

**Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
From November 2009 Training**

Part I: Basics of ECO

Question 1: Where do I find a copy of the guidelines and other materials that were presented at the ECO training in November 2009? **Answer 1:** All materials related to ECO are on the DESE website at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/ECOtraining.html>

Part II: Collection of Information

Question 2: If the ECSE program is integrated – do you complete ECO’s on all students disabled and nondisabled? **Answer 2:** No. Only children with an IEP, regardless of the reason for eligibility, and in ECSE program for at least 6 months will receive an ECO rating.

Question 3: For ECSE – Sometimes children who are “speech only” do not have assessment information for Outcome 1 and Outcome 3 – can only qualitative measures (e.g., parent input and professional observation) be used to determine ratings for these outcomes? **Answer 3:** Yes. It is acceptable to utilize parent input and professional observation for any outcome areas not having test scores. It might be helpful to use the chart on page 30 of the *ECO Handbook for Administration and Reporting Guidelines* for an explanation of what the ratings represent other than a percent delay.

Question 4: For First Steps – If an infant is found eligible based on medical reasons, but informal assessment or curriculum-based measures such as the HELP-3 are used for IFSP planning – can these measures be used for the ECO rating without completing a specific tool for ECO? **Answer 4:** Yes. It is appropriate to use informal or formal assessment scores from measures completed prior to the IFSP. ECO should utilize existing information that was collected for eligibility determination or IFSP planning. Assessment information is only one source of information and should be combined with parent input and provider observations. The determination of ECO ratings should not be an extra step in the process of the 45-day timeline.

Question 5: If no test scores are used to complete the MOSS, why isn’t it considered best practice to reference age equivalents in our standardized test results? **Answer 5:** Assessment experts caution using age equivalents and prefer the use of standard scores or percentiles to age equivalents when reporting results to parents. DESE has not required the use of a specific assessment tool for ECO, however, those that report scores in a functional age or age equivalent will be more congruent with the MOSS.

Question 6: What if First Steps exit rating for a child and ECSE entry rating are not the same? **Answer 6:** The process of determining a First Steps exit/ECSE entry rating for a child should be collaborative since the evaluation of the child for ECSE is taking place simultaneously with the child’s services in First Steps ending. When the First Steps transition meeting is held for a child at age 2 years, 6 months, there should be a discussion about the ECO rating process and how the two programs plan to collaborate to agree on a rating that serves as both exit and entry. Thirty (30) days prior to the child’s exit from First Steps, the Service Coordinator will determine a rating for First Steps exit using informal or formal assessment information, professional observation and parent input. This information must be shared with the LEA immediately. To alleviate potential differences between First Steps and ECSE findings in assessment information, parent input, and professional observations, it is best practice for discussions to occur between the First Steps Service Coordinator and LEA staff in order to obtain a final exit/entry rating that is agreed upon by both programs; a rating that truly reflects the child’s present level of function with regard to ECO.

Question 7: What specific information is shared between First Steps and ECSE? **Answer 7:** Every rating requires informal or formal assessment, professional observation and parent input. If the LEA is conducting informal or formal assessments to determine eligibility, this information should be shared with the SPOE to be combined with parent input. Professional observations may be available from both First Steps and ECSE professionals, and are combined with the assessment results and parent input to determine a rating for First Steps exit/ ECSE entry. Example, if ECSE administers a standardized assessment (e.g., HELP, DAYC) the results shared with First Steps need to include an age equivalent and/or standard scores. Raw scores are not sufficient for First Steps to use toward a rating for ECO.

Question 8: If a standardized assessment (e.g., Brigance, DAYC) is conducted specifically for the purpose of ECO and not for evaluation/re-evaluation purposes in First Steps or ECSE, do you need to provide the parent with Notice of Action? **Answer 8:** Yes. If a formal assessment is completed solely for the purpose of determining an ECO rating, then the parent must be provided with notice. However, if a formal assessment is part of the typical process for all children (i.e., Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for exiting ECSE children) and that information is also going to be used for ECO, then parent notice is not needed.

