

# Using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health Framework to Achieve Interprofessional Functional Outcomes for Young Children

## A Speech-Language Pathology Perspective



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### KEYWORDS

- Functional outcomes • Young children
- International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health framework
- Speech and language disorders • Activities and participation of children

### KEY POINTS

- The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Framework is used to write functional goals.
- Functional goals are set for young children with communication disorders.
- Interprofessional collaboration can benefit from the ICF framework.

### INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF FUNCTIONING, DISABILITY, AND HEALTH

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), a comprehensive coding system that views functioning and disability as a conceptual framework and a common language between all professions, focusing primarily on adults.<sup>1–4</sup> In 2007, the WHO published a new internationally agreed-upon comprehensive classification system based on the ICD to assess the health of children and youth in the context of their developmental stages and living environments. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) verifies the importance of

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describing children's health using a methodology that applies codes for bodily functions and structures, activities and participation, and environmental factors that either limit or help children to function in an array of everyday activities. In 2012, the WHO merged the ICF and the ICF-CY to enhance usage for the transition across the life span. The ICF is the WHO framework that measures health and disability at both individual and population levels. The WHO Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS 2.0) was developed as a collaborative international approach aimed at assessing health status and disability across various cultures and settings.

## **FUNCTIONAL GOAL WRITING USING THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF FUNCTIONING, DISABILITY AND HEALTH FRAMEWORK**

Functional goals are written for individuals and target their ability to participate in daily living environments across settings including home, school, and community. The focus is not on the impairment or disorder but on the participation in activities of daily living.

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) need to obtain knowledge and skills and become competent to teach information to others including graduate clinicians, children, and families regarding the ICF framework for writing functional goals for children. Additionally, SLPs need to be competent in the delivery of services after assessing a child's communication skills and limitations and successes interacting with others within their daily living environments. Graduate programs can infuse the ICF framework within clinical practicum coursework. Graduate students need to acquire the ability to use the ICF framework as an assessment component to evaluate a child's speech, language and social skills, and limitations exhibited during communication interactions and to develop appropriate functional goals for children's needs.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (ASHA) Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology describes the diagnostic categories that are consistent with relevant diagnostic categories in the ICF framework.<sup>5-9</sup> The ICF framework is useful in describing the SLP's role in prevention, assessment, and habilitation/rehabilitation of communication and swallowing disorders. The framework consists of 2 components: health conditions and contextual factors.

### **HEALTH CONDITIONS**

#### ***Body Functions and Structures***

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These involve the anatomy and physiology of the human body. Relevant examples in speech-language pathology include craniofacial anomaly, vocal fold paralysis, cerebral palsy, stuttering, and language impairment.

#### ***Activity and Participation***

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Activity refers to the execution of a task or action. Participation is the involvement in a life situation. Relevant examples in speech-language pathology include difficulties with swallowing safely for independent feeding, participating actively in class, understanding a medical prescription, and accessing the general education curriculum.

### **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

#### ***Environmental Factors***

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These comprise the physical, social, and attitudinal environments in which people live and conduct their lives. Relevant examples in speech-language pathology include the role of the communication partner in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), the influence of classroom acoustics on communication, and the impact of

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