

Treating the First Assessment Period as a Baseline

Results Matter Assessment



COLORADO
Department of Education

Preschool
through Third
Grade (P-3) Office

Please read carefully as this is an official change in Results Matter assessment policy effective Fall 2019.

Capturing True Baseline Data

A child's very first assessment rating period serves as a baseline for measuring and comparing subsequent progress. This initial portfolio of observations and documentation demonstrates where a child is along the continuum of development before any instruction and intervention has been provided. A true baseline is important for measuring growth, particularly in the context of preschool special education assessment and Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Preschool Outcomes reporting, where child growth is measured from entry to exit from preschool special education services on several outcomes.

To reflect baseline information and subsequently show the greatest amount of progress, ratings for a child's first assessment period should be based on the earliest observations and information available. Teachers are encouraged to enter ratings in the first period as soon as they have sufficient documentation for any objective. They do not need to wait for the standard checkpoint rating window (i.e., two week-window before the deadline) in the child's baseline period to finalize their baseline data. This does not mean, however, that teachers should rush to score all objectives in the first few weeks, which is not feasible given the overall number of assessment objectives. Rather, an assessor's mindset should be to score as soon as baseline evidence becomes available.

After determining ratings in the first checkpoint period, staff can continue capturing documentation to be considered in the following period. For children who have been evaluated for special needs and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place, information from formal evaluation reports can be used as documentation and should be entered into the online tool as soon as possible. As with other ongoing assessment, special educators and general educators should partner closely to capture this information online.

Children Placed on an IEP Mid-Year

Some children are placed in preschool with an IEP after the start of the school year, and sometimes not until well into the second or third checkpoint periods. In this case, teachers should keep what has already been scored so far in the period corresponding to the child's IEP entry date and instead of waiting until the standard checkpoint rating window, follow the baseline guidance above for the objectives that are still un-scored.

Definitions:

Assessment Rating Window- During this window, providers make final determinations about how to rate the child on each of the assessment indicators. Observation and documentation continue to be collected during this window. There are three assessment rating windows - fall, winter, and spring.

Baseline ratings-The results of the first assessment rating a child receives in Results Matter. This initial portfolio of observations and documentation demonstrates where a child is along the continuum of development before any instruction and intervention has been provided.

Checkpoint deadline- Assessment data on every indicator is expected to be finalized in the online assessment system for each child NO LATER THAN the checkpoint deadlines, which are specified dates (published annually). Please see the [Results Matter Calendar](#) for current dates.

Documentation window- During this window, providers observe and document observations of assessment indicators for each child.

Rating Finalization - The process of determining final assessment ratings for each objective at the end of the Assessment Rating Window. For the baseline ratings, the finalization will be whenever sufficient data has been collected and may or may not correspond to the end of the Assessment Rating Window.

Family Communication and Individual Learning Plans

Some programs may be concerned with not having the most current assessment scores at the time of family conferences that would show children’s current developmental picture. One possible solution is to move the first conference earlier in the baseline period. Also, staff could customize the information selected for the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and include more up-to-date developmental information. Please note, children receiving state funds for preschool are required to have an ILP. CDE strongly encourages the use of an ILP as the primary tool for family conferences. CDE advises programs to consider family input in the ILP as well as other non-Results Matter information they have about a child. The information for the ILP does not need to come entirely from the assessment system.

Resources for developing ILPs:

- [Individual Learning Plans in Preschool](#)
- [Instructions on how to create an ILP in TS GOLD®](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How do we collect all the assessment information in the first two weeks of school?*

We are not expecting that all baseline data be collected in the first two weeks of school. Rather, we are expecting that ratings be finalized as soon as initial evidence for each objective becomes available. This might occur in the first few weeks for some objectives but may take until the end of the checkpoint period for other objectives.

2. *May we begin collecting observations upon the child’s enrollment?*

Yes. Begin collecting observations upon the child’s enrollment. The team may have access to observational information that was collected just prior to enrollment that could also be utilized, for example, from screening or evaluation data that informed the eligibility determination.

