

Individual Strengths

This domain describes the assets of the individual that can be used to advance healthy development. It is important to remember that strengths are NOT the opposite of needs. Increasing an individual's strengths while also addressing his or her behavioral/emotional needs leads to better functioning, and better outcomes, than does focusing just on the individual's needs. Identifying areas where strengths can be built is a significant element of service planning.

In these items the 'best' assets and resources available to the individual are rated based on how accessible and useful those strengths are. These are the only items that use the Strength Rating Scale with action levels.

For Individual Strengths, the following categories and action levels are used:

0 = Well-developed or centerpiece strength; may be used as a protective factor and a centerpiece of a strength-based plan.

1 = A domain where a useful strength is evident but require some effort to maximize the strength. Strength might be used and built upon in treatment.

2 = A domain where strengths have been identified but require significant strength building efforts before it can be effectively utilized as part of a plan.

3 = A domain in which no current strength is identified; efforts are needed to identify potential strengths.

Question to Consider for this Domain: What are the individual's assets that can be used in treatment planning to support healthy development? **Please rate the highest level from the past 30 days.**

21. FAMILY SUPPORT - This item refers to the presence of a sense of family identity as well as love and communication among family members. Even families who are struggling often have a firm foundation that consists of a positive sense of family and strong underlying love and commitment to each other. These are the constructs this strength is intended to identify. As with Family Relationships, the definition of family comes from the individual's perspective (i.e., who the individual describes as his/her family). If you do not know this information, then we recommend a definition of family that includes biological/adoptive relatives and their significant others with whom the individual is still in contact.

Questions to Consider

- How do family members communicate with each other?
- How do family members show support for each other in the family?
- Is there a family member that the individual can go to in time of need for support? That can advocate for the individual?
- Is there potential to develop positive family relationships

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Family has one or more strong supportive relationships where communication is effective.
- 1** Family has one or more supportive relationships, and/or communication is good.
- 2** Strength building is required to develop more supportive relationships and/or strengthen the family's ability to communicate.
- 3** No evidence of any family relationships as a strength at this time or the individual has no identified family, or the family requires significant assistance to develop supportive relationships and their ability to communicate.

22. INTERPERSONAL - This item is used to identify an individual's social and relationship skills. Interpersonal skills are rated independently of Social Functioning because an individual can have social skills but still struggle in his or her relationships at a particular point in time. This strength indicates an ability to make and maintain long-standing relationships.

Questions to Consider

- Does the individual have the trait ability to make friends?
- Do you feel that the individual is pleasant and likeable?
- Do adults or other individuals like him/her?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Significant interpersonal strengths. Individual has well-developed interpersonal skills and healthy friendships.
- 1** Individual has good interpersonal skills and has shown the ability to develop healthy friendships.
- 2** Mild level of interpersonal strengths. Individual requires strength building to learn to develop good interpersonal skills and/or healthy friendships.
- 3** There is no evidence of observable interpersonal skills or healthy friendships at this time and/or individual requires significant help to learn to develop interpersonal skills and healthy friendships.

23. OPTIMISM - This refers to the individual's orientation toward the future.

Questions to Consider

- Does s/he have a generally positive outlook on things; have things to look forward to?
- How does s/he see her/himself in the future?
- Is s/he forward looking and see her/him as likely to be successful?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual has a strong and stable optimistic outlook for his/her future.
- 1** Individual is generally optimistic about his/her future.
- 2** Individual has difficulty maintaining a positive view of him/herself and his/her life. Individual's outlook may vary from overly optimistic to overly pessimistic.
- 3** There is no evidence of optimism at this time and/or individual has difficulties seeing positive aspects about him/herself or his/her future.

24. EDUCATIONAL - This item is used to evaluate the nature of the school's relationship with the individual and family, as well as, the level of support the individual receives from the school.

Questions to Consider

- Is the school an active partner in the individual's education?
- Is the individual's school an active partner in figuring out how to best meet the individual's needs?
- Does s/he like school?
- Has there been at least one year in which s/he did well in school?
- When has the individual been at her/ his best in school?

