



# PFS-2 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This document is designed to provide clarification to some of the more frequently asked questions about the Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition (PFS-2). For questions not covered here, please contact FRIENDS National Center for CBCAP (FRIENDS@friendsnrc.org).

## **What is the cost of the PFS-2?**

You may download and use the PFS-2 free of charge. The survey and associated materials can be found on this page of the FRIENDS website: <https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>.

## **Is the PFS-2 available in other languages?**

The PFS-2 has only been validated for use in English at this time. A culturally relevant adaptation of the PFS-2 for Spanish-speaking audiences is forthcoming. A validated Spanish adaptation (S-PFS)<sup>1</sup> of the original Protective Factors Survey (PFS) is available on the FRIENDS website (<https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>).

## **Can the original PFS continue to be used?**

Yes – the original PFS continues to be a reliable and valid peer-reviewed instrument<sup>2</sup> that assesses multiple protective factors to prevent child abuse and neglect, and can continue to be used.

## **Why was the original Protective Factors Survey (PFS) revised?**

Following several years of implementation by practitioners working in the field of child maltreatment prevention, FRIENDS determined that the instrument could be revised to clarify wording and reflect a broader range of attitudes and behaviors within the subscales, especially in the areas of concrete supports and social supports. Beginning in 2014, significant research was conducted to revise and improve the existing PFS in alignment with the most current research.

The revisions made on the PFS-2 include clarifying and rewording items, minimizing cultural bias, and collapsing the response categories. In addition to the traditional version of the PFS-2, a retrospective version of the survey is available (see *Why is there a retrospective version of the PFS-2?* below for more information).

## **What is the purpose of the list of services on the 'Program Information' form of the PFS-2?**

The items about services are included so programs can track which services a participant is currently receiving through the program/agency. The program-specific and demographic items are not required for the validity of the scale; they are optional. However, we strongly recommend that the PFS-2 data be analyzed in reference to demographic data (e.g. race/ethnicity) and program data (e.g. hours of services received, types of services received). The survey items that are answered on the 5-point scale are the actual items that measure the protective factors and comprise the subscales.

<sup>1</sup>Conrad-Hiebner, A., Schoemann, A. M., Counts, J. M., & Chang, K. (2015). The development and validation of the Spanish adaptation of the Protective Factors Survey. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 52, 45-53.

<sup>2</sup>Counts, J. M., Buffington, E. S., Chang-Rios, K., Rasmussen, H. N., & Preacher, K. J. (2010). The development and validation of the protective factors survey: A self-report measure of protective factors against child maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(10), 762-772.

## **Why is there a retrospective version of the PFS-2?**

Simply put, when we don't know something, we tend to think we know more about that topic than we actually do – we don't know what we don't know. This means that it is likely that a participant may over-rate themselves when they first begin receiving services, which results in a ceiling effect at pre-test where scores are all very high and have no room for improvement. Furthermore, participants may be hesitant to answer survey questions when they first begin receiving services due to a lack of established trust with program providers, and uncertainty about how the survey information will be used; participants may over-rate themselves at pre-test to make a good impression and avoid judgment.

After receiving services, changes in respondents' knowledge or beliefs about an issue can lead them to score themselves lower on the post-test than they had on the pre-test, which can inadvertently make it appear that program services had little to no effect (response shift bias). Using a retrospective model reduces the likelihood of respondents over-rating themselves at the beginning of services, allows time for trust to be built between participants and providers, and may show more change.

This model also saves staff and participants time by administering the survey at one sitting, rather than two, and yields a 100% match between pre- and post-tests. Finally, the retrospective version offers a better solution for short-term, low-intensity services that may find collecting post-tests from participants difficult due to natural drop-off and attrition.

