.			Observation-Based Assessment Instrument Items Aligned with P-LIT 6 Objective 19. Demonstrates emergent writing skills: a. Writes name[2]			
	Dual Language Learner	Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Scribbles or Marks	Controlled Scribbles	Mock Letters or Letter-Like Forms	Letter Strings
John	No	Yes	√			
Anna	No	No		√	Emerging	
Tyler	No	No		√		
Bethany	Yes	No			√	
Mee	Yes	Yes	√			
Shakira	No	No			√	
Jamal	Yes	No				√
Mattie	No	No		√		
Brigit	No	No			√	
Matthew	No	No		√		
Summary			2/10= 20%	4/10= 40%	3/10= 30%	1/10= 10%

2. Using ongoing child assessment information to aggregate and analyze at the program level.

The program leadership team must take time to analyze the data carefully and identify what is or is not working. If you planned **aggregation and analysis** activities as part of **preparation** activities, and if you engaged a wide variety of stakeholders throughout the cycle, congratulations! You've set a solid foundation for making data-informed decisions.

When analyzing ongoing assessment data for children who are DLLs, remember that it is important to understand the procedures and instruments staff used to collect ongoing assessment data. Include descriptions of the procedures and instruments used to collect the data in any of your analyses. Remember to acknowledge any limitations that might exist with analysis and interpretation of these data.

Table 3. Aggregation and Analysis Activities: Using Ongoing Child Assessment Data for Analysis and Planning

Step	Data Source	Questions to Guide Analysis
1. Create or obtain ongoing child assessment information and relevant variables	• Observations, child work samples, videos, checklists, information from families	• Have we compiled all the relevant data for each child? • Have we identified the relevant variables that we want to use to aggregate and analyze and disaggregate the data?
2. Ensure the integrity of the data	• Data set that contains ongoing child assessment information	• If data are missing, have we indicated what data are missing and why? • Were the data collected within the established timelines for the assessment cycle? • Are there any obvious anomalies in the data set?
3. Analyze the data—evaluate progress toward ELOF and school readiness goals in focused conversations with the leadership team and key stakeholders	• Results from data analyses	• What is the progress toward ELOF and school readiness goals? • What are the patterns or trends in the data over time for each of the ELOF indicators and school readiness goals?
4. Analyze the data—address questions the leadership team and key stakeholders posed while planning	• Results from data analyses • Action plan	• Did training or coaching help close the gap on missing data? • Were assessment cycles completed according to the annual schedule?
5. Analyze the data—examine results for subgroups of children and have focused conversations with the leadership team and key stakeholders	• Results from data analyses	• What is the progress toward ELOF and school readiness goals for different subgroups? • How does the progress of subgroups compare to the entire group? • What are the subgroup patterns or trends in the data over time for each of the ELOF indicators and school readiness goals? • How do these subgroup patterns or trends compare to the entire group?

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Case Story
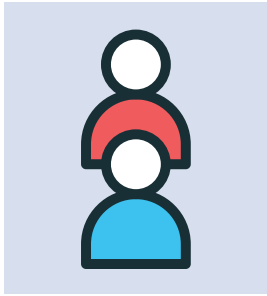
The Westcott Head Start leadership team meets after every assessment cycle to dig into their data. Before the meeting, the data coordinator generates summary reports from the online scoring system. The team receives a report with child-level data related to individual classrooms and home visitors and aggregated child-level data across the entire program. The leadership team reviews school readiness goals, which are available at each meeting so the team can assess the program's progress toward the goals.

The team analyzes the summary reports about the progress that individual children, subgroups of children, and the program overall have made toward ELOF expectations and in school readiness goals.

The team uses four different strategies to analyze the data. First, they look at the data in the aggregate by examining the mean (average of a group of numbers), median (middle value of numbers when they are ordered from smallest to largest), and range (difference between the lowest and highest values) of scores for each of the ELOF domains. After they look at these scores for a single cycle, they compare the current cycle scores to previous cycles and analyze trends over time. They also analyze the data to determine if they have achieved school readiness goals. For example, if the school readiness goal is that 80% of enrolled children meet or exceed expectations in the ELOF Social and Emotional domain, the team can use the summary report data to determine if they have met it.

After analyzing data in the aggregate at the program level, the team examines the same data at center, classroom, and home visitor caseload levels. Again, they consider the mean, median, and range of scores for a single set. They also compare current cycle scores to previous cycles and analyze trends over time. As they analyze the data, they flag anomalies and confirm their plans to address them. They identify where summary reports indicate children are meeting or exceeding ELOF expectations versus not meeting expectations. Analyzing these data helps the leadership team make informed decisions about which centers, teaching teams, and/or home visitors might need targeted and ongoing support to enhance curriculum or teaching and assessment practices.

Given that 40% of children enrolled in Westcott Head Start Center are DLLs and 8% are chronically absent, the team disaggregates the program, center, and classroom data by DLL and attendance status. They compare the means, medians, and ranges of scores by DLL and attendance status. Disaggregating this data helps them understand if there are differences in development and learning within assessment cycles or across cycles for children who are DLLs or who are chronically absent. If they find differences, they can discuss what supports teachers might need (e.g., differentiated or individualized instruction) and can work together to improve attendance.

Find additional resources related to digging deeper into data in the resource Data in Head Start and Early Head Start: Digging Into Data.

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

D. Use And Share

It is important to take time after aggregating and analyzing to determine who needs the data to plan or communicate with others. Very often, this activity overlaps with Prepare, because when your program shares data, new questions always arise, which then requires preparation for additional data collection activities.

