



# Outcomes that Matter™ for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

*Leon C. Fulcher & Thom Garfat*

There is a growing expectation that service providers demonstrate accountability and achieve specific outcomes. The authors combine the Circle of Courage and the Search Institute Assets models to record developmental outcomes.

Outcomes measurement has become a contemporary requirement for non-profit, government, and private sector child, youth, and family service providers throughout North America

(Stuart, 2008) as well as in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. Cost-effectiveness, care planning, service evaluations, and fiscal audits are now commonplace with efforts to improve out-of-home care, education, and treatment outcomes.

## ***Outputs and Outcomes***

This *Outcomes Agenda* now requires that human services achieve targeted outcomes with those whom they serve. However, care *outputs* are frequently confused with care *outcomes*. In their survey of

Welfare and Family Service Agencies across Canada, Farris-Manning and Zandstra (2003) found that only half “have systematic processes for integrating results of their own outcomes evaluation and needs assessments into practice” (Stevenson & Balla, 2003, p. 9).

Care outputs are commonly required by government agencies responsible for providing or contracting services for young people in out-of-home care (Fulcher, 2002). These *corporate parents* rarely have direct contact with children and young people in out-of-home care, although some attempts are made to achieve such contact through youth-in-care forums.

By contrast, care outcomes involve developmental achievements shaped through relationships with children and young people in out-of-home placement. This distinction is illustrated with pre-school children attending child care centres. A care output may require that all children receive nutritional lunches. A care outcome might focus on whether this particular child learns to feed him or herself using a spoon (Fulcher & Garfat, 2008).

## **Developmental Outcomes**

*Policy outcomes* are commonly pursued by government bodies seeking annual assurances that public funding is achieving targeted goals and policy objectives. Fewer attempts are made, however, to monitor *developmental outcomes* achieved by children and young people in out-of-home care, but these are the outcomes that really matter. Most contemporary efforts still rely on anecdotal case studies or are tagged on to service evaluations.

The *Outcomes that Matter™* recording instrument can be used with young people and their families to monitor weekly achievements in out-of-home care. The Recording Instrument is organised around the Circle of Courage developmental needs of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002) and draws from research carried out by the Search Institute with over three million young people and then adapted with permission for use with children and young people in out-of-home care (Fulcher, McGladdery, & Vicary, 2011).

### **Sample Recording Instrument**

## **OUTCOMES THAT MATTER FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE**

**Name of Young Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Carer Recorder:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Recording:** Week Ending \_\_\_\_\_

**Highlight of the Week:** (Reflecting back on the week, what stands out for you or the young person?)

**Critical Incidents or Significant Events:** (Note any that have occurred)

**Any Contact with Birth Family Members and/or Significant Others:** (Who and When?)

## How has the young person participated with completion of this recording?

Participated Fully	An Active Interest	Some Participation	Declined Participation	Not Possible
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Read each statement, then reflect back over the past week and write 2-3 lines about a particular episode where this outcome was or was not being achieved. Outcomes around the young person (External) are identified with **(E)** while Internalised Outcomes are identified with **(I)**. Once a comment or note has been entered, then place an 'X' beside one of the 6 boxes that reports what you and the young person (if possible) agree happened every day last week (**Achieving**); most days (**Mostly Achieving**); about half the time (**Some Achieving**); not very often (**A Little Achieving**); or it just wasn't happening (**Not Achieving**). Use **Not Recorded** if there was a reason why that outcome was not recorded this week, and then give the reason.

### **BELONGING**

(E) Safety: \_\_\_\_\_ (Young Person's Name) \_\_\_\_\_ has been safe in a variety of ways where he/she lives, at school, and in his/her neighbourhood.