Question 9: What is the rationale for not indicating the ECO process as an assessment on the IEP for ECSE? **Answer 9:** ECO is not an assessment; it is a synthesis of information related to the child's present level of abilities. The entry rating is completed from existing information, including assessment scores, completed for eligibility determination. The exit rating is completed using existing information from formal or informal assessments, parent input and professional observation.

Question 10: Generally the determination of ECO rating is not viewed as an added step during the eligibility determination process because all three (3) sources of information (assessment, professional observations and parent input) are readily available. However, isn't the determination of an exit rating an added step?

Answer 10: Formal assessment of a child does not routinely take place as a child prepares to exit First Steps or ECSE programs. In the instance where no formal assessment scores are available, and the individual determining the rating needs more information on the child's current functioning across the typical settings, it is appropriate to use one of the two ECO instruments, developed by collaborating partners in the state, which are solely for the purpose of determining ECO ratings. Keep in mind formal assessment scores are not required to obtain an exit ECO rating in First Steps or ECSE programs. See pages 16 and 17 of the *ECO Handbook for Administration and Reporting Guidelines* for more information on informal assessment scores.

Question 11: Do we tell the parents that their child's ECO entry and exit ratings are sent to the state?

Answer 11: Yes. According to the *Early Childhood Outcome Reporting Guide for Parents*, the data collection process is described to parents as follows: "The data may be used at the federal, state and local levels to demonstrate the effectiveness of the early childhood services your child received. The information will always be shared in a way that protects your child's confidentiality, and individual scores will not be reported. The ratings will be a part of your child's First Steps or ECSE record, and you may access the information at any time."

Part III: Determination of Ratings

Question 12: What are the entry and exit dates for First Steps and ECSE? **Answer 12:** The initial IFSP or IEP date is used as the date of entry into the program. For both First Steps and ECSE, the exit date is the actual date that the rating was determined, but should be no later than the date the child exits the program. Exit data is recorded within 30 days prior to exiting the program.

Question 13: Who will complete the entry/exit data and who is responsible for reporting the data?

Answer 13: The rating scales will be completed by the service coordinator or ECSE teacher. In cases where ECSE services are not provided directly by the district (e.g., an ECSE co-op), the district providing the ECSE services must report the data to DESE for those children.

Question 14: For First Steps and ECSE, what is the “6-month rule” for completing ECO ratings?

Answer 14: ECO entry and exit ratings are gathered for children who will be in the program for at least six months. If you know that the child will be in the program for less than six months, ECO ratings are not required. **Examples:** 1) If a child enters the ECSE program with less than 6 months left before child goes to Kindergarten, no entry or exit ratings are collected. 2) If a child enters First Steps at birth and moves out of state at age 4 months, though an entry rating was collected, no entry or exit is reported.

Question 15: If a child is evaluated in First Steps or ECSE and determined eligible, but parent refuses services, is a rating completed? **Answer 15:** Only children who are eligible and served under an IFSP/IEP are given an entry rating. If the parent refuses to proceed with IFSP/IEP development and no services are provided, no rating is given.

Question 16: If a child is “speech only” and receives itinerant services only, is an ECO rating still completed for this child? **Answer 16:** Yes, any child who has an IEP, regardless of the reason for eligibility, and receives services for at least 6 months must have ECO ratings at entry and exit.

Question 17: When are the First Steps exit ratings and ECSE entry ratings completed for a First Steps child with a summer birthday and receiving First Steps services through the summer months? **Answer 17:** The discussion of who and when to complete the First Steps exit/ECSE entry rating should be part of the First Steps transition conference, which is held about 6 months prior to the child’s 3rd birthday. The LEA and First Steps should work collaboratively to assign the child a First Steps exit/ECSE entry rating. The First Steps exit rating is completed at the end of summer services when the children transition to ECSE. In order for a child with a summer birthday to continue receiving First Steps services through the summer, ECSE must determine children eligible for Part B services prior to the child’s 3rd birthday. This means that LEA evaluation of the child will be taking place while the child is still in First Steps. Therefore it is acceptable to wait to do the ECSE entry rating for these children and use the First Steps exit rating as the ECSE entry rating.