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (n.d.a, n.d.b) suggests that when sharing data, programs should consider the 4As—accurate, appealing, accessible, and audience-specific. Accuracy is the integrity of data as described in the Aggregate and Analyze section. Appealing refers to the visual appeal of the data. This involves considering whether and how to display data using pictures, tables, graphs, or other visuals. Keep words and numbers to a minimum. Accessible means that a variety of stakeholders should be able to understand the data. It also means that data should be readily available and easy to locate, such as on a program's website or in an annual report. Audience-specific means that some information about ongoing child assessment might be tailored for different audiences. For example, if an education staff member is sharing a child's ongoing child assessment information with a kindergarten teacher as part of transition planning, the kindergarten teacher might need additional information about the ELOF indicators to interpret the data. Or, if program leadership is sharing data about school readiness goals with colleagues from early care and education programs, they might also share information about how school readiness data needs to be aggregated and analyzed.
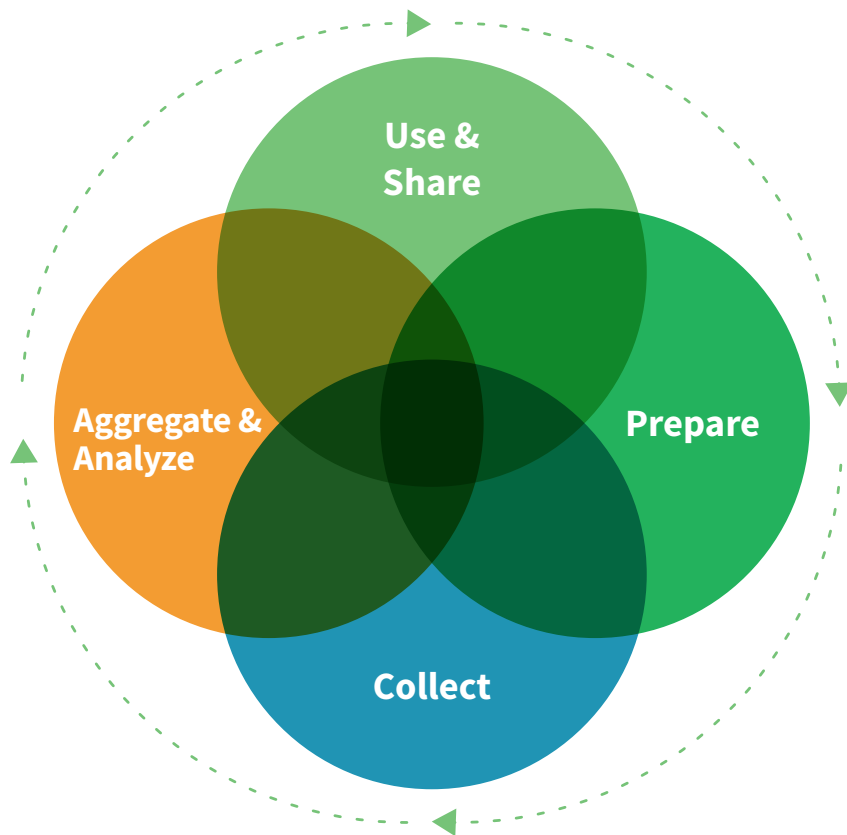
1. Use and share ongoing child assessment data.

Remember that data do not make decisions—people do. Education staff use ongoing child assessment data to make curricular decisions and adjust teaching strategies. Staff should share information about the purposes for ongoing child assessment, the assessment processes and instruments, and data with families. When families understand the purposes and processes of ongoing child assessment, they are more likely to contribute assessment information and partner with education staff. Education staff want to share these data with other collaborators, such as special education personnel or the teachers in an early care and education program a child might also attend. It is important that everyone supporting a child's development and learning has access to ongoing child assessment information.

2. Program leadership using and sharing assessment data.

Use and Share activities are the most relevant parts of the data process for Head Start leaders (National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations, n.d.). Use child assessment data to inform decisions about curricula. For example, consider the extent to which the scope and sequence of the curriculum or curricula aligns with the ELOF. If child assessment data suggest that children are not making enough progress in language and literacy skills, consider examining the fidelity with which teachers implement language and literacy practices. If staff are implementing core curriculum with fidelity, try adopting a curricular enhancement for language and literacy to help education staff differentiate and individualize for children who need additional instruction. Data from child assessments may also inform decisions about assessment processes and instruments. For example, if the data from subgroup analyses show that children who are DLLs tend to perform lower than their peers, the team might revisit the instruments or the processes they are using to collect data to ensure that they are collecting accurate, reliable data about children who are DLLs.

Child assessment data can also inform decisions about program improvement efforts and professional development, including ongoing implementation supports, such as job aides and coaching. Coaches might look at child assessment data to better understand where children do not appear to be making expected progress and help teachers and home visitors use practices that support children's development in those areas. Program improvement efforts and professional development efforts might focus on improving data collection, data quality, data analysis and interpretation, and data use and sharing.

Who should programs share data with, and for what purpose?
- Share program aggregated and disaggregated data with education staff so they understand how their ongoing child assessment data contributes to it.
- Share program data with families and other key stakeholders to help them engage in the assessment processes and visualize children's progress.
- Share child data and fidelity data with program leaders so they can determine if or what overall changes need to occur, such as:
  - hiring practices regarding bilingual/bicultural staff (supports for growing and maintaining staff);
  - hiring and training interpreters, and consultants; and
  - establishing community partnerships and connecting with community resources.
- Share data with key stakeholders to support conversations about meeting the needs of children who are DLLs or have disabilities.

When sharing program-level data, it is particularly important to consider your audience. What information is presented, how it is presented, and what might be done with it varies across audiences.

For more information about using and sharing data, see the tip sheet Using Data to Tell a Story: Tailoring a Data Story for Different Audiences.