Due to the low likelihood that responses to the Concrete Supports subscale items will change over the course of shorter-term service delivery, the retrospective PFS-2 only measures these items at post-test. However, this subscale is valuable in assisting with case planning with clients or conducting needs assessments. Programs are encouraged to administer the Concrete Supports items as a true pre-test to gain insight into participants' needs. The Concrete Supports items are available as a stand-alone pre-/post-test and can be found on the FRIENDS website: <https://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>.

## **How long after a parent begins a program should they be given the post-test? We are an open-ended parent support program; parents sometimes participate in our program for many years.**

Agencies should take theoretical considerations (e.g. estimated time for program impact) as well as logistical details (e.g. accessibility of clients) to determine the optimal time for survey administration. Additionally, programs should bear in mind the likelihood of participant drop-off, particularly towards the end of service delivery, in determining when to administer the post-test. For example, a program that is delivering a 12-week-long parent education curriculum may choose to administer a post-test in Week 10 or 11.

Programs should also be aware that participants' abilities 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 pre- and post-test version of the PFS-2 rather than the retrospective version to measure changes in family protective factors over time.

The retrospective version of the survey should only be administered after participants have received a minimum of 12 hours of services; administering the retrospective survey with fewer than 12 hours of service delivery will likely not show change.

## **Some items refer to "family" – is there a rule about the definition of family?**

Programs are encouraged to instruct participants to construct their own definition of family based on their personal circumstances. For example, participants may include children in the household who may not be directly related to the participant, or close relatives who may or may not live with the participant.

## **Why is there no subscale to measure Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development on the PFS-2?**

Knowledge of parenting and child development is a complex construct with many different components. 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 confidence or tendency toward self-reflection – neither of which are understood to be true protective factors. Therefore, we believe that parents' knowledge and competence can be reflected in the attitudes and behaviors addressed in the other subscales. We recommend programs that deliver parent education services evaluate this component of their services using a tool specific to their curriculum and content.

## **What are the psychometric properties of the PFS-2?**

The reliability of the PFS-2 is estimated using an internal-consistency measure, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, and all five subscales demonstrate acceptable internal consistency (0.59 – 0.82). Content validity, construct validity, and criterion validity were also examined and provide evidence that the PFS-2 is a valid measure of multiple protective factors against child maltreatment. For further information about the psychometric properties of the PFS-2, please contact the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research ([cppr@ku.edu](mailto:cppr@ku.edu)).

## **Are there cutoff scores identified in the technical material?**

No, there are no cutoff scores for the PFS-2.

## What were the demographics of the populations used in the PFS-2 field tests?

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex (Female, N=902)</b>	744	82.5%
<b>Race/Ethnicity (N=939)*</b>		
Native American or Alaskan Native	38	4.0%
Asian	17	1.8%
African-American	180	19.2%
Hispanic or Latino	195	20.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0.3%
White	409	43.6%
African Nationals/Caribbean Islanders	4	0.4%
Middle Eastern	3	0.3%
Multi-racial	75	8.0%
Other	9	1.0%
<b>Family Income (N=864)*</b>		
\$0 - \$10,000	252	29.2%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	127	14.7%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	122	14.1%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	86	9.9%
\$40,001 - \$50,000	74	8.6%
More than \$50,001	197	22.8%
<b>Highest Level of Education (N=890)*</b>		
Elementary or junior high school	22	2.5%
Some high school	151	17.0%
High school diploma or GED	256	28.8%
Trade/Vocational training	28	3.2%
Some college	198	22.2%
Associate's degree	63	7.1%
Bachelor's degree	112	12.6%
Master's degree	48	5.4%
PhD or advanced degree	11	1.2%
<b>Marital Status (N=891)*</b>		
Married	348	39.1%
Partnered	123	13.8%
Single	306	34.4%
Divorced	71	8.0%
Widowed	11	1.2%
Separated	31	3.5%
<b>Housing (N=892)*</b>		
Own	288	32.3%
Rent	460	51.6%
Shared housing with relatives/friends	90	10.1%
Temporary	40	4.5%
Homeless	13	1.5%

\*Less than 1%: Prefer not to answer

\*\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding