

The Decision Tree

Child Indicator Seeds for Success



Using Age-Expected Resources

The 7 point rating scale is anchored in the concepts of age-expected development. In order to make child indicators a truly effective process, it is essential to be able to apply what we know about child development to what we are seeing in individual children.

There are many resources that are available to help you anchor your thinking in typical child development. These resources help you use that knowledge by thinking about what happens when, and in what order – essentially defining skills that are age-expected, those that come immediately before age expected, and those that are foundational.

Age expected resources also help you:

- organize the information you know so that you can apply it in observation,
- apply the information to a child from various sources, and
- identify skills that fall in each category

Be aware that there are challenges with using age expected resources

- They usually provide age ranges
- They don't all agree
- Even children developing according to age expectation show variations in development.

Ideas for addressing the challenges:

- Look for items that are similar to the skills the child has demonstrated – they won't be exact
- Use more than one resource
- If in doubt, get information about the child's functioning that is more descriptive
 - He's happy.
 - What is he doing that makes you say he's happy?
 - She plays well with toys.
 - What does she do with toys?

Use the resources to refresh your understanding of child development for the age of each child you see at each step in the IFSP process, including:

- Intake
- Evaluation and Assessment
- Child Indicator Rating
- Intervention
- Exit

If going to see a 18 month old child, review the skills expected at 18 months, as well as the range (15- 21 months) before you see the child, keep it in mind when you are with the child, and reflect on it afterwards. If you go in with that anchor, you will have begun to develop the frame of thinking of child development in terms of age-expected, immediate foundational and foundational skills.

Putting It All Together

Keep a focus on functionality and the quality of skills.

Remember that children's skills don't come at exact ages.

Give credit for accommodations, but don't adjust for prematurity.

Remember that culture plays a part in what is age-expected. As you know from working with families of different cultures, expectations for development may vary -- especially with regard to independence and self care skills. It's important for the team to learn from the family about their culture's expectations for their child's development and learning. If a child's skills are not at the same level as same age peers of our mainstream culture, it may be that there is a different expectation within that child's culture. Teams must be aware and sensitive to these differences.

The rating is to reflect age expected functioning within the child's culture-- so the team needs to understand those expectations.