



The Purpose and Use of the PFS-2

Background. The Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition (PFS-2) is designed for use with parents and caregivers participating in child maltreatment prevention services. Though there are numerous instruments designed to measure individual protective factors, the PFS-2 assesses multiple protective factors to prevent child abuse and neglect. The PFS-2 is intended to help agencies and programs better assess changes in family protective factors – a major focus of prevention work. To begin using the survey, please visit the FRIENDS website: <https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>.

Please note:

The PFS-2 was neither developed nor tested as a tool for making clinical diagnoses or for making decisions regarding out-of-home placements or legal adjudications. Agencies should rely on other instruments for clinical use.

Purpose. The primary purpose of the PFS-2 is to provide feedback to agencies for continuous improvement and evaluation purposes. Agencies may also find the survey results useful in case planning with clients or conducting needs assessments. The survey results are designed to 1) provide agencies with a snapshot of the families they serve, 2) measure changes in family protective factors, and 3) help identify areas where staff can focus on increasing protective factors for each family.

Use. A variety of programs and service types may find the PFS-2 useful, including parent education and parent support groups, planned and crisis respite, and home visiting, among others.

About the survey. The PFS-2 is a 19-item survey available as a traditional and as a retrospective (administered at the time a post-test would be given). Staff can administer the survey before, during, or after service provision to measure changes in family protective factors.

The subscales. The PFS-2 measures protective factors in five areas:

- ▶ **Family Functioning/Resilience:** Having adaptive skills and strategies to persevere in times of crisis. Family's ability to openly share positive and negative experiences and mobilize to accept, solve, and manage problems.
- ▶ **Nurturing and Attachment:** The emotional tie along with a pattern of positive interaction between the parent and child that develops over time.
- ▶ **Social Supports:** Perceived informal support (from family, friends, and neighbors) that helps provide for emotional needs.
- ▶ **Caregiver/Practitioner Relationship:** The supportive, understanding relationship between caregivers and practitioners that positively affects parents' success in participating in services.
- ▶ **Concrete Supports:** Perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.

A note about protective factors. While “Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development” and “Children’s Social/Emotional Development” are known protective factors to prevent child abuse and neglect, they are not measured by this instrument. These factors were excluded from the PFS-2 because there is reason to believe that respondents’ self-reported level of parenting and child development knowledge is not an accurate reflection of true parenting knowledge, but rather captures parenting confidence or tendency toward self-reflection – neither of which are understood to be true protective factors. We believe that parents’ knowledge and competence can be reflected in the attitudes and behaviors addressed in the other subscales. We recommend program that deliver parent education services evaluate this component of their services using a tool specific to their curriculum and content.

In addition, while the “Caregiver/Practitioner Relationship” is not often identified as a protective factor, this subscale can help service providers better assess their ability to effectively engage with caregivers, and support improved service delivery.