



Parents as Teachers Technical Assistance Brief

Guidance for Family-Centered Assessment

This is part of a series of Technical Assistance Briefs published by the Parents as Teachers national office designed to address emerging issues around the Parents as Teachers evidence-based model. These briefs are informed by research and evaluation findings, technical assistance efforts, feedback from stakeholders, and discussion within Parents as Teachers learning communities.

What information will I find in this brief?

The purpose of this TA Brief is to provide guidance on conducting family centered assessment as a part of providing high quality Parents as Teachers services. This information is meant to enhance the guidance found in the Model Implementation Guide.

What is the overall purpose of family-centered assessment within Parents as Teachers?

Family-centered assessment gives parent educators a snapshot of the family; a picture that helps the parent educator plan and deliver services. This allows the parent educator to document and synthesize the family's strengths, the factors that promote resilience and well-being, and the family's goal-setting priorities.

How do parent educators conduct family-centered assessment?

Parent educators use a family-centered assessment as a way to gather and document information about the family. This is conducted in a collaborative, respectful manner and is documented with an approved family-centered assessment instrument. The result is a strengths-based snapshot of the family which offers the parent educator and family an opportunity to recognize and leverage these strengths to build up the areas of need. It also allows the parent educator to partner with caregivers in planning service delivery, facilitating goal-setting, and making connections to resources. A strengths-based look at the family at one moment in time helps the parent educator get a sense of the family's personal resources and then helps the family use them to fulfill their collective goals. Some tools are designed to be used to track the family's progress toward goals, but this is not required.

Parent educators complete and document a family-centered assessment within 90 days of enrollment for families and at least annually thereafter. Parents as Teachers affiliates may choose to complete the family-centered assessment earlier and/or more often; affiliates should be mindful of the tool developer's guidance with regard to the frequency. It is important that the assessment is completed and documented with all families served by your affiliate, regardless of their needs characteristics, to facilitate goal-setting with each family.

What does a family-centered assessment cover?

At minimum, the family-centered assessment covers the family's strengths, resources, and needs in each of the following seven areas:

- > Parenting (e.g. parent knowledge, capacity, parenting practices, and parent-child relationship)
- > Family relationships and formal & informal support systems
- > Parent educational and vocational information
- > Parent general health
- > Parent & child access to medical care, including health insurance coverage



- > Adequacy and stability of income for food, clothing, and other expenses
- > Adequacy and stability of housing

To ensure that your approach to family-centered assessment is sufficiently comprehensive, your strategy may include gathering information from an existing tool and/or set of approved assessment questions covering the required areas listed above ensuring that the information is documented and/or viewable in one place. It is critical that your approach to assessment is strengths-based, collaborative, respectful of families' cultural background, and universally applied. In addition to the areas listed on the previous page, you are strongly encouraged to gather information about broader contextual factors that influence family and child well-being, including neighborhood and community factors (i.e. environment, safety, transportation, social connections, etc.).

Please note: The information gathered in the areas outlined above should be integrated with the child's developmental, health, vision and hearing screenings to gain a full understanding of the family's strengths, resources and needs.

Selecting a Family-Centered Assessment Tool

Parents as Teachers does not require the use of a single tool across all affiliates recognizing that each has individual needs and serves different communities. Parents as Teachers conducts regular reviews of family-centered assessment instruments in the field; if there is a tool that is not on the list in this brief, please contact your technical assistance provider at the national office to begin the review approval process.

Appendix A of the Quality Assurance Guidelines provides information about a sampling of instruments that are currently used in the field which cover all seven required areas. This is not an exhaustive list of family-centered assessment instruments and inclusion on this list does not constitute a recommendation by Parents as Teachers.

Before deciding on a family-centered assessment tool to use, affiliate supervisors and staff will need to carefully review instruments and consider the fit with program goals and with the families they serve. We encourage affiliates to consider how the assessment will be perceived by your families, especially with regard to cultural fit. Consider how parent educators will use the tool collaboratively with families to facilitate goal-setting and plan service delivery. We encourage Parents as Teachers affiliates to contact their technical assistance providers to discuss their family-centered assessment needs.

Please note: Family-centered assessment is a strategy for structuring and documenting discussions with families to recognize factors that promote their resilience, well-being, and facilitate goal setting. As such, family centered assessment tools used by affiliates are not required to have established research reliability and/or validity.



Family-Centered Assessment Tools that Align with Parents as Teachers Required Areas (see Appendix A of the Quality Assurance Guidelines for additional details)

Life Skills Progression (LSP): The LSP is a family-centered assessment instrument designed for use by programs serving families with children ages 0-5 years. There are 43 parent and child scales that describe a spectrum of skills and abilities that monitor client strengths and needs. The assessment is conducted through observation and semi-structured interviews with the parent(s). It is recommended by the LSP developers that it be completed within 60 days of enrollment but preferably within 30 days. Additionally, the LSP is easy to use taking a maximum of 10 minutes to complete.

Family Map: The Family Map is a comprehensive family-centered assessment instrument designed for use by programs serving families with children ages 0-5 years. The main premise of the Family Map is to improve family partnership by learning about each family's strengths and needs as well as the resources that will be most helpful. The instrument is conducted through a structured interview with the parent(s) which takes about two hours.

North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for General Services: The North Carolina Family Assessment Scale for General Services is a family assessment tool that has been designed and tested for use with families having children and youth 0-18 years. It can therefore be used by a wide variety of programs. The tool covers the domains of environment, parental capabilities, family interactions, family safety, child well-being, social/community life, and family health. The assessment is easy to use and conducted through a combination of observations and semi-structured interviews with the parent(s). It takes about 40 minutes to complete.

Mid America Head Start Family Assessment: The Mid America Head Start Family Assessment is designed for use by programs serving families with children 0-5 years. It is a tool that assists parent educators in getting to know families, identify any supports needed, and establish goals with families. It is a matrix based management system that plots families on a five-point assessment system of thriving, developing, stable, at-risk and, in-crisis. The assessment is conducted through a combination of observations and semi-structured interviews with the parent(s).

If the family-centered assessment tool your affiliate uses is not listed here, please contact your technical assistance provider at the Parents as Teachers National Center.