

Child Strengths

This domain describes the assets of the child that can be used to advance healthy development. It is important to remember that strengths are NOT the opposite of needs. Increasing a child’s strengths while also addressing his or her behavioral/emotional needs leads to better functioning, and better outcomes, than does focusing just on the child’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 child 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 Child 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 child’s assets that can be used in treatment planning to support healthy development? **Please rate the highest level from the past 30 days.**

37. 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 child’s perspective (i.e., who the child 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 child is still in contact.

Questions to Consider	Ratings & Definitions
→ Does the child have good relationships with any family member?	0 Family has one or more strong supportive relationships where communication is effective.
→ Is there a family member that the child can go to in time of need for support? That can advocate for the child?	1 Family has one or more supportive relationships, and/or communication is good.
→ Is there potential to develop positive family relationships?	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 child has no identified family, or the family requires significant assistance to develop supportive relationships and their ability to communicate.

38. INTERPERSONAL - This item is used to identify a child’s social and relationship skills. Interpersonal skills are rated independently of Social Functioning because a child 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 child have the trait ability to make friends?
- Do you feel that the child is pleasant and likeable?
- Do adults or other children like him/her?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Significant interpersonal strengths. Child has well-developed interpersonal skills and healthy friendships.
- 1** Child has good interpersonal skills and has shown the ability to develop healthy friendships.
- 2** Mild level of interpersonal strengths. Child 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 child requires significant help to learn to develop interpersonal skills and healthy friendships.

39. OPTIMISM - This refers to the child’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** Child has a strong and stable optimistic outlook for his/her future.
- 1** Child is generally optimistic about his/her future.
- 2** Child has difficulty maintaining a positive view of him/herself and his/her life. Child’s outlook may vary from overly optimistic to overly pessimistic.
- 3** There is no evidence of optimism at this time and/or child has difficulties seeing positive aspects about him/herself or his/her future.

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

Questions to Consider

- Is the school an active partner in the child’s education?
- Is the child’s school an active partner in figuring out how to best meet the child’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 child been at her/ his best in school?

Ratings & Definitions

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

41. 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 child.

Questions to Consider

- Does the child know what s/he wants to 'be when s/he grows up?'
- Has the youth ever worked or is s/he developing prevocational skills?
- Does s/he have plans to go to college or vocational school, or for a career?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** This level indicates a child 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 a child who is working, however, the job is not consistent with developmentally appropriate career aspirations.
- 2** This level indicates a child 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 a child with a clear vocational preference.
- 3** This level indicates a child who is unemployed and has no clear vocational aspirations or a plan to achieve these aspirations. This level indicates a child with no known or identifiable vocational skill and no expression of any future vocational preferences.

Supplemental Information: Vocational strength has been found to be one of the three best predictors for positive outcomes for mental health and juvenile justice involved youth. Children with these strengths were less likely to be rearrested than those without.

42. COPING AND SAVORING SKILLS - This rating should be based on the psychological strengths that the child might have developed including both the ability to enjoy positive life experiences and manage negative life experiences. This should be rated independent of the child's current level of distress.

Questions to Consider

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

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Child with exceptional psychological strengths. Both coping and savoring skills are well developed.
- 1** Child with good psychological strengths. The person has solid coping skills for managing distress or solid savoring skills for enjoying pleasurable events.
- 2** Child with limited psychological strengths. For example, a person with very low self-esteem would be rated here.
- 3** Child with no known or identifiable psychological strengths. This may be due to intellectual impairment or serious psychiatric disorders.

43. 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 child 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 child does particularly well?

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Child has a talent that provides him/her with pleasure and/or self-esteem.
- 1** Child has a talent, interest, or hobby that has the potential to provide him/her with pleasure and self-esteem.
- 2** Child 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 child requires significant assistance to identify and develop talents and interests.

Supplemental Information: Talents/Interests strengths have been found to be one of the three best predictors for positive outcomes for mental health and juvenile justice involved youth. Children with these strengths were less likely to be rearrested than those without.

44. SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS - This item refers to the child'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 child; however an absence of spiritual/ religious beliefs does not represent a need for the family.

Questions to Consider

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

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Child is involved in and receives comfort and support from spiritual and/or religious beliefs, practices and/or community.
- 1** Child is involved in and receives some comfort and/or support from spiritual and/or religious beliefs, practices and/or community.
- 2** Child 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 child show any interest in these pursuits at this time.

Supplemental Information: Spiritual/Religious strength has been found to be one of the three best predictors for positive outcomes for child involved in the mental health and juvenile justice systems. Children with these strengths were less likely to be rearrested than those without.

45. COMMUNITY LIFE - This item reflects the child's connection to people, places or institutions in his or her community. Community connections are different from how the child functions in the community. An child's connection to the community is assessed by the degree to which the child 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 child live in the same neighborhood.

Questions to Consider

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

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** Child is well integrated into his/her community. S/he is a member of community organizations and has positive ties to the community.
- 1** Child is somewhat involved with his/her community.
- 2** Child 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.

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

Questions to Consider

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

Ratings & Definitions

- 0** This level indicates a child 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. Child is involved with both parents.
- 1** This level indicates a child 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 a child 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 a child who does not have any stability in relationships. Family finding and/or adoption must be considered.

47. NATURAL SUPPORTS - Refers to unpaid helpers in the child’s natural environment. All family members and paid caregivers are excluded.

Questions to Consider	Ratings & Definitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Who does the child turn to for help? → Who does the child consider to be a support? → Does the child have non-family members in his/her life that are positive influences? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 Child has significant natural supports that contribute to helping support the child’s healthy development. 1 Child has identified natural supports that provide some assistance in supporting the child’s healthy development. 2 Child has some identified natural supports however s/he is not actively contributing to the child’s healthy development. 3 Child has no known natural supports (outside of family and paid caregivers).

48. RESILIENCE - This rating refers to the child or youth’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 children’s ability to problem solve for themselves or utilize their own special skills and talents to advance their healthy development.

Questions to Consider	Ratings & Definitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What does the child do well? → Does s/he recognize those skills as strengths? → Is s/he able to use strengths and problem-solve for her/himself? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 This level indicates a child who is able to identify and use internal strengths to better him/herself and successfully manage difficult challenges. 1 This level indicates a child who can identify most of his/her internal strengths and is able to partially utilize them. 2 This level indicates a child who can identify internal strengths but is not able to utilize them effectively. 3 This level indicates a child who cannot identify internal personal strengths.

49. RESOURCEFULNESS - This rating should be based on the child’s ability to identify and use external/environmental strengths in managing their lives.

Questions to Consider	Ratings & Definitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How does the child solve problems? → What resources are available to the child and how does s/he use them? → How the child get his/her needs met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 Child is quite skilled at finding the necessary resources required to aid him/her in his/her managing challenges. 1 Child 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 Child 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 Child 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.