CONCLUSION

Ongoing child assessment is essential for monitoring children's progress in key areas of development and learning. Staff use this information to make curricular and instructional decisions and individualize learning experiences. At the program level, information from ongoing child assessment guides continuous program improvement. It also informs professional development and helps staff examine children's progress toward outcomes in the ELOF and school readiness goals.

To complete successful cycles of Prepare, Collect, Aggregate and Analyze, and Use and Share, programs need to:

- Develop teams to support and inform the ongoing assessment processes.
- Create and implement a comprehensive assessment plan that meets children's and families' needs.
- Commit time and resources to Prepare, Collect, Aggregate and Analyze, and Use and Share quality data to meet children's needs and improve program quality.
- Engage families as partners in the assessment process.
- Engage other collaborators who support children in the assessment process.

By following the steps outlined in this guide, programs will improve the quality of their ongoing child assessment practices. They will be better prepared to use the data to ensure that all children enrolled in Head Start are ready to succeed in school.

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood National Centers

Checklist

Gross motor objectives: balance on balance beam and ride tricycle

Date: 8/14/13

Child's name	Walk balance beam without falling		Can pedal and ride tricycle	
Alex Lopez	Yes	No	Yes	No
Rosalie G.	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yurid Alonso	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yunely Luna	Yes	No	Yes	No
Nelson de Jesus	Yes	No	Yes	No
Karen Feijo	Yes	No	Yes	No
Marely Martinez	Yes	No	Yes	No
Valeria Saverio	Yes	No	Yes	No
Jose	Yes	No	Yes	No
Paloma Ramirez	Yes	No	Yes	No
Gladys	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No

Valeria can go from up to down.
n Jose can walk on the balance beam
Paloma she doesn't want to participate
she need more encourage.
More practice.

Valeria (no)
Jose yes
Marely yes
Paloma (no)

Pelota
bean bags.
balance.
Bal

By following the steps outlined in this guide, programs will improve the quality of their ongoing child assessment practices.

REFERENCES

American Education Research Association, American Psychological Association, & the National Council on Measurement in Education. *Standard for Educational and Psychological Testing.* Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 2014.

Assessment Technology Incorporated. "Galileo Pre-K." Retrieved from ati-online.com/galileoPreschool/pre-K-assessment.php, 2018.

Atkins-Burnett, S.S., S. Monahan, L. Akers, J. Carta, B.A. Wasik, & K. Boller. *Tailored Teaching: Teachers' Use of Ongoing Child Assessment to Individualize Instruction (Vol.1).* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, 2014.

Bayley, N. *Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development (3rd ed.).* San Antonio, TX: Harcourt Assessment, 2006.

Bodrova, E., & D. J. Leong. "Common Assessment Terms and How to Use Them: A Glossary for Early Childhood Educators." In *Spotlight on Young Children: Observation and Assessment* edited by H. Bohart & R. Procopio, 15–20. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2018.

Bricker, D. *Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System for Infants and Children* (*2nd ed.*). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes, 2002.

California Department of Education. "DRDP (2015): A Developmental Continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry." Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from https://www.desiredresults.us, 2016.

Carta, J., C. Greenwood, D. Walker, & J. Buzhardt. 2010. *Using IGDIs: Monitoring Progress and Improving Intervention for Infants and Young Children.* Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes, 2010.

Dodge, D.T., L.J. Colker, & C. Heroman. *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool (4th ed.).* Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, 2002.

Gresham, F. M., & S. N. Elliott. *Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scales Manual.* Minneapolis, MN: Pearson, 2008.

Heroman, C., D.C. Burts, K. Berke, & T. Bickart. *Teaching Strategies GOLD.*
Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, 2010.

McLean, M. "Assessment and Its Importance in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education." In *Essential Elements for Assessing Infants and Preschoolers with Special Needs,* edited by M. McLean, M.L. Hemmeter, & P. Snyder, 1-36. Boston: Pearson, 2014.

McLean, M., M. L. Hemmeter, & P. Snyder, eds. *Essential Elements for Assessing Infants and Preschoolers with Special Needs.* Boston: Pearson, 2014.

Messick, S. "Foundations of Validity: Meaning and Consequences in Psychological Assessment." In *ETS Research Report Series 2* –(1993): 1–18.

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. *Measuring What Matters: Exercises in Data Management. Exercise 3: Analyze and Aggregate: Dig Into Data.* Cambridge, MA: Authors, n.d.-a.

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. *Measuring What Matters: Exercises in Data Management. Exercise 4: Use and Share: Using PFCD Data to Tell Your Story.* Cambridge, MA: Authors, n.d.-b.

National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations. n.d. "The Four Data Activities."
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/learning/docs/The-Four-Data-Activities.pdf, n.d.

National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. "Ongoing Child Assessment: Overview."
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/ongoing-child-assessment-overview, 2014.

Parks, S. "Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP)". Palo Alto, CA: VORT, 1997.

Reid, D. K., W. P. Hresko, & D. D. Hammill. *Test of Early Reading Achievement (3rd ed.).* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed, 2001.

Riley-Ayers, S. *Formative Assessment: Guidance for Early Childhood Policymakers.* New Brunswick, NJ:
Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, 2014.

Scott-Little, C., S. L. Kagan, & V. S. Frelow. 2003. "Creating the Conditions for Success with Early Learning Standards: Results from a National
Study of State-Level Standards for Children's Learning Prior to Kindergarten." *Early Childhood Research and Practice: An Internet
Journal on the Development, Care, and Education of Young Children,* 5 (no.2 (2006): 1–21.

Snow, C. E. & S.B. Van Hemel. *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How.* Washington, DC:
National Academies Press, 2008.

