

# North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program Procedural Guidance

## Reference: Screening, Evaluation and Assessments Policy

### *Child Assessment*

#### Introduction

If the child is determined eligible as an infant or toddler with a disability for the North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program (NC ITP), the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) must ensure that the child receives a multidisciplinary assessment of the unique strengths and needs of that infant or toddler and the identification of early intervention services appropriate to meet those needs.

#### Definitions

**Assessment** means the ongoing procedures used by qualified personnel to identify the child's unique strengths and needs and the early intervention services and supports appropriate to meet those needs throughout the period of the child's eligibility. It includes the *assessment of the child* and the assessment of the child's family.

**Initial Assessment** refers to the *child assessment* and the family-directed assessment conducted *prior to the child's first Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) meeting*. This is different than the process to determine eligibility as the initial assessment can occur simultaneously with eligibility determination.

**Family-Directed Assessment** focuses on the resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and the identification of the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of that infant or toddler. *(For additional information, please refer to the Family-Directed Assessments Procedures.)*

#### Requirements

1. If the child's Part C eligibility is established, the CDSA must conduct assessments of the child and family.
2. The assessments of the child and family *may occur simultaneously* with the evaluation to determine eligibility. Note: evaluation is not required to determine eligibility for all children as some may have an established condition or documented delay
3. Qualified personnel must use informed clinical opinion when conducting an eligibility evaluation and when conducting a child assessment. The initial child assessment must be multidisciplinary.
4. All eligibility evaluations and child assessments must be conducted in the native language of the child, if determined developmentally appropriate for the child by the qualified Personnel unless clearly not feasible.

5. An **initial child assessment** of each infant or toddler with a disability must be conducted in order to identify the child's unique strengths and needs and the early intervention services appropriate to meet those needs.
6. The **initial assessment of the child** must include the following:
  - A. A review of the results of the eligibility evaluation, if applicable;
  - B. Personal observations of the child; and
  - C. The identification of the child's strengths and needs in each of the developmental areas within the context of the three child outcomes.

## Procedures

1. The initial child assessment and family-directed assessment are required before the initial IFSP, IF a child is eligible for the NC ITP. CDSAs will first decide if an evaluation is needed to determine eligibility. Then, decide if the initial child assessment and family-directed assessment will occur simultaneously with the evaluation process or after eligibility has been determined.
2. **Multidisciplinary** means the involvement of two or more separate disciplines or professions. For an initial child assessment to be multidisciplinary, both disciplines must provide observations of the child.
3. The purpose of the initial child assessment is to gather information about the child's use of skills in each of the developmental areas within the context of daily routines in the home, community, and other natural settings in order to guide intervention planning. This information, along with the family-directed assessment process, will inform the development of functional, participation-based outcomes for the initial IFSP.
4. The results of the initial child assessment (and evaluation for eligibility determination, if completed) are used to determine the initial child outcome summary rating.
5. The results of the initial and ongoing child assessments are documented in Section III of the NC ITP IFSP form. The IFSP must include a statement of the child's present levels of physical development (including vision, hearing, and health status), cognitive development, communication development, social/emotional development, and adaptive development within the context of the three child outcome statements based on the information from that child's evaluation and/or assessments.
6. All IFSP team members are responsible for participating in the multidisciplinary IFSP Team's ongoing assessment of an infant or toddler with a disability to facilitate the development of integrated goals and outcomes for the IFSP.
7. **Ongoing Assessment** in early intervention can be continuous or discreet.
  - A. After enrollment, continuous or ongoing assessment occurs within the context of providing early intervention services.
  - B. Discreet events would include administering a discipline-specific test instrument or a criterion-referenced instrument that would provide information about overall development or to address a specific developmental concern. These activities require written parental consent and Prior Written Notice using the ***NC ITP Prior Written Notice and Consent for Evaluation and Assessment Form*** and ***NC ITP Prior Written Notice Form***.

8. **Authentic Assessments** are assessments of a child's skills in the real-life context of family that use naturalistic methods to obtain functional, contextual information relevant to learning in routine activities. Authentic assessment involves gathering information from various sources, such as:
  - A. Observations to gather information about the child's functional use of his/her skills in natural environments across varied settings and situations.
  - B. Parent and caregiver report regarding the child's preferences for activities, materials, play partners, and schedules.
9. The functional developmental information obtained during ongoing authentic assessments is documented annually in section III of the IFSP. The functional development of the child will assist in determining the exit child outcome ratings.

### **Recommended Child Assessment Tools**

An assessment 'tool' is not required for the child assessment process but can be used as a guide for observations of the child in natural environments and to assist with addressing each of the developmental areas. The following tools were selected as suggestions for use because they promote **authentic assessment** of the child as described above. If a CDSA selects an assessment tool other than those suggested below, it is recommended that the assessment tool promote authentic assessment of the child's skills through observations in natural settings and routines and interview with parents and caregivers.

- Carolina Curriculum
- Ages and Stages
- Early Childhood Development Chart
- NC Age Anchoring Tool: For use with the Child Outcomes Summary Process
- Survey of the Wellbeing of Young Children