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**CHILD  
ASSESSMENT  
REQUIREMENTS**

The child assessment of needs and strengths has separate assessments based on the age and developmental stage of the child and is used to evaluate and prioritize the needs and strengths of each child. There are four assessment tools and each is used to systematically identify critical child issues and help plan effective service interventions. DHS workers must complete the age appropriate child assessment of needs and strengths in SWSS. Child placing agencies will continue to use the age appropriate child assessment of needs and strengths template.

FC workers must engage the parents/guardian and the child, if age appropriate, in the discussion of the child's needs and strengths. The needs and strengths assessment serves several purposes:

- Ensures that all workers consistently consider each child's strengths and needs in an objective manner by the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Provides an important case planning reference tool for workers and supervisors.
- Serves as a mechanism to stimulate direct service referrals to address identified child needs.
- It ensures the family identifies and discusses the child's needs and strengths.
- When the initial assessment is followed by periodic reassessments, it serves as a mechanism for the FC workers and supervisors to assess change in child functioning and therefore, judge the impact of services on the child, while offering the parents/guardian an opportunity to reassess their child's needs and strengths.
- In the aggregate, it provides management information on the problems children face. These profiles can then be used to develop resources to meet the children's needs.

The four assessment scales for children, based on age, are as follows: ages 0 through 3 years (DHS-433), 4 through 9 (DHS-434), 10 through 13 (DHS-435) and 14 years and over (DHS-432). Items on the scales are similar but different definitions are frequently

present for different age groups. Main domains are linked to child development tables to assist the FC worker in appropriately identifying issues in development. Domains on the scales are weighted to indicate priority for service provision. The following format is used in the assessments:

- Strengths are defined as any domain scored with a positive number.
- Appropriate behavior and/or functioning is defined as any domain that is scored a “0” on the assessment. This may include instances where the child has had a prior need but has responded to treatment intervention. Items scored as “0” on the assessment may, but not have to, be considered a strength;
- A situational concern is defined as an issue identified for a child that is short term and may be in response to a recent event or change in placement or in the child’s family. Situational concerns **must not** be identified in consecutive service plan periods. If the issue persists beyond the case planning period, it would be then identified as a need.
- A need is defined as any domain scored with a negative number that is not a situational concern.

## Which Cases

All cases open for foster care services, except when the child is placed in a residential care setting and the worker **agrees** with the residential care provider’s assessment.

## Decisions

The Child Assessