

September 30, 2025

C-2025-Early Start-001

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: UPDATES TO THE EARLY START REPORT

The Early Start Report (ESR) is California's required data collection system for infants, toddlers, and their families who receive early intervention services and supports coordinated by regional centers (RC). In an effort to collect meaningful data and improve data accuracy, Department of Developmental Services will implement the following ESR enhancements by **November 3, 2025**. In addition to ESR system improvements, we updated the attached ESR Software Guide to provide better guidance on data entry and reporting requirements.

What will change in the ESR?

- Adding "Self" as a Referral Source (9d)
- Updating Developmental Delay (14a) to:
 - Adaptive/Self-Help Skills
 - Cognitive
 - Expressive Language
 - Reception Language
 - Physical (Gross Motor) (*new*)
 - Physical (Fine Motor) (*new*)
 - Social Emotional
- Natural Environments (18) to:
 - Community Based
 - Daycare (*new*)
 - Home
 - Remote (*new*)
 - Clinic (*new*)
- Child Outcomes
 - Removing the "Parent Declined" box (19a)
 - Adding a list of Child Assessment Tools (19b) (*new*)
- Adding data validation rules in date fields
 - 9(a) Initial Referral - The date cannot be later than today's date.
 - 11 Initial IFSP Meeting was Held - The date cannot be later than today's date.
 - 19 Child Outcomes - None of the dates (Initial/Entrance or Final/Exit) can be later than today's date.
 - 22 Exit Date - The date cannot be later than today's date.
 - 22 Exit Date - The date cannot be earlier than the Initial Referral date (field 9a).

Why the change?

Over time, we've identified several areas where our current ESR system could be enhanced to support the program's goals and improve data collection and outcome reporting.

- **Better Insight:** Updating the referral source, developmental delay, location of services, and assessment tool will allow for more meaningful analysis of the Early Start program.
- **Parent Decline box:** Historically, the "parent declined" indication box has been present above the final/exit assessment portion in section E of the ESR. An unintended outcome is that required final assessment data cannot be entered when Early Start coordinators check the "parent declined" box. This box therefore has been removed. Regional centers should continue to advise families about the importance of completing the final assessment upon the child's exit from the Early Start program.

What sections are updated in the ESR Software guide?

- Referral source (Page 11)
- Developmental Delay (Page 15)
- Natural Environments (Page 21)
- Child Outcomes (Page 23)
- Final Disposition Definitions (Pages 27-29)
- ESR FAQs (Pages 55-60)

Additional resources – Child Outcomes

- <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/videos.asp>

Regional centers should review the changes in the ESR Software Guide and prepare accordingly. Your prompt attention and cooperation are essential to improving data collection and quality.

For further information on these modifications, see attached updated ESR Manual. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at ESR@dds.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by:

MARICRIS ACON
Deputy Director
Children, Adolescents and Young Adult Services Division

Attachment

cc: Regional Center Administrators
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services
Regional Center Community Services Directors
Association of Regional Center Agencies