

Completing the Functional Screen for Children's Long-Term Support Programs

A Resource for Families Who Have Children with Special Health Care Needs

Many programs in Wisconsin that provide supports and services for children with special needs require that a **functional screen** be completed to determine eligibility. Examples include the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Waivers, the Children's Community Options Program (CCOP), and the Katie Beckett Program. The screening tool collects information on your child's health, need for supports and how they play and interact with others.

Keep in mind that the screen only determines your child's **functional eligibility** but not their overall program eligibility. Some programs, like the Katie Beckett Program, will also review your child's income to determine if they are financially eligible for the program.

A service coordinator or social worker will meet with a family and ask questions about the child. That staff person will then complete an online functional screen and it will be reviewed and a determination will be made by the Department of Health Services.

What Should Families Consider When Completing a Functional Screen?

Remember "Rosy versus Realistic"

Sometimes parents want to be positive and optimistic about what their child could do or might do and paint an overly rosy picture. This is not a good time to be overly optimistic. **It is better to be as realistic as possible.**

Before you meet with agency staff think about the following:

- If you were leaving your child with a friend or family member for a whole month and you had to tell them everything you do for your child and all the things that your child needs to get through the day what would you tell them? Include things that might only happen occasionally.
- On an average day how much help or support do you provide to your child and how much time does that take? Now consider a difficult day - *what does that look like?*
 - Are you up with your child during the night?
 - How about at meal times?
 - What is it like when your child does not feel well or had a bad day at school?
 - What support or help is provided by other family members and what if that was not available?

These questions can help you have a more realistic view of the care that you provide and will help to give a realistic view of your child to the screener.

Below are a few examples of a *Rosy versus Realistic* perspective:

Rosy = Ben can dress himself independently.

Realistic = Ben can dress himself independently about one day a week, if I have the right clothes out for him.

Rosy = Sophie can communicate her needs to me.

Realistic = Most of the time, people who are unfamiliar with Sophie do not know what she wants or cannot understand her words or signs.

Rosy = Aiden plays with his siblings after school.

Realistic = If supervised by an adult and not having a bad day, Aiden can play with his brother and sister for about a half hour before there is a meltdown.

Can Families Review the Functional Screening Tool?

Yes, the screen is available on the Department of Health Services website at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/functionalscreen/index.htm This will give you a sense of what questions will be asked.

What if my child is found not eligible through the screening and I think the screener missed something or did not include a complete picture of my child?

Contact the social worker or staff person who completed the screen and talk with them about what was missed or not considered during the screening process. Families can also ask that another staff person complete a new functional screen.

If your child was not deemed eligible you may also want to wait 9 to 12 months and request a new screening. Sometimes in younger children the differences between a typically developing child and a child with a disability are not as profound, but as your child gets older their challenges become clearer and he or she may qualify for long-term supports and other services.

If you have questions or need help finding services contact the following organizations:

- [Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/regionalcenters.htm)
dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/regionalcenters.htm
- [Wisconsin First Step](http://www.wisconsinfirststep.com) , a 24-hour hotline and resource database, at 1-800-642-7837