Ratings & Definitions

- NA** Individual is not in school.
- 0** The school is an effective advocate on behalf of the individual and family to identify and successfully address the individual's educational needs, or, the individual excels in school.
- 1** The school works with individual and family to identify and address the individual's educational needs, or, the individual performs adequately in school.
- 2** The school is currently unable to adequately address the individual's academic or behavioral needs.
- 3** There is no evidence of the school working to identify or successfully address the individual's needs at this time and/or the school is unable and/or unwilling to work to identify and address the individual's needs and/or there is no school to partner with at this time.

25. VOCATIONAL - This item is used to refer to the strengths of the school/vocational environment and may or may

not reflect any specific educational/work skills possessed by the individual.

Questions to Consider

- Has the individual ever worked or is s/he developing vocational skills?
- Does s/he have plans to go to college or vocational school, or for a career?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** This level indicates an individual who is employed and is involved with a work environment that appears to exceed expectations. Job is consistent with developmentally appropriate career aspirations.
 - 1** This level indicates an individual who is working, however, the job is not consistent with developmentally appropriate career aspirations.
 - 2** This level indicates an individual who is temporary unemployed. A history of consistent employment should be demonstrated and the potential for future employment without the need for vocational rehabilitation should be evidenced. This also may indicate an individual with a clear vocational preference.
 - 3** This level indicates an individual who is unemployed and has no clear vocational aspirations or a plan to achieve these aspirations. This level indicates an individual with no known or identifiable vocational skill and no expression of any future vocational preferences.
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26. COPING AND SAVORING SKILLS - This rating should be based on the psychological strengths that the individual might have developed including both the ability to enjoy positive life experiences and manage negative life experiences. This should be rated independent of the individual's current level of distress.

Questions to Consider

- How does the individual handle stress and disappointment?
- How does the individual respond when good things happen to him/her?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual with exceptional psychological strengths. Both coping and savoring skills are well developed.
 - 1** Individual with good psychological strengths. The person has solid coping skills for managing distress or solid savoring skills for enjoying pleasurable events.
 - 2** Individual with limited psychological strengths. For example, a person with very low self-esteem would be rated here.
 - 3** Individual with no known or identifiable psychological strengths. This may be due to intellectual impairment or serious psychiatric disorders.
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27. TALENTS AND INTERESTS - This item refers to hobbies, skills, artistic interests and talents that are positive ways that young people can spend their time, and also give them pleasure and a positive sense of self.

Questions to Consider

- What does the individual do with free time?
- What does s/he enjoy doing?
- Is s/he engaged in any pro-social activities?
- What are the things that the individual does particularly well?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual has a talent that provides him/her with pleasure and/or self-esteem.
 - 1** Individual has a talent, interest, or hobby that has the potential to provide him/her with pleasure and self-esteem.
 - 2** Individual has expressed interest in developing a specific talent, interest or hobby even if he/she has not developed that talent to date.
 - 3** There is no evidence of identified talents, interests or hobbies at this time and/or individual requires significant assistance to identify and develop talents and interests.
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28. SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS - This item refers to the individual's (and family's) experience of receiving comfort

and support from religious or spiritual involvement. This item rates the presence of beliefs that could be useful to the individual; however an absence of spiritual/ religious beliefs does not represent a need for the family.

Questions to Consider

- Does the individual have spiritual beliefs that provide comfort?
- Is the family involved with any religious community? Is the individual involved?
- Is individual interested in exploring spirituality?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual is involved in and receives comfort and support from spiritual and/or religious beliefs, practices and/or community.
- 1** Individual is involved in and receives some comfort and/or support from spiritual and/or religious beliefs, practices and/or community.
- 2** Individual has expressed some interest in spiritual or religious belief and practices.
- 3** There is no evidence of identified spiritual or religious beliefs, nor does the individual show any interest in these pursuits at this time.

Supplemental Information: Vocational, Talents/Interests, and Spiritual/Religious, have been found to be the three best predictors for positive outcomes for individual involved in the mental health and juvenile justice systems. Individual who had strengths in these areas were less likely to be rearrested than those who did not.

29. COMMUNITY LIFE - This item reflects the individual’s connection to people, places or institutions in his or her community. Community connections are different from how the individual functions in the community. An individual’s connection to the community is assessed by the degree to which the individual is involved with the institutions of that community which may include, but are not limited to, community centers, little league teams, jobs, after school activities, religious groups, etc. Connections to a community through specific people (i.e. friends and family) could be considered an important community connection if many people who are important to the individual live in the same neighborhood.