Snyder, P., T. McLaughlin, & M. McLean. "Recommended Practices in Assessment." In *Essential Elements for Assessing Infants and
Preschoolers with Special Needs* edited by M. McLean, M.L. Hemmeter, & P. Snyder, 401-419. Boston: Pearson, 2014a.

Snyder, P., M. McLean, & D. Bailey. "Types and Technical Characteristics of Assessment Instruments." In *Essential Elements for Assessing
Infants and Preschoolers with Special Needs,* edited by M. McLean, M.L. Hemmeter, & P. Snyder, 37-86. Boston: Pearson, 2014b.

U.S. Department of Education. "Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Program/Definitions." (Report No. NCER
20082009REV). Washington, DC: Author. http://www.ed.gov/earlylearning/elc-draft-summary/definitions, 2011.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. "Head Start Early
Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five." https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/elof-ohs-framework.pdf, 2015.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. "Head Start Program Performance Standards."
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/docs/hspss-final.pdf, 2016.

Wolery, M. & J. Ledford. "Monitoring Intervention and Children's Progress." *In Essential Elements for Assessing Infants and Preschoolers
with Special Needs* edited by M. McLean, M.L. Hemmeter, & P. Snyder, 383–400. Boston: Pearson, 2014.

Appendix A

Definitions of Terms Used in Comprehensive Assessment Systems and Ongoing Child Assessment

Accommodations: Adjustments or changes in assessment procedures to obtain more accurate information. Examples include administering the assessment in a child's home language or providing additional response time for a child with a disability (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Assessment: Processes associated with gathering information to make informed decisions about children's development and learning (McLean et al., 2014).

Assessment instrument: Tests and tools such as rating scales, observation systems or checklists, or other instruments or devices that measure characteristics of programs, classrooms, or children (Snyder, McLean, & Bailey, 2014b).

Authentic assessment: Observing children during typically occurring activities and routines to gather information about children's development and learning (Snyder et al., 2014a).

Bias: Characteristics of an assessment that unfairly favor a child or group of children based on factors such as cultural or linguistic diversity, gender, or disability status (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Comprehensive assessment system: "[A] coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments—each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used—that organizes information about the process and context of young children's learning and development to help Early Childhood Educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions. A comprehensive assessment system includes, at a minimum—(a) Screening Measures; (b) Formative Assessments; (c) Measures of Environmental Quality; and (d) Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, http://www.ed.gov/early-learning/elc-draft-summary/definition).

Criterion-referenced assessment: A type of assessment that focuses on predetermined criteria or standards. Items on the assessment often are arranged sequentially or hierarchically. The assessment is often related to curricular content, goals, or early learning standards, but is not explicitly linked or aligned with a specific curriculum see Curriculum-based assessment; (Snyder et al., 2014a).

Curriculum-based assessment: A special type of criterion-referenced assessment that focuses on content mastered in a curriculum. The items on the assessment instrument often are arranged sequentially or hierarchically. There is typically a detailed scope and sequence of item content on the assessment. The content is explicitly aligned with a curriculum (Snyder et al., 2014). Examples include Teaching Strategies Gold (Heromen et al., 2010), which is linked to the Creative Curriculum (Dodge et al., 2002); the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (Bricker, 2002); or the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP; Parks, 1995).

Data: Factual information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation.

Diagnostic assessment: To gather information about an individual child's strengths and needs and to determine whether the child has a delay in one or more areas of development and learning (McLean, 2014). Diagnostic assessment, often referred to as evaluation, helps determine whether a child is eligible for services and supports under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or whether the child has a diagnosed condition (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome).

Appendix A

Direct assessment: These assessments use structured tasks or activities. The tasks come with specific administration instructions. Checklists or scoring rubrics are used to document children's responses to the task. Direct assessments can include standardized, norm-referenced assessment instruments, rating scales, and general outcome measurement.

Documentation: Gathering evidence and artifacts of children's learning, which can include work samples, observation notes, anecdotal records, and transcripts of children's conversations (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Early learning and development foundations (ELDF), early learning and development standards (ELDS), or early learning guidelines (ELG): These state what children are expected to know or be able to do. They are often organized chronologically under developmental or learning domains such as perceptual, motor, and physical development, social emotional development, language and literacy, cognitive, and approaches to learning (Scott-Little et al., 2003).

Fidelity: The extent to which assessment instruments and assessment processes are implemented as intended. Examples include administering items in a direct assessment as described in the administration manual or ensuring that staff complete all steps related to using a rubric to score a child's work sample. Curriculum fidelity refers to the extent to which staff implement the scope and sequence of the curriculum as intended. This means implementing the content of the curriculum as outlined in the curriculum guide and using the lesson plans or instructional strategies as the curriculum developer intended.

Formative assessment: Collecting and using assessment data to tailor instruction to children's strengths and needs (Riley-Ayers, 2014).

Generalized outcome measurement (curriculum-based measurement): Brief, frequently administered probes of children's progress toward desired generalized outcomes (e.g., learning to communicate, early literacy skills, learning to move in the environment). These assessments provide information about children's status and progress in key skill indicators. These assessments also are known as individual growth and development indicators (IGDIs; Carta et al., 2010).

Normative sample: A group of children whose scores on an assessment instrument are used to develop data so staff can make relative comparisons between a child's or children's performance on the instrument (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Ongoing child assessment: The continuing process of observing, documenting, and interpreting progress, then determining when to adjust practices to better support children's development and learning (National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, 2014).

Observation-based assessment: An approach to assessment based on education staff regularly observing and documenting children's knowledge and skills. Observation can be open-ended, such as when education staff observe children in everyday routines and activities and document what they observe. It also can be more structured, with a rating scale or rubric that education staff use to record what she or he observes (Bodrova & Leong, 2018). Observation-based assessment is a type of authentic assessment.

