



Choosing Between the Retrospective or the Traditional PFS-2

The Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition (PFS-2) is available as a retrospective or a traditional survey. This guide is provided to assist agencies in deciding which version of the survey is most appropriate for their program's service delivery needs. For more information, please go to the FRIENDS website (<https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>).

Background. The Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition (PFS-2) is designed for use with parents and caregivers participating in child maltreatment prevention services. The 19-item survey measures protective factors in five areas: family functioning/resilience, nurturing and attachment, social supports, caregiver/practitioner relationship, and concrete supports. The survey is available as both a retrospective and as a traditional pre-/post-test.

The retrospective PFS-2. The retrospective PFS-2 is designed to be administered only once, at the end of service delivery when a post-test would normally be administered. Participants are asked to think back and answer how they felt or what they experienced *before* they started the program* (retrospective pre-test), and then to answer based on what they feel or experience *now*, after completing the program (post-test).

The retrospective was developed largely in response to practitioner feedback and requests to address several key issues:

- ▶ Due to natural participant drop-off, collecting post-tests from participants is difficult; the retrospective is administered only once, and therefore yields a 100% match between pre- and post-tests.
- ▶ The retrospective reduces the burden on participants by requesting that they complete the PFS-2 only once, as opposed to completing separate pre- and post-tests. Similarly, this reduces the amount of time staff spend on administration and scoring.
- ▶ Surveys may be administered at any time during service provision (after a minimum of 12 hours of services) since the retrospective includes a pre-test.
- ▶ The retrospective may reduce the likelihood of response shift bias (Howard, 1980; Howard & Ralph, et al., 1979), where participants' knowledge change through the course of service delivery may result in over-rating at pre-test and thus show little to no change at post-test (Cantrell, 2003; Pratt, 2000).

*Staff may replace "program" with the term that makes the most sense for the setting (e.g. curriculum, class, group, etc.)

Considerations in choosing the retrospective PFS-2. The retrospective should only be administered after participants have received *a minimum of 12 hours* of program services. See below for a few points to consider in determining whether the retrospective PFS-2 is right for your agency's needs:

- ▶ Participants' ability to recall their feelings or experiences prior to receiving services may be influenced by the length of services; longer-term or ongoing program services may benefit from using the traditional PFS-2 to measure change over time.
- ▶ A retrospective model is subject to social desirability bias, where participants may rate themselves more highly at post-test to show positive change as a result of receiving services.
- ▶ Funders may require that program outcomes are measured using the traditional model rather than a retrospective.
- ▶ The Concrete Supports subscale is not included as a pre-test in the retrospective version of the PFS-2. Participants are asked to respond to the items in this subscale only at post-test due to the low likelihood that these responses will change over the course of shorter-term service delivery. However, this subscale is valuable in assisting with case planning with clients or conducting needs assessments. Programs using the retrospective are encouraged to administer the Concrete Supports items as a true pre-test to gain insight into participants' needs. The Concrete Supports items can be found as a standalone pre-/post-test on the FRIENDS website (<https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>).

FURTHER READING

Cantrell, P. (2003). Traditional vs. retrospective pretests for measuring science teaching efficacy beliefs in preservice teachers. *School Science and Mathematics*, 103(4), 177-185.

Howard, G. S. (1980). Response-shift bias. A problem in evaluating interventions with pre/ post self-reports. *Evaluation Review*, 4(1), 93 – 106.

Howard, G. S., Ralph, K. M., Gulanick, N. A., Maxwell, S. E., Nance, S. W., & Gerber, S. K. (1979). Internal invalidity in pre-test-post-test self-report evaluations and a re-evaluation of retrospective pre-tests. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 3, 1-23.

Pratt, C. C., McGuigan, W. M., & Katzev, A. R. (2000). Measuring program outcomes: Using retrospective pretest methodology. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 21(3), 341 – 349.

The traditional PFS-2. The traditional version of the PFS-2 is designed to be administered twice, first at the beginning of services to establish a baseline measure (pre-test), and again at the end of service delivery to measure participants' changes in protective factors (post-test).

Considerations in choosing the traditional PFS-2. Programs should consider the following points when determining whether to use the traditional version of the PFS-2:

- ▶ Longer-term programs, such as Parents as Teachers home visiting, may find the traditional model to be well-suited for ongoing data collection as new participants begin receiving services. Programs may further choose to administer a post-test *during* service provision (for example, as an interim or mid-point measure after 6 months of home visits) to determine participants' service delivery needs and adjust services as necessary.
- ▶ Since the traditional PFS-2 is administered twice, additional staff time is required for administration and scoring. Ensuring that there is sufficient time for participants to complete two surveys should be considered in the context of program or curricula duration.
- ▶ Programs may see a ceiling effect in scores due to the likelihood of participants rating themselves highly at the beginning of services (response shift bias), therefore allowing little to no room for improvement at the end of services.