Question 18: Is there any information on the validity and/or reliability related to the MOSS? **Answer 18:** No, it is not applicable. The MOSS is a data collection/synthesis tool.

Question 19: Where do I keep the ECO information in the child’s file: Permanent record or Special Education file? **Answer 19:** The information should be maintained in the child’s special education file. If a child transfers and special education information is sent, the completed MOSS may be sent to the new district/SPOE as part of the child’s record; however, it is not mandatory that the completed form be sent. For more information regarding transfers see question #20.

Part IV: Data Reporting

Question 20: How do we report exit/entry on compensatory IFSPs for First Steps and Extended School Year for ECSE? **Answer 20:** For children receiving compensatory IFSP services past the third birthday or ECSE ESY services, the exit date would be the usual end date for the program, rather than the extended end date. For example, if a child turns 3 on April 1, but receives compensatory services from First Steps until May 1, the exit date would be April 1.

Question 21: What do I do when a child transfers? **Answer 21:** *Transfers within the state:* It is expected that children will only have one entry and one exit rating for FS or ECSE statewide. This would mean that

District/SPOE A will provide the entry data to DESE and District/SPOE B will provide the exit data to DESE. DESE will match the child's entry information with the exit information using the individual identifier number (MOSIS ID) for each child.

Transfers out of the state of Missouri: If the child is in Missouri's ECSE/FS program for more than 6 months, the teacher/SC must complete an exit rating and submit that to DESE when the child transfers out of the program. If you do not have sufficient notification and/or information to complete an exit rating on an out-of-state transfer, indicate in the child's file that an exit rating was not completed.

Transfers into the state of Missouri: ECSE/FS must conduct an entry rating when they first enroll the child.

Question 22: What if the district/SPOE cannot locate the entry rating for transfer children?

Answer 22: District/ SPOE will not need to locate the entry rating as long as they know that one was completed. If you aren't sure whether or not an entry rating was completed, complete the rating scale and provide the information to DESE. DESE will watch for multiple entry ratings for the same child and adjust accordingly.

Question 23: In what ways is DESE planning to disaggregate the data? Will districts receive specific information for their district? **Answer 23:** DESE is required to publicly report these data for each district/SPOE. ECSE data will be included in the Special Education District Profile, while First Steps data will be included in the SPP\APR Data by SPOE report. The public report will include the five outcome reporting categories as well as the two summary statements for each indicator area.

Question 24: How do I submit ECO data to DESE? **Answer 24:** In July of each year, SPOEs will submit entry ratings for any children who entered the program and exit ratings for any children who exited the program during the previous fiscal year using the ECO spreadsheet on the DESE website. DESE will send a reminder message to SPOE directors. ECSE submits all entry and exit data compiled during that school year at the end of the school year using the MOSIS Student Core file due July 15. **NOTE:** A child may have entry OR exit OR both ratings reported in a given year. However, most children will have entry ratings submitted in one year, and exit ratings submitted in a subsequent year.

Question 25: How do we get the MOSIS number for ECSE children? **Answer 25:** Every district should apply for a MOSIS ID for all children receiving services through the district, which includes children receiving ECSE services. The submission process is the same as for students in grades K-12. District ECSE personnel should contact the district's central office to determine who is responsible for the MOSIS application.

Question 26: Can I enter both exit and entry data for one child on the same line on the collection spreadsheet? **Answer 26:** No, each line on the data collection sheet will list ONE set of ratings, either entry or exit for ONE child. (**NOTE:** this is **only** applicable to First Steps reporting).

Question 27: What is the purpose of the optional column on the data collection form that says, "If exiting, in program < 6 months"? **Answer 27:** This is for internal tracking purposes and could be marked if the child exits First Steps within 6 months from entry. (**NOTE:** this is **only** applicable to First Steps reporting).

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