Outcome: Description of the knowledge or skills that a child is expected to demonstrate (e.g., language, social, math). Within Head Start, outcomes are specified in the ELOF (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, 2015).

Appendix A

Portfolio: A collection of children's work samples and other learning evidence collected over time, which can be an important repository to inform ongoing child assessment (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Rating scale: A rating scale is like a checklist in that a list of skills and behaviors is included; however, it includes a qualitative component that offers choices about how well, how often, or how independently children demonstrate a behavior (Wolery & Ledford, 2014).

Reliability (reliable): The consistency or accuracy of assessment scores over time, raters, items, or people (AERA et al., 2014).

Screening: Brief standardized process that identifies concerns impacting children's development or learning. When staff identify concerns, they monitor children's development and learning more closely or refer children for diagnostic assessment (McLean, 2014).

Standardized, normative-referenced assessment instrument: A type of assessment instrument that evaluates a child's development and learning relative to a normative group or standardization sample. Staff use standardized materials and administration procedures and items on the assessment based on statistical criteria. Examples include the Test of Early Reading Ability (Reid et al., 2001), the Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development (Brigance, 1978), the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development (3rd ed., Bayley, 2006), or the Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scales (SSIS; Gresham & Elliott, 2008).

Summative assessment: Refers to an evaluation that is conducted at the end of a specific time to summarize children's learning toward desired outcomes (Bodrova & Leong, 2018).

Test: Refers to the presentation of a standard set of stimuli or questions and observations of responses to the stimuli or questions. Tests are one type of assessment instrument (Snyder, McClean, Bailey).

Validity (valid): Refers to evidence that supports the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences made or actions taken from scores derived from an assessment (AERA et al., 2014; Messick, 1993; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

Appendix B

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET

Planning	People	Timeline
1. Form a planning team to oversee the planning and implementation of a system of ongoing assessment. Members include program directors, education managers, coaches, a data coordinator, a disabilities coordinator, teaching and home visiting staff, and family engagement staff.		
2. Develop a process for ongoing child assessment, which includes collecting data, aggregating and analyzing data, and using and sharing data.		
3. Identify education teams who will complete training together and plan and implement ongoing assessment in classrooms, family child care homes, and home visitor caseloads.		

4. Develop a process for collecting data including:
 	
a. What to assess
    i. Select an assessment instrument and the process staff will follow to use the assessment tool
b. When to assess
    i. Plan the schedule and related assessment processes
c. How to assess
    i. Plan for and support observation strategies staff use in ongoing assessment, including anecdotal notes, checklists, work samples, videos
d. How to involve families in ongoing assessment
e. Strategies to ensure access to equipment needed, including computer, digital camera
f. Strategies for data entry and storage		

5. Analyze any previously collected data—examine results for subgroups of children and have focused conversations with the leadership team and key stakeholders.		

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Appendix B

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET

Planning	People	Timeline
6. Plan what to assess, how to assess and document, and where, when, and who should assess for each week.		
7. Ensure assessment in home language and/or English for children who are DLLs: **a.** Identify the children who are DLLs **b**. Identify a protocol for gathering information from families about the child's language dominance and background **c.** Establish a DLL assessment team to facilitate access to staff or interpreters who can provide culturally and linguistically appropriate ongoing assessment **d.** Ensure that any standardized or norm-referenced assessments have norms and procedures appropriate for children who are DLLs		
8. Ensure appropriate assessment for children with disabilities: **a.** Train all education staff to assess children with disabilities 　i. Review information in the IEP or IFSP 　ii. Break down IEP goals or IFSP outcomes for observation 　iii. Accommodations children need in the classroom or home environment 　iv. Engage and gather information from families **b.** Supervise assessment of children with disabilities		
9. Develop protocols to engage with families and gather information about child preferences and typical functioning at home.		

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Appendix B
ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET

Planning	People	Timeline
Training		
10. Provide training for all staff who will conduct ongoing child assessment.		
11. Train supervisors, coaches, or child development specialists to visit each classroom, family child care provider, and home visitor regularly to observe and provide feedback on ongoing child assessment.		
12. Train supervisors to implement fidelity checks for ongoing child assessment and data entry.		
Collection		
13. Plan what to assess, how to assess and document, and where, when, and who should assess for each week.		
14. Check documentation collection weekly to track what observations have been completed.		
15. Enter data into a computer or other data organization system weekly.		
16. Monitor the data entry for each classroom and home visitor caseload.		
17. Monitor the fidelity of data collection for each classroom and home visitor caseload.		

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Appendix B
ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET

Aggregate	People	Timeline
18. Create or obtain data files of ongoing child assessment information and relevant variables to aggregate and analyze and disaggregate the data (program, classroom/teacher, or home-based setting/caregiver, or home visitor caseload with which the child is associated, assessment cycle with which the data are associated, age of child, DLL status, child with IFSP/IEP, years in program, etc.).		
19. Ensure the integrity of the data set that staff analyze.		
20. Evaluate progress toward ELOF indicators, ELDS, and school readiness goals by having focused conversations with the leadership team and other key stakeholders.		
21. Address questions the leadership team and other key stakeholders posed during the planning phase.		
22. Examine results for subgroups of children and have focused conversations with the leadership team and other key stakeholders.		

Appendix B
ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHEET

Use & Share	People	Timeline
23. Use aggregated child data to inform decisions related to curricular scope and sequence, domains and subdomains from the ELOF, and school readiness domains.		
24. Use aggregated child data to inform decisions about assessment processes and instruments.		
25. Use aggregated child data to inform decisions about program improvement activities.		
26. Consider the 4As (accuracy, appealing, accessible, audience-specific) when developing strategies for sharing data with different stakeholders.		
27. Share program-level aggregated and disaggregated data with education staff so they understand how their ongoing child assessment data contributes to program-level data.		
28. Share program-level data with families and other key stakeholders so they are aware of the progress children are making toward desired outcomes and school readiness goals and to engage them in the assessment processes.		
29. Share aggregated child data and assessment fidelity data with program leaders to determine if or what overall changes need to occur.		
30. Share data with key stakeholders to support conversations about meeting the needs of children who are DLLs, have disabilities, are from different age groups, or represent other populations identified in your program.		