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Achieving	Mostly Achieving	Some Achieving	A Little Achieving	Not Achieving	Not Recorded
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*Each of the following Outcomes statements are addressed in a similar fashion to the one above. First the designated carer provides a two- to three-line narrative that offers a word picture capturing an episode in the daily life approach to caring. This is followed by a reflective judgment using the Likert (Achieving) Scale*

*provided, indicating how often during the past 7 days something may have been noted with each designated outcome. There are 10 External Outcomes designated with (E) and 10 Internal Outcomes that are designated with (I).*

(E) Positive Communication: \_\_\_\_\_ and his/her carers listened to and talked with each other, sought help, advice, guidance, and/or representation as appropriate.

(E) Caring Relationships: \_\_\_\_\_ was offered, received, and accepted support from birth family members, personal carers, and other significant adults.

(E) Carer Support: \_\_\_\_\_ received personal time, physical care, and encouragement and demonstrated a sense of belonging with others in her/his living environment.

(E) Boundaries for Daily Living: \_\_\_\_\_ received consistent supervision and his/her whereabouts were monitored according to reasonable behaviour guidelines.

### **MASTERY**

(I) Actively Engaged in Learning: \_\_\_\_\_ got personally involved in learning activities made available at school, in work experiences, or in other activities which further developed her/his life skills.

(E) Supportive Environments: Relationships with teachers, activity leaders, and peers offered \_\_\_\_\_ security, encouragement, and nurturing that stimulated his/her learning and skill achievements.

(E) Carer's Involvement in Learning: Carers actively supported \_\_\_\_\_ to succeed in school, in work experiences, and with other learning opportunities at home or elsewhere.

(I) Motivation to Achieve: \_\_\_\_\_ did his/her best to learn and to master new life skills or to realise personal goals.

(I) Making Use of Learning Opportunities and Homework: \_\_\_\_\_ participated in learning activities at home or elsewhere and also completed and submitted school homework on time.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

(I) Planning and Decision-Making: \_\_\_\_\_ exercised positive planning, chose from a number of options, and attempted to solve his/her problems.

(I) Personal Power: \_\_\_\_\_ expressed her/his feelings in a manner that took account of others and s/he was able to have a say over things that happened in her/his life.

(I) Responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrated age-appropriate self-care, awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and acceptance of personal responsibility for his/her actions.

(E) Activity Programmes: \_\_\_\_\_ participated in two or more structured community activities, hobbies, interests, clubs, or societies during the past week.

(I) Positive View of Personal Future: \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrated a positive awareness of his/her culture or spiritual identity, found the world interesting and enjoyable, showed that he/she has a place in it, and demonstrated optimism about the future.

## **GENEROSITY**

(E) Service to Others: \_\_\_\_\_ engaged in specific opportunities to help others in his/her daily living environment, in his/her neighbourhood, or in the wider community.

(I) Peaceful Conflict Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_ sought to resolve potential conflicts through compromise without physical aggression or resorting to hurtful action or language.

(I) Caring: \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrated the extent to which she/he places high value on helping others and considering the needs of others.

(I) Honesty: \_\_\_\_\_ showed that he/she can tell the truth even when it's not easy.

(E) High Expectations: Carer(s) and others encouraged \_\_\_\_\_ to do her/his best at school, at work, or in other activities, and offered her/him recognition for doing so.

