

**Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF)  
Data Quality Talking Points**

- 1. Overarching goal=data that inform program practices**
  - The purpose of the outcomes data is to improve programs for children and families
  - But you can't use data for program improvement decisions until you know the data are good
  - Good quality data are those that are valid and generalizable (representative)
  
- 2. Evidence, Inference, Action**
  - Evidence is the numbers
  - Inference is the interpretation of the numbers
  - Action is what should be done, based on interpretation of the numbers
    - First – data improvement
    - Then – program improvement
  
- 3. Improving data quality**
  - Training and communication
  - TA for data providers
  - Data analysis
  
- 4. Data analysis as a quality check**
  - Look at the aggregated data
  - Look for validity of data – sensible patterns
    - Should NOT see wild variation across programs
    - SHOULD see variations for different kinds of kids, such as by disability category
  - Look for generalizability of data -- program data must match the program it represents in terms of
    - Geography
    - Demographics
    - Types of disabilities and delays
    - Length of time in services
  
- 5. Data validity 'red flags'**
  - The n is too small
  - The overall pattern is not what you would expect
  
- 6. Data generalizability 'red flags'**
  - Not all areas of the program are included in the data
  - Not all types of families are represented
  - Not all types of kids are represented (disability, length of stay, etc.)
  
- 7. What to do when you find 'red flags'**
  - Work with data collectors to understand and explain why the data look like they do
  - If red flags can be explained by data collection problems
    - provide training and TA on data collection
    - institute ongoing QA measures at various levels
  - If variations are NOT due to data quality (no red flags) consider program effectiveness and improvement