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Appendix C
Ongoing Assessment for Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

The HSPPS address the unique challenges and opportunities of assessing children who are dual language learners (DLLs). The standards require that assessment of children who are DLLs include:

- Assessing language development in both the home language and English
- Determining the language staff will use to assess the child
- Using alternative culturally and linguistically responsive assessment practices when necessary
- Finding qualified staff or interpreters who speak the home language(s) of DLLs and their families
- Using valid and reliable assessment tools, when administered in children's home languages

These standards that ensure staff accurately assess children who are DLLs and that assessments provide useful information. Staff might tailor learning opportunities and teaching practices to promote each child's progress in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. The assessment standards apply to center-based and family child care settings and to home-based programs.

The HSPPS require that programs design and implement a coordinated approach that ensures the full and effective participation of children who are DLLs and their families (1302.101(b)(2)). This coordinated approach includes systematically and comprehensively addressing child and family needs. Ongoing assessment of children's progress is one way to ensure that they have meaningful access to the educational program and are ready for school.

Identify qualified, bilingual person(s) to assess in home language(s) and English

Whenever possible, Head Start programs are required to use qualified, bilingual staff or interpreters to conduct assessment in children's home languages and English. Your program needs to develop and implement effective hiring practices to acquire and retain qualified, bilingual staff or interpreters who are a match for the languages and cultures of children and families. It is important to create interpretation or translation guidelines to ensure high-quality and consistent ongoing assessment for children who are DLLs.

Find resources that provide guidelines for working with interpreters on pages 11 and 12 of **Screening Dual Language Learners in Early Head Start and Head Start : A Guide for Program Leaders.**

Some urban communities and school districts use qualified, bilingual/bicultural educational staff who can readily observe children in their home language and in English. This often happens in communities where only two languages—English and another language—are predominantly spoken (Spanish and English, Hebrew and English, Chinese and English, etc.). However, programs seldom have individual staff members with the necessary qualifications for many languages.

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood
National Centers

Consider the need for additional bilingual/bicultural staff

Programs can create assessment teams to help implement ongoing assessments. The teams include staff members (e.g., education staff, family outreach workers, interpreters, etc.) who, together, have backgrounds in early childhood development and assessment, as well as proficient bilingual/bicultural skills. Assessment team members will need time to collaborate to plan for and conduct ongoing assessments and review assessment results.

Assessment teams with bilingual/bicultural members will also be helpful in meeting with families to gather information about each child's language background. As indicated earlier, it will be important to ask families about their child's language history and current language environments.

Interpreters will need time to learn about ongoing assessment procedures, review the assessment tool, and review interpretation etiquette with other team members. As a program leader, you need to determine if team members need additional training on dual language learning, working with interpreters, using the assessment instrument, collecting observations, or interpreting assessment results. Your program might consider collaborating with your school district or other community partners in early care and education. You can help each other find interpreters/translators and staff trainings related to second language acquisition or specific language assessment tools.

Remember! Assessing children who are DLLs requires a combination of staff skills.
- Cultural knowledge and language proficiency in the children's home language
- Knowledge and training in early childhood development
- Knowledge of early dual language learning
- Knowledge of the assessment instrument
- Training, experience, and professional development to help them use it with fidelity

Relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards for ongoing assessment of children who are DLLs

§1302.33(c) Characteristics of screenings and assessments.

(1) Screenings and assessments must be valid and reliable for the population and purpose for which they will be used, including by being conducted by qualified and trained personnel, and being age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and appropriate for children with disabilities, as needed.

(2) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English, a program must use qualified bilingual staff, contractor, or consultant to:

> (i) Assess language skills in English and in the child's home language, to assess both the child's progress in the home language and in English language acquisition;
> (ii) Conduct screenings and assessments for domains other than language skills in the language or languages that best capture the child's development and skills in the specific domain; and,
> (iii) Ensure those conducting the screening or assessment know and understand the child's language and culture and have enough skill level in the child's home language to accurately administer the screening or assessment and to record and understand the child's responses, interactions, and communications.

(3) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English and qualified bilingual staff, contractors, or consultants are not able to conduct screenings and assessments, a program must use an interpreter in conjunction with a qualified staff person to conduct screenings and assessments as described in paragraphs (c)(2)(i) through (iii) of this section.

(4) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English and can demonstrate that there is not a qualified bilingual staff person or interpreter, then screenings and assessments may be conducted in English. In such a case, a program must also gather and use other information, including structured observations over time and information gathered in a child's home language from the family, for use in evaluating the child's development and progress.

Appendix D
Ongoing Assessment for Children with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Head Start has a long history of fully including young children with disabilities in its infant and toddler and preschool programs. The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) require that young children with disabilities have access to the full range of activities and services offered in Head Start programs. Programs are required to provide any necessary modifications to the environment, variations in instruction, and accommodations and supports to support the full participation of children with disabilities. Each Head Start program must ensure that at least 10% of its total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Programs need to take additional steps in planning and implementing ongoing child assessment for children with disabilities. Ongoing child assessment serves a different purpose than formal evaluation, which helps determine whether a child is eligible for early intervention or early childhood special education and related services (McLean, 2014).