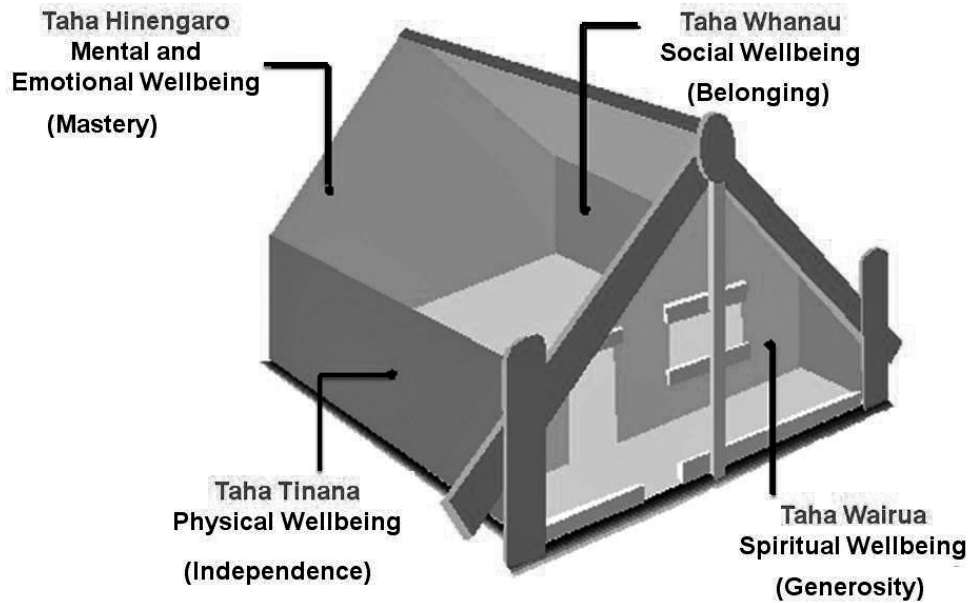
## **Overall Development**

The Circle of Courage concepts are universal and consistent with key developmental goals across many diverse cultures. For example, *Hauora* is a Maori philosophy of health and well-being that originated in New Zealand. It comprises *taha whanau* (wider family connections), *taha hinengaro* (capacity to learn and to communicate thoughts and feelings), *taha tinana* (physical growth and development toward autonomy), and *taha wairua* (ca-

capacity for happiness, faith, a sense of purpose, and considering the needs of others). Each dimension influences and supports the others.

Dr. Mason Durie's *Hauora Whare Tapawha Model* symbolically represents *hauora* as the four walls of a whare, or ancestral house, with each wall representing a different dimension. All four dimensions are deemed essential for strength and longevity. (Adapted from Durie, 1994, p. 70). See figure 1.

**Figure 1**



Reflecting back over the past week, what might be added about each dimension of this young person’s developing health and well-being, and about his/her developing sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity?

***Caring and Sharing within Wider Family Connections (Belonging)***

***Capacity to Learn and Communicate Thoughts and Feelings (Mastery)***

***Physical Growth and Development toward Self-Care and Autonomy, including Health & Dental Care (Independence)***

***Capacity for Happiness, Faith, a Sense of Purpose, and Attending to the Needs of Others (Generosity)***

<b>Completed By:</b> Designated Carer(s) (print name)	<b>Seen and reviewed by:</b> Care Supervisor or Social Worker(print name)
Signature(s)	Signature(s)
Date:	Date:

