



## Research Snapshot No.16

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### **Child-led goal setting and evaluation tools for children with a disability: A scoping review**

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#### ***What you need to know?***

The paper focuses on child-led goal setting tools for children with disabilities or developmental delays aiming “to enhance children's active participation in goal setting within developmental therapy or rehabilitation contexts.”

The study was motivated by the recognition that children with disabilities and developmental delays (and then as adults):

- experience barriers to their participation in goal setting. This can have long impacts on participation and autonomy, self-concept, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, and therefore their capacity for self-determination.
- regularly and frequently are involved in formal and informal goal setting experiences in multiple settings, more often than children without disability and delays, and
- are continually having decisions made for them by many people (family, care givers, intervention and education providers) and they have little involvement or say.

#### ***What is this research about?***

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- What published evidence is there of the characteristics of child-led tools or approaches being used during goal setting and evaluation?
- What are the clinimetric properties and clinical utility of tools used for goal setting and evaluation with a child self-respondent?

This paper recognises that:

- person-centred care frameworks evidenced in adult research literature suggest children should be actively involved in goal setting and informs how children can be involved,

- we should consider the unique needs of children particularly as their skills are evolving,
- evidence-based clinical guidelines support goal setting practices that are collaborative, involve child and family and direct interventions towards meaningful areas for children and their families, and
- child-led goal setting has the potential to positively influence the child–practitioner relationship and, because the goals have personal value for the child, to improve self-efficacy, engagement, and outcomes.

### ***What did the researchers do?***

The researchers conducted a scoping review guided by the JBI manual for evidence synthesis and reported according to the PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews guidelines. Six electronic databases were searched and reviewed to identify relevant studies for the children aged less than 18 years.

Data extraction and synthesis were performed to classify tools and approaches and then later, to develop a framework for the child-led goal setting and evaluation tool / approach.

An abductive qualitative content analysis approach was applied to data synthesis, which included:

- an inductive phase (to identify and classify tools and approaches reported in the published literature)
- followed by a deductive phase (to categorize these data using existing goal setting theory and author clinical experience, to develop a framework that could be applied in clinical practice.)

### ***What did the researchers find?***

The researchers found:

- Fifty articles met the inclusion criteria - children as self-respondents during at least one phase of goal setting and evaluation.
- Three approaches and four tools for child-led goal setting and evaluation were identified.
  - Child-led goal setting and evaluation approaches: ENGAGE approach, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), “Personalised goals for positive behaviour support”.
  - Child-led goal setting and evaluation tools: Canadian Occupation Performance Measure (most frequent), Goal Attainment Scale, KID'EM, Perceived Efficacy and Goal Setting System(PEGS).
- No studies reported the clinimetric properties of tools specifically for child self-responders.
- Qualitative analysis revealed six distinct goal phases used in tools and approaches.  
The six distinct goal phases were synthesized into a new framework for child-led goal setting and evaluation titled DECIDE:

1. Direct children to goal setting;
  2. Elicit goal topics and priorities;
  3. Construct a goal statement;
  4. Indicate baseline goal performance;
  5. Develop an action plan to address the goal; and
  6. Evaluate goal progress after the intervention.
- Goal setting and evaluation with children should be considered as a multi-phase process.

### ***How can you use this research?***

This research is relevant to any person in any role involved in early childhood intervention, rehabilitation, early childhood education, support in schools, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), research, policy making, including parents and carers, in any setting where goals are being developed for children of all ages. It can be used to:

- guide clinicians and researchers in implementing child-led goal setting in early childhood intervention
- build on what we know about how we should implement child lead / child voice practices
- consider the implications of goal setting strategies across every phase of service delivery
- evaluate the DECIDE framework as a tool to help structure the goal setting process and ensure that children are actively involved.

### ***Where to from here?***

This is an opportunity to consider:

- how practitioners, teachers, policy makers and planners can involve children when making overarching plans at the start of a service and for plan periods,
- how practitioners and teachers can involve children when planning and evaluating service or session goals and strategies,
- the impact of building children's capacity to be able to have a say in setting their own goals on their health, wellbeing, safety, independence, autonomy, social engagement, behaviour, future learning and employment outcomes, and
- how to address the unique needs of children of all ages as well as supporting their skills to develop their goal setting skills.

### ***About the researchers***

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### ***Citation***

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**This Research Snapshot was prepared by Kerry Dominish, PRECI committee member, Speech Pathologist (BAppSci[SP]) and CEO for EarlyEd early childhood intervention service for the last 12 years.**

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*In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*