3. *Can we use previous screening, family interview, and Child Find assessment to support baseline ratings?*

Yes. Teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings are encouraged to enter data in the online system as soon as they have sufficient documentation for any objectives. This data can be gathered through various data sources such as a developmental screener, information gathered through the family interview, and/or an initial eligibility evaluation for special education services.





4. When can we finalize baseline ratings in the online system?

We expect that teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings will complete baseline ratings for children as early as possible, using the earliest pieces of documentation that demonstrate a child’s development prior to access to instruction or intervention. Some examples of early documentation may be information from a developmental screening tool, family interviews, information gathered from the enrollment packet, etc.

5. Should you continue to collect documentation after you finalize the baseline data?

After determining ratings in the first checkpoint period, staff can continue capturing documentation to be considered in the following period. For children who have been evaluated for special education services and have an IEP, information from

formal evaluation reports should be used as documentation and should be entered into the online tool as soon as possible. As with other ongoing assessments, special educators and general educators should partner closely to capture this information in the online system.

6. How do we handle baseline ratings for a child who enters preschool or preschool special education services with fewer than six weeks remaining in the checkpoint? Previous guidance was to skip ratings entirely.

It is important to enter a baseline rating for children as soon as initial evidence for each objective becomes available. This is especially important for children on IEPs. However, as in previous guidance, if teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings truly do not have enough documentation for all objectives, our guidance is to wait to enter and finalize the checkpoint at the subsequent checkpoint deadline. Note: If teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings finalize any baseline ratings with “not observed,” it will interfere with the OSEP baseline calculation during the OSEP exit season.

7. Does CDE support districts in setting their own deadline for teachers and other staff to assign baseline ratings (e.g., within the child's first 12 days)?

We do not believe that a compressed timeline will capture sufficient evidence of all the objectives and dimensions. While a compressed deadline is not encouraged, CDE does encourage local procedures that underscore the importance of and provide support for teachers and other staff assigning checkpoint ratings to enter baseline ratings as soon as they have sufficient documentation for any objectives.

8. *Instead of setting baseline ratings, why doesn't CDE just move up the checkpoint deadline in the first Assessment Rating Window?*

We do not believe that a compressed timeline will capture sufficient evidence. It may still take some time to collect evidence for all assessment objectives. Further, children's baseline periods do not always occur in the fall and some children return to preschool the following year.

9. *How much documentation is needed to set a baseline rating?*

You must have sufficient documentation to support your rating no matter when the rating is made. As noted in the [Results Matter Handbook](#), the expectation is simply that teachers have some form of high-quality, objective documentation that can inform all assessment ratings. Documentation can include typed notes, digital photos (of work samples or activities), voice recordings, video recordings, and other vendor-supported resources. Photos and work samples should include context statements to illustrate how they relate to the chosen objectives. The difference between the new guidance around entering baseline data and previous guidance is that you should finalize ratings as soon as you have adequate documentation.

10. *If we finalize baseline ratings early in any checkpoint period, what should we do from that point until the checkpoint deadline?*

Continue to collect documentation. Documentation and baseline ratings should inform your instruction, intervention, and ultimately your next rating.

11. *How do we put this policy in practice with TS GOLD® and COR Advantage?*

This baseline scoring process means treating the scoring process in *GOLD*® and COR Advantage a bit differently in the first assessment period.

For teachers using *GOLD*®, it is not just about using preliminary ratings. While preliminary ratings are still helpful, determining the earliest possible baseline score means moving more quickly from entering preliminary ratings to scoring and finalizing areas under the Assess>Checkpoint by Child/Class options. When developing the ILP for family conferences, teachers could draw from more recent preliminary ratings that do not necessarily need to be converted into new finalized ratings for the period. To learn more about entering preliminary ratings into MyTeachingStrategies, please see the Teaching Strategies Administrator Guide, page 41.

For teachers using COR Advantage, this means not entering scores more than one time for the same objective in the baseline period, since the online system stamps whatever the highest rating was within a period regardless of the order in which they were entered (teachers do not “finalize” in this system).

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

If you have questions or would like to discuss this guidance further with CDE staff, please contact your regional preschool specialist:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/contact>