## Outcomes that Matter Achievement Profiles

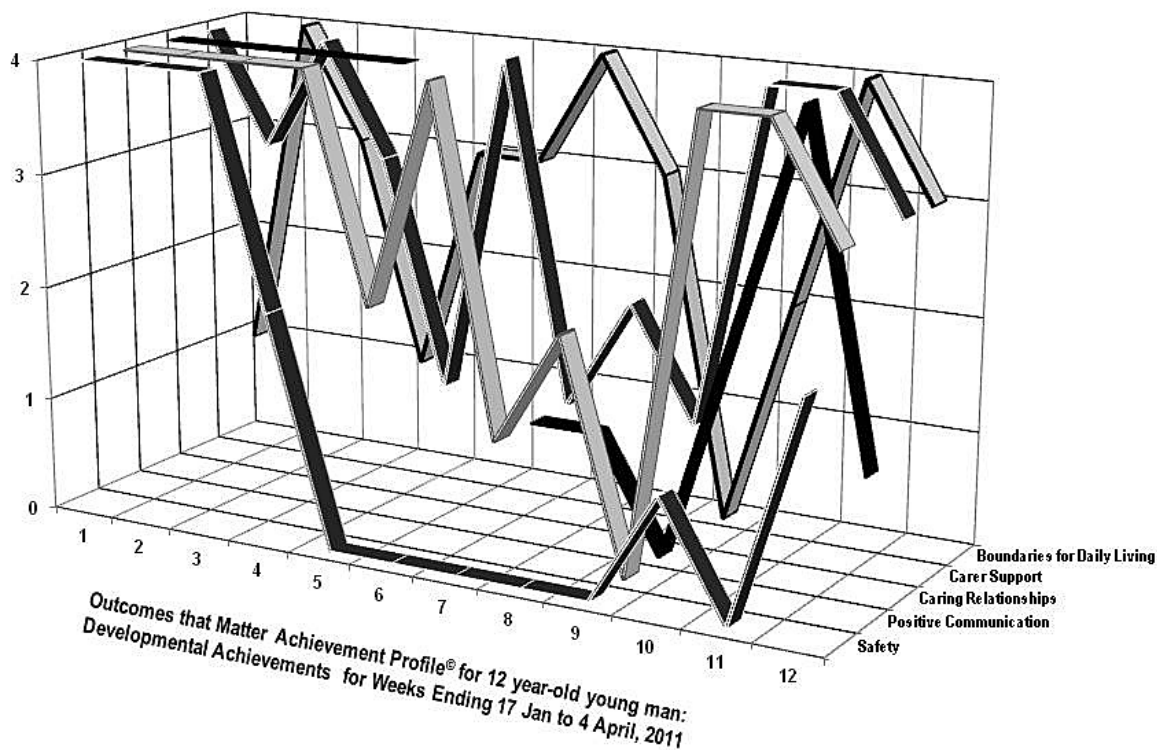
Weekly *Outcomes that Matter* recordings make it possible to plot visual achievement profiles for each young person in out-of-home care. A young person's profile might look, for example, like the following achievement profile generated for a 12-year-old boy over the course of 12 weeks of his 20-week out-of-home placement. See graph below.

Information recorded by designated carers for each developmental outcome associated with belonging aids in planning by helping to identify patterns or erratic achievements around each Outcome that Matters. In the profile below, one sees how safety was compromised for this young man from week 5. Safety in the placement was compromised following an accident involving a younger birth family member who was hit by a stone thrown by this foster child while playing outdoors. Thereafter, this young man's sense of belonging diminished in ways noted

around lack of positive communication, disrupted caring relationships, erratic support, and challenging boundary issues. By week 12 in this achievement profile, the placement had disrupted and an alternative placement was required.

*Outcomes that Matter* recordings assist carers in their direct work with young people and family members by moving from traditional descriptive recordings to accounts which capture word-picture episodes in the daily life-space of caring. Such episodes are relational and offer important accounts of what is happening between a young person and his/her carers. The *Outcomes that Matter Achievement Profiles*® assist carers and others to monitor young persons' achievements and to target initiatives which will enhance care planning. *Outcomes that Matter* recordings help to better inform and facilitate team parenting, providing focus for everyone working together with purpose—including family members—to support and nurture this young person's health and well-being.

## Belonging



■ Safety □ Positive Communication ■ Caring Relationships ■ Carer Support □ Boundaries for Daily Living

Outcomes that Matter encourage closer exploration of achievements that are located around the young person, referred to here as external outcomes. Carers are also encouraged to monitor and intentionally nurture internal outcomes through achievements that children and young people internalise for use in their daily interactions with others. Better care and education plans are thus facilitated and the quality of developmental care provided for children and young people in out-of-home care—as well as in-home care—is enhanced. Additional learning can be found for each of the 20 Outcomes that Matter by clicking on the Learning Zone tab at *The International Child and Youth Care Network* ([www.cyc-net.org](http://www.cyc-net.org)). There, carers and teachers can access 20 online modules that assist those seeking to use the Outcomes that Matter recording instrument.

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