

# The Decision Tree

## Child Indicator Seeds for Success



### Determining the Child's Functional Status for Child Indicators

The Child Indicators represent the integrated nature of how children develop and learn and cut across the five developmental domains that must be included in multidisciplinary evaluations. They shift away from measuring test scores in domain-specific areas toward looking at how skills and behaviors are functional and meaningful in the child's day to day life. (Pletcher & Youngren, 2013)

#### FAQs

**Question:** What is the role of an assessment tool in determining child indicator ratings? **Should professional, clinical judgment be used?**

**Answer:** While Virginia requires that a tool be used, it is only one piece of information used to determine Child Indicator ratings. Information from the family, other caregivers and your informed clinical opinion are also required when assessing a child's functioning across settings and situations.

The challenge for determining where a child falls on the rating scale is that no single evaluation tool exists that directly measures the three outcomes. Also, most of the current instruments used to assess children are domain-based and may not address a child's level of functioning in a variety of settings.

**Current recommended practices in assessment call for the use of multiple measures and multiple sources when assessing young children (Neisworth & Bagnato, 2005).** Early childhood teams should turn to naturalistic means of assessing the skills a child can perform across a variety of settings. Naturalistic/authentic assessments include observations of children in their everyday environment, reliance on information from informed caregivers, and use of curriculum based measures which take into account different ways of achieving functional skills for children with disabilities. Naturalistic assessments provide multiple opportunities for a child to perform skills across domains of development and can be embedded within the context of child-initiated routines and planned activities (Losardo & Notari-Syverson, 2001). Assessment occurs in the context of daily routines and involves individuals who have the greatest opportunities to interact with the children on a regular basis (e.g., parents, caregivers, teachers).

**The Child Indicator rating is based on a synthesis of all information obtained through multiple measures and sources and compares the child's function to same age peers of their same culture. It's important to remember a child may score at age level on the standardized tool, but not be functioning comparable to same age peers. Conversely, a child may use an assistive device to function comparably to same age peers, but not score at age level on the standardized tool.**

**Question:** What is the purpose of the Virginia Child Indicator Booklet?

**Answer:** This booklet is meant to be used in combination with other sources of information including those mentioned above. The purpose of this booklet is to provide a "hands on" resource with information readily accessible to assist service coordinators, providers and families in determining how a child is functioning in relation to his or her same aged peers in three functional areas:

1. positive social-emotional skills and relationships;
2. acquisition and use of new knowledge and skills; and
3. use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs (taking action to get needs met).

**A thorough explanation and details of development are beyond the scope of the Virginia Child Indicator Booklet. It is incumbent upon early childhood professionals to have a thorough knowledge of development. Resources listed in this manual can be used as one mechanism for professionals to increase their knowledge. Observation of typically developing children and specific coursework are other methods to increase professional competency in child development.**