



# Frequently Asked Questions about Child and Family Outcomes in Babies Can't Wait

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## What does the Law say?

Babies Can't Wait (BCW) is Georgia's Part C Early Intervention Program under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the same law that governs special education services for children in public school systems. Part C establishes a comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system of early intervention supports for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 3 and their families. The Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) Division of Public Health administers Babies Can't Wait as part of a comprehensive statewide system for children with special needs.

IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 and included a new requirement that States submit a Performance Plan that evaluates each State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of Part C and describes how the state will improve such implementation {IDEA 2004 Section 616 (b)(1)(A)}. Two priority areas and fourteen related indicators were identified for Part C systems and must be addressed in each State's Performance Plan. The indicators include requirements to establish systems for collecting and reporting child and family outcomes. Georgia's State Performance Plan for Babies Can't Wait was submitted on December 2, 2005 and is available at <http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/familyhealth/bcw/GeorgiaPartCSPP.pdf>

## Why are child and family outcome data important?

Child and family outcome data are important to help local, state and federal staff:

- Examine the effectiveness of Part C nationally, within a state, and within a community,
- Monitor the implementation of Part C,
- Monitor the status of young children with disabilities,
- Provide information for program improvement at the federal/state/local levels, and
- Provide data on child progress that can be used to adjust services or curriculum.

## When will Georgia begin collecting child and family outcome data?

Babies Can't Wait will begin collecting child and family outcome data in March 2006.

## What child outcomes will be measured and reported?

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U. S. Department of Education requires that states provide data on the percent of infants and toddlers who demonstrate improved:

- a. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
- b. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication); and
- c. Use of appropriate behavior to meet their needs.

For each of these outcomes, data will be collected to indicate the percent of infants and toddlers who (1) reach or maintain functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers, (2) improve functioning, and (3) do not improve functioning.

## How will Babies Can't Wait collect child outcome information?

Babies Can't Wait will collect child outcome information through existing evaluation and assessment procedures. Child outcome data will be collected for every child whose initial eligibility for Babies Can't Wait is determined on or after March 1, 2006, regardless of how long they receive early intervention supports and services. Initial data collection for each child will occur within 45 days from the initial referral to Babies Can't Wait as part of the evaluation process. Evaluators will use information collected during this process to complete a Child Outcomes Summary form developed by the National Early Childhood Outcomes Center for use in assigning ratings in each of the outcome areas. The completed Child Outcomes Summary form will be reviewed during the initial IFSP meeting. The Child Outcomes

Summary form will also be completed annually in conjunction with re-evaluation and re-determination of eligibility and reviewed at the annual IFSP meeting(s). Prior to each child's exit from Babies Can't Wait, the Child Outcomes Summary form will be completed based upon ongoing assessment by your child's current service providers during regularly-scheduled visits with your child and family. The final or exit ratings will be reviewed during the exit review of your child's IFSP. Collection of information for the exit rating will not require any additional evaluations.

### **Will my child's provider(s) have less time to spend with my child and family as a result of collecting child outcome data?**

No. Child outcome information will be collected through evaluations that already occur in order to determine initial and annual eligibility for Babies Can't Wait and as part of ongoing assessments completed prior to exit from Babies Can't Wait. No additional evaluations or assessments will be scheduled in order to collect this data; therefore, time that would be spent with your child and family will not be reduced.

### **Will I be able to review the child outcome ratings that my child receives?**

For initial and annual ratings, the completed Child Outcome Summary form will be reviewed with your family at your child's individualized family service plan meeting. Ratings assigned as your child exits Babies Can't Wait will be discussed with you during your child's exit review prior to transition.

### **What if I disagree with the ratings assigned to my child?**

You will have opportunities to provide information about your child during team meetings, evaluation and assessment sessions, and through other discussions with early intervention providers. Your input is important to all of these processes and you should feel comfortable discussing any disagreements with your service coordinator and/or other early intervention providers. They will be able to explain the ratings that were given to your child and how the information you provided was used in assigning those ratings. If you continue to disagree about ratings assigned for your child, you may request that a statement be placed in your child's record commenting on the information and giving reasons for disagreeing with the ratings. Such a statement will be included as part of your child's record as long as the record is maintained by Babies Can't Wait.

### **How will the child outcome data be reported?**

Individual child data will be combined with data and ratings for other children participating in early intervention to provide an overall picture of child progress and child outcomes in Babies Can't Wait. Reports will be produced that reflect progress for children within each district Babies Can't Wait program in Georgia in addition to a statewide report of progress. Quarterly and annual reports will be generated and disseminated throughout the state.

### **How will the child outcome data be used?**

Child outcome data will be used by Babies Can't Wait state staff as well as District staff to identify areas for supervision of personnel and monitoring, as well as where additional training may be needed for early intervention personnel, in order to effectively support families in promoting progress and development of their children who are enrolled in Babies Can't Wait. Child outcome data may also inform IFSP team members if adjustments to supports and services may be needed to better meet the unique needs of an individual child and his or her family.