Questions to Consider

- Does the individual feel like s/he is a part of a community?
- Are there activities that the individual does in the community?
- Are the individual active in the community?
- Is the individual a member of a community organization or group?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual is well integrated into his/her community. S/he is a member of community organizations and has positive ties to the community.
- 1** Individual is somewhat involved with his/her community.
- 2** Individual has an identified community but has only limited, or unhealthy, ties to that community.
- 3** There is no evidence of an identified community of which s/he is a member at this time.

30. RELATIONSHIP PERMANENCE - This rating refers to the stability and consistency of significant relationships in the individual's life. This likely includes family members but may also include other adults or peers.

Questions to Consider

- Does the individual see both parents regularly?
- Has anyone consistently been in the individual’s life since birth?
- Has the individual been in multiple home placements?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** This level indicates an individual who has very stable relationships. Family members, friends, and community have been stable for most of his/her life and are likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Individual is involved with both parents.
- 1** This level indicates an individual who has had stable relationships but there is some concern about instability in the near future (one year) due to transitions, illness, or age. A stable relationship with only one parent may be rated here.
- 2** This level indicates an individual who has had at least one stable relationship over his/her lifetime but has experienced other instability through factors such as divorce, moving, removal from home, and death.
- 3** This level indicates an individual who does not have any stability in relationships. Independent living or adoption must be considered.

31. INDIVIDUAL INVOLVEMENT WITH CARE - This item refers to the individual's participation in efforts to address his/her identified needs.

Questions to Consider

- Is the individual aware of his/her needs and strengths?
- How does individual understand his/her needs and challenges?
- Does the individual attend sessions willingly and participate fully?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual is knowledgeable of needs and helps direct planning to address them.
- 1** Individual is knowledgeable of needs and participates in planning to address them.
- 2** Individual is at least somewhat knowledgeable of needs but is not willing to participate in plans to address them.
- 3** Individual is neither knowledgeable about needs nor willing to participate in any process to address them.

32. NATURAL SUPPORTS - Refers to unpaid helpers in the individual's natural environment. All family members and paid caregivers are excluded.

Questions to Consider

- Who does the individual turn to for help?
- Who does the individual consider to be a support?
- Does the individual have non-family members in his/her life that are positive influences?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual has significant natural supports that contribute to helping support the individual's healthy development.
- 1** Individual has identified natural supports that provide some assistance in supporting the individual's healthy development.
- 2** Individual has some identified natural supports however s/he is not actively contributing to the individual's healthy development.
- 3** Individual has no known natural supports (outside of family and paid caregivers).

33. RESILIENCE - This item rates individual's ability to recognize his or her internal strengths and use them in times of need or to support his or her own healthy development. The concept of resiliency evaluated here is strongly related to supporting individual's problem solving, or utilizing his/her own special skills and talents to advance one's healthy development.

Questions to Consider

- What does the individual do well?
- Does s/he recognize those skills as strengths?
- Is s/he able to use strengths and problem-solve for her/himself?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** This level indicates an individual who is able to identify and use internal strengths to better him/herself and successfully manage difficult challenges.
- 1** This level indicates an individual who can identify most of his/her internal strengths and is able to partially utilize them.
- 2** This level indicates an individual who can identify internal strengths but is not able to utilize them effectively.
- 3** This level indicates an individual who cannot identify internal personal strengths.

34. RESOURCEFULNESS - This rating should be based on the individual's ability to identify and use external/environmental strengths in managing his/her life.

Questions to Consider

- How does the individual solve problems?
- What resources are available to the individual and how does s/he use them?
- How the individual get his/her needs does met?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Individual is quite skilled at finding the necessary resources required to aid him/her in his/her managing challenges.
- 1** Individual has some skills at finding necessary resources required to aid him/her in a healthy lifestyle but sometimes requires assistance at identifying or accessing these resources.
- 2** Individual has limited skills at finding necessary resources required to aid in achieving a healthy lifestyle and requires temporary assistance both with identifying and accessing these resources.
- 3** Individual has no skills at finding the necessary resources to aid in achieving a healthy lifestyle and requires ongoing assistance with both identifying and accessing these resources.