

Interventions to improve functional outcomes in cerebral palsy

SETTING FUNCTIONAL GOALS

Guidelines for clinicians working with children and young people with CP

Setting meaningful goals is best practice when working with children and young people with cerebral palsy. Intervention should begin with setting client-centred, functional goals that will be the focus of intervention.

GOALS SHOULD BE ...

CHOSEN BY THE CLIENT

Time should be spent understanding what is important to the child, and setting functional goals that focus on improving the child's ability to participate in activities that are most important to them. If the child is unable to identify or articulate their own goals, families should be encouraged to set goals considering the child's preferences and interests. If children and families do not identify goals, therapists may support goals that focus on improving outcomes.

FUNCTIONAL

Functional goals are goals that reflect real-life tasks such as the ability to get in and out of bed, put a t-shirt on or ride a bike. Functional goals are not goals that focus on underlying impairments such as improving strength, sensory processing or joint range. It may be important to break down long-term goals into smaller, more achievable functional goals.

SPECIFIC

Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART). Goals should be well-defined, incremented according to the child's ability and progress. A realistic timeframe within which goals may be achieved should be set. A plan for how the goals will be achieved is an important consideration when setting achievable goals.

SET AS A TEAM

When children are engaged with multiple health professionals it is important to set goals and plan for intervention as a team, with the child and family as active members of the team. Setting a small number of team goals (2-4) means that practice can be targeted and achievable, and the child and family are less likely to feel overwhelmed with the number of recommendations being made.

AFTER GOALS HAVE BEEN SET ...



A plan for how the goals may be achieved should be collaboratively set with the child and family



A copy of the goals should be given to the family. This should include the timeframe within which goals will be reviewed



Goals should be measured at the beginning and the end of the intervention, using tools such as the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure or Goal Attainment Scale. Goals should be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant to changes in the child's preferences and abilities.