### **What is a family outcome?**

A family outcome is a benefit experienced by families as a result of services received. For example, providing parents with information about their child's diagnosis is a service. If parents or family members understand the information and find it helpful in describing their child's condition to others, advocating for services, or responding effectively when their child needs additional support, a benefit has been experienced and a family outcome has been achieved.

### **What family outcomes will be measured and reported?**

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education requires that states provide data on the percent of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services have helped their family:

- a. Know their rights;
- b. Effectively communicate their children's needs; and
- c. Help their children develop and learn.

### **How will Babies Can't Wait collect family outcome information?**

Babies Can't Wait will collect family outcome information using a Family Outcomes Survey tool developed by the National Early Childhood Outcomes Center. The Family Outcomes Survey will be presented to every family whose child or children are exiting Babies Can't Wait, regardless of how long they have been in BCW. The survey will be presented at or near the final meeting to review the individualized family service plan prior to exit, which typically occurs within 30 days of the date of transition. Families will have the option of completing the survey with their service coordinator or independently. The survey will be available in English and Spanish. Families who need the survey in another language may complete the questions through an interpreter. Completed surveys may be returned to Babies Can't Wait via the service coordinator or by mail.

### **How will the family outcome data be reported?**

Responses will be combined with those of other families participating in early intervention to provide an overall picture of families in Georgia and their experiences with Babies Can't Wait. Reports will be produced that reflect responses for each district Babies Can't Wait program in Georgia in addition to a statewide report of responses. Quarterly and annual reports will be generated and disseminated throughout the state.

### **How will the family outcome data be used?**

Family outcome data will be used by Babies Can't Wait state staff as well as district staff to identify areas for supervision of personnel, monitoring, as well as where additional training may be needed for early intervention personnel, in order to effectively address identified needs for families of children enrolled in Babies Can't Wait.

### **Who should complete the family survey for my family?**

Babies Can't Wait is interested in getting the best possible information about each family. So, who answers the questions is up to your family. For some families, one parent may complete the survey. In other families, two parents may discuss and complete the survey together. Or, families may choose to include additional significant family members in the discussion and completion of the survey.

### **How long will the family survey take to complete?**

This will depend on how many times you read the survey and whether you discuss it with your spouse or other significant family members. Most people find that they can complete the survey in about 10 minutes.

### **I have twins who are exiting Babies Can't Wait. Will I be asked to complete a separate survey for each child?**

Babies Can't Wait is interested in getting the best possible information as it relates to your experiences in early intervention for each of your children. For some families who feel that their responses to the survey would be consistent or the same for each child, they would only need to complete one survey. For other families where their children have very different abilities and needs which would result in respondents answering survey questions differently for each child, it will be necessary to complete one survey for each child. So, the decision about how many surveys to complete will be individualized for each family.

**I am moving to a new city in Georgia and my child will be transferring to another district Babies Can't Wait program for her last six months of eligibility. Will I be asked to complete the Family Outcomes Survey before we move?**

No. The Family Outcomes Survey will only be completed by families of children who are exiting the Babies Can't Wait system (1) at three years of age; (2) because they are determined to no longer be eligible for Babies Can't Wait at an annual review; (3) because the family is voluntarily withdrawing from Babies Can't Wait; or (4) because they are moving out of Georgia. In this situation, you would only be asked to respond to the survey by the new Babies Can't Wait district when your child transitions out of the system at three years of age.

**Will my family's responses or my child's ratings affect eligibility or supports and services provided by Babies Can't Wait?**

No. Neither your family's responses nor your child's ratings will affect the supports and services being provided to your child and family by Babies Can't Wait. Babies Can't Wait policies and procedures related to eligibility determination and individualized family service plan development and implementation will not change as a result of the collection of child and family outcome data.

**Will every Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) need to include outcomes related to one or more of the child and family outcomes?**

No. IFSP outcomes should still reflect what is most important for the family and child and the IFSP team members' input about what the next steps are in addressing those priority areas. However, IFSP teams may consider the child outcome areas and the family outcome areas while discussing the family's priorities.

**Who will have access to my family's responses and my child's ratings?**

Your family's responses and your child's ratings will not be shared with anyone outside of Babies Can't Wait without your informed, written consent. Your family's responses and your child's ratings will be entered into the Babies Can't Wait data system by staff at the District Babies Can't Wait office serving the county where you live. Each month, data is sent to the state office for Babies Can't Wait where aggregate data reports are produced for dissemination. Aggregate data reports include numbers from each District gathered together to reflect a total report of the Babies Can't Wait data for Georgia. Data in these reports is combined and is not associated or linked to any individual child or family.

**What if I have more questions?**

Contact your local Babies Can't Wait Early Intervention Coordinator, BCW Parent Educator, or the State Babies Can't Wait office at 404-657-2726 or toll free at 888-651-8224. Or visit the Babies Can't Wait webpage periodically for updated information: <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw/>