

# PROMISING PRACTICES



## Customized program outcomes management system meets the needs of persons served

[BC Centre for Ability](#) provides a wide range of community-based services to children, youths, and adults with disabilities in British Columbia. The centre's Early Intervention Therapy Program uses an outreach model to provide therapy services and social work support to pre-school children (from birth to five years of age) with physical, neurological, and developmental disabilities. Services are delivered at home, in day care centres, or at pre-schools in the greater Vancouver area.

This article describes the journey of the Early Intervention Therapy Program in developing its own program outcomes management system -- or POMS for short -- to guide and evaluate the centre's practice.

After the centre's first [CARF](#) accreditation survey in 2003 and following a surveyor's suggestion to improve the outcomes management tool, the Early Intervention Therapy Program planned for a re-design of its outcomes measurement and management system that would:

- Create a unified framework with the capability to evaluate whether interdisciplinary intervention makes a difference to the diverse population of children whom the program serves.
- Be built on the principles of family-centred practice to ensure that interventions reflect family-identified goals and priorities.
- Be logical and user-friendly to clinicians, enhancing their clinical decision making and practice.

For close to two years, the program conducted an extensive search for a measurement tool that would meet these three objectives. Program managers participated in the hands-on CARF-Boston University

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An organization receiving exemplary recognition in its CARF survey report stands out because of its professional and strategic response to a service or business need. CARF presents these ECS Promising Practices articles to encourage dialogue among service providers and to offer examples of creative solutions for improving service quality.

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[Transforming Outcomes Data into Management Information](#) institute in Tucson, Arizona; reviewed literature; and consulted with experts in the rehabilitation field from across North America.

The search led to a conclusion that no standardized product existed that could be used to measure the spectrum of ages and developmental disabilities of the program's consumer population. Staff members realized that the centre needed to build its own outcomes management system.

The search and consultation process, however, enabled staff members to become familiar with theoretical frameworks that would be used to design an outcomes management tool. The theoretical frameworks included:

- **Family-centred practice:** Family-centred practice is not only the cornerstone of the Early Intervention Therapy Program's service delivery, but it also has been widely researched as the core practice in enhancing and empowering families to support their children with disabilities. The program uses the Child and Family Service Plan process to work with families in designing individualized intervention plans based on the unique needs of the child and the family. The information collected from the Child and Family Service Plan review is a key source of data to evaluate program effectiveness.
- [International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health \(ICF\)](#): The Early Intervention Therapy Program uses the ICF as an integrated framework to evaluate the interdisciplinary interventions across the diverse consumer population. Focusing on functions and participation rather than on classification, Early Intervention Therapy Program team members identified key domains to be measured, including (1) posture and mobility, (2) play and learning, (3) self-care, and (4) communication. All identified goals, when translated into measurable outcomes, will be categorized into these four domains for review.
- **Goal Attainment Scaling:** The Early Intervention Therapy Program recognizes that Goal Attainment Scaling can be easily used in goal setting and outcomes review with families. The team assesses whether the targeted outcome is excelled, better than expected, achieved, or partially achieved or there is no change/decrease in performance. Reasons for achievement or non-achievement are also categorized and analyzed to help with revising and targeting new outcomes.

Using the above three frameworks, the Early Intervention Therapy Program designed a POMS that reflects the program's practice and can easily be integrated into the day-to-day practice of all clinicians.

The process begins with families articulating their needs, concerns, and

priorities for setting intervention goals. Then, family members and the program's interdisciplinary team together translate the family's goals into measurable outcomes and mutually agreed time lines. The outcomes are reviewed and evaluated based on Goal Attainment Scaling. The reviews form the base for future goal setting for families.

The Early Intervention Therapy Program continues to refine the POMS based on knowledge staff members have gained in the past five years. Program managers and staff members agree that the program has far-reaching impacts on service delivery. In addition to being a tool for outcomes measurement, the POMS has become a significant tool for improvements in clinical practice. Clinicians began to use the program as a tool to reflect on their practice, using data to guide their decision-making process and program development.

Since then, the frameworks used to develop the POMS have been extended to other programs at the centre.

Although the journey of managing and evaluating program outcomes continues, BC Centre for Ability staff members report they learned several valuable lessons in developing the POMS for the Early Intervention Therapy Program:

- Commitment from the organization's leadership must be clearly communicated and demonstrated to staff.
- Active staff engagement and input are essential throughout the process. Recruiting champions across the organizational structure helps to promote discussion and buy-in among staff.
- Comprehensive and continuous staff training must be in place. Training in areas such as writing goals, collaborative goal setting with families, the Child and Family Service Plan process, and data input and integrity has become forums of discussion, modifications, and revisions.
- Seeking external consultation not only helps to keep a project's momentum going, but it also helps clarify focus and directions for development.
- Celebrating each step of accomplishment and ensuring a loop for ongoing input and suggestions enhance stakeholders' involvement.

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