Learn about the child's disability and typical functioning

Initially, the teaching team, which includes all staff who are working with the child meet to share and review all information about the child's typical functioning and area(s) of disability. Gather information from the family about the child's skills at home. If the family cannot attend a meeting with the teaching team, have someone from the team meet with the family at home to gather this information. Staff should have regular conversations with families to share information about the child's progress and discuss strategies for intervention at home and at the center.

Consider accommodations the child may need

Discuss accommodations that the child may need to function as independently as possible soon after the child begins to attend a program or receive home-based services. The accommodations a child needs will vary but may include the following:

- An augmentative or alternative communication system or device
- An alternative mode for written language
- Assistive technology to facilitate movement, fine motor, or adaptive skills
- Strategic positioning strategies
- Visual support
- Auditory support

What to assess

Planning ongoing assessment for children with disabilities will be different from planning for children without disabilities. Each child with an IEP or IFSP will have either goals from the IEP or outcomes from the IFSP that need to become part of ongoing assessment and instructional plans for the child. IEP goals have a 12-month timeline, and IFSP outcomes have a 6-month timeline. Staff need to break down goals into a series of smaller steps before beginning to observe for them. The early intervention or early childhood special education teacher assumes responsibility for breaking down goals or outcomes and working with the teacher or home visitor to plan observations.

Ongoing child assessment for goals, outcomes, or learning targets take place weekly. Staff teach these small steps during ongoing activities throughout the day. Children move to the next step in the sequence when they achieve the current step.

The IFSP or IEP usually describes accommodations. The teaching team will need implement them in the classroom or home environment. In addition to accommodations, staff may make environmental changes in lighting, sound, or the physical arrangement of spaces.

For more information, go to the adaptations gallery at the Desired Results Access Project website, sponsored by the California Department of Education, Special Education Division https://www.draccess.org/AdaptationsGallery.html.

How to assess

Write observable and measurable learning targets for children. Embed opportunities to practice these targets within ongoing activities throughout the day. Teachers can count the number of times the child performs the targeted behavior. Below is an example of data that staff collected by tallying an observable and measurable learning target for a 3-year-old named Jared.

Jared briefly shares a toy he is using during play time when an adult asks him for a turn.	
Monday	– – + +
Tuesday	– + –
Wednesday	+ + – + +
Thursday	+ + + + + +
Friday	+ + +

From: 15-Minute In-Service Suite: Ongoing Child Assessment

Observe his skills throughout the week. Staff discuss documentation together to determine whether a learning target has been met. When the child is ready to move toward the next learning target, teachers will include supports within the classroom context to assist the child and continue to observe and document. This data collection should occur within the context of ongoing child assessment as the teacher or home visitor observes and collects data related to the ongoing assessment tool they use.

Relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards for ongoing assessment of children with disabilities

§1302.14(b) Children eligible for services under IDEA.

(1) A program must ensure at least 10 percent of its total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA, unless the responsible HHS official grants a waiver.

(2) If the requirement in paragraph (b)(1) of this section has been met, children eligible for services under IDEA should be prioritized for the available slots in accordance with the program's selection criteria described in paragraph (a) of this section.

§1302.61 Additional services for children.

(a) Additional services for children with disabilities. Programs must ensure the individualized needs of children with disabilities, including but not limited to those eligible for services under IDEA, are being met and all children have access to and can fully participate in the full range of activities and services. Programs must provide any necessary modifications to the environment, multiple and varied formats for instruction, and individualized accommodations and supports as necessary to support the full participation of children with disabilities. Programs must ensure all individuals with disabilities are protected from discrimination under and provided with all services and program modifications required by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794), the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*), and their implementing regulations.

Appendix E
Additional Resources

Accommodations or Adaptations for Children with IEPs or IFSPs

Children with Disabilities: Environmental Support
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/environmental-support

Desired Results Access Project: Desired Results Developmental Profile (2015) Adaptations Gallery
https://www.draccess.org/AdaptationsGallery.html

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center: Outcomes FAQ
http://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/faqs.asp

Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

Child Screening & Assessment – Screening Dual Language Learners in Early Head Start and Head Start: A Guide for Program Leaders
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/screening-dual-language-learners.pdf

Dual Language Learners Program Assessment (DLLPA)
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/dllpa-child-screenings-508.pdf

Gathering and Using Language Information That Families Share: Collecting Information From the Families of Dual Language Learners (DLLs)
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/gathering-using-language-information.pdf

Inviting and Supporting Cultural Guides and Home Language Models Tip Sheet
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/dll-supporting-cultural-guides-language-models.pdf

Curriculum Fidelity

Implementation of Curriculum with Fidelity
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/implementation-curriculum-fidelity

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/elof-ohs-framework.pdf

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, 2015)

Ongoing Child Assessment

15-Minute In-Service Suite: Ongoing Child Assessment
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/child-screening-assessment/article/ongoing-child-assessment

Tailored Teaching: Teachers' Use of Ongoing Child Assessment to Individualize Instruction
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/40158_cpm_final_report_vol_i.pdf

Prepare, Collect, Aggregate and Analyze, and Use and Share

Measuring What Matters: Exercises in Data Management

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/measuring-what-matters-exercises-intro.pdf

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/measuring-what-matters-exercises-01.pdf

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/measuring-what-matters-exercises-02.pdf

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/measuring-what-matters-exercises-03.pdf

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/measuring-what-matters-exercises-04.pdf

Using Data to Tell a Story: Tailoring a Data Story for Different Audiences
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/using-data-tell-story-tailoring-data-story-different-audiences

Using a Data Narrative to Tell a Story
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/using-data-narrative-tell-story

Quality Data for Programs Serving Infants and Toddlers

What Is Quality Data for Programs Serving Infants and Toddlers?
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/what-is-quality-data-infants-toddlers.pdf

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning

Early Childhood
National Centers

53

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/hspps-final.pdf (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2016)

§1302.14 Selection process.

(b) Children eligible for services under IDEA.

(1) A program must ensure at least 10 percent of its total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA, unless the responsible HHS official grants a waiver.

(2) If the requirement in paragraph (b)(1) of this section has been met, children eligible for services under IDEA should be prioritized for the available slots in accordance with the program's selection criteria described in paragraph (a) of this section.

§1302.33 Child screenings and assessments.

(a) Screening.

(1) In collaboration with each child's parent and with parental consent, a program must complete or obtain a current developmental screening to identify concerns regarding a child's developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills within 45 calendar days of when the child first attends the program or, for the home-based program option, receives a home visit. A program that operates for 90 days or less must complete or obtain a current developmental screening within 30 calendar days of when the child first attends the program.

(2) A program must use one or more research-based developmental standardized screening tools to complete the screening. A program must use as part of the screening additional information from family members, teachers, and relevant staff familiar with the child's typical behavior.

(3) If warranted through screening and additional relevant information and with direct guidance from a mental health or child development professional a program must, with the parent's consent, promptly and appropriately address any needs identified through:

(i) Referral to the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA for a formal evaluation to assess the child's eligibility for services under IDEA as soon as possible, and not to exceed timelines required under IDEA; and,

(ii) Partnership with the child's parents and the relevant local agency to support families through the formal evaluation process.

(4) If a child is determined to be eligible for services under IDEA, the program must partner with parents and the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA, as appropriate, and deliver the services in subpart F of this part.

(5) If, after the formal evaluation described in paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this section, the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA determines the child is not eligible for early intervention or special education and related services under IDEA, the program must:

(i) Seek guidance from a mental health or child development professional to determine if the formal evaluation shows the child has a significant delay in one or more areas of development that is likely to interfere with the child's development and school readiness; and,

(ii) If the child has a significant delay, partner with parents to help the family access services and supports to help address the child's identified needs.

(A) Such additional services and supports may be available through a child's health insurance or it may be appropriate for the program to provide needed services and supports under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act if the child satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. section 705(9)(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. 705(9)(b) of the Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability.

(B) A program may use program funds for such services and supports when no other sources of funding are available.

(b) Assessment for individualization.

(1) A program must conduct standardized and structured assessments, which may be observation-based or direct, for each child that provide ongoing information to evaluate the child's development level and progress in outcomes aligned to the goals described in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*. Such assessments must result in usable information for teachers, home visitors, and parents and be conducted with enough frequency to allow for individualization within the program year.

(2) A program must regularly use information from paragraph (b)(1) of this section along with informal teacher observations and additional information from family and staff, as relevant, to determine a child's strengths and needs, inform and adjust strategies to better support individualized learning and improve teaching practices in center-based and family child care settings, and improve home visit strategies in home-based models.

(3) If warranted from the information gathered from paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section and with direct guidance from a mental health or child development professional and a parent's consent, a program must refer the child to the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA for a formal evaluation to assess a child's eligibility for services under IDEA.

(c) Characteristics of screening and assessment.

(1) Screenings and assessments must be valid and reliable for the population and purpose for which they will be used, including by being conducted by qualified and trained personnel, and being age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and appropriate for children with disabilities, as needed.

(2) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English, a program must use qualified bilingual staff, contractor, or consultant to:

> (i) Assess language skills in English and in the child's home language, to assess both the child's progress in the home language and in English language acquisition;
> (ii) Conduct screenings and assessments for domains other than language skills in the language or languages that best capture the child's development and skills in the specific domain; and,
> (iii) Ensure those conducting the screening or assessment know and understand the child's language and culture and have enough skill level in the child's home language to accurately administer the screening or assessment and to record and understand the child's responses, interactions, and communications.

(3) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English and qualified bi- lingual staff, contractors, or consultants are not able to conduct screenings and assessments, a program must use an interpreter in conjunction with a qualified staff person to conduct screenings and assessments as described in paragraphs (c)(2)(i) through (iii) of this section.

(4) If a program serves a child who speaks a language other than English and can demonstrate that there is not a qualified bilingual staff person or interpreter, then screenings and assessments may be conducted in English. In such a case, a program must also gather and use other information, including structured observations over time and information gathered in a child's home language from the family, for use in evaluating the child's development and progress.

(d) Prohibitions on use of screening and assessment data.

The use of screening and assessment items and data on any screening or assessment authorized under this subchapter by any agent of the federal government is prohibited for the purposes of ranking, comparing, or otherwise evaluating individual children for purposes other than research, training, or technical assistance, and is prohibited for the purposes of providing rewards or sanctions for individual children or staff. A program must not use screening or assessments to exclude children from enrollment or participation.

1302.102 Achieving program goals.

(c) Using data for continuous improvement.

> (1) A program must implement a process for using data to identify program strengths and needs, develop and implement plans that address program needs, and continually evaluate compliance with program performance standards and progress towards achieving program goals described in paragraph (a) of this section.

(2) This process must:

(i) Ensure data is aggregated, analyzed and compared in such a way to assist agencies in identifying risks and informing strategies for continuous improvement in all program service areas;

(ii) Ensure child-level assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least three times a year, including for sub-groups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, except in programs operating fewer than 90 days, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services; and,

(iii) For programs operating fewer than 90 days, ensures child assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least twice during the program operating period, including for subgroups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services;

(iv) Use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement; and,

(v) Use program improvement plans as needed to either strengthen or adjust content and strategies for professional development, change program scope and services, refine school readiness and other program goals, and adapt strategies to better address the needs of sub-groups.

NOTES

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

NOTES

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT:
A GUIDE FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

For more information on ongoing assessment, please visit
Child Screening & Assessment/Ongoing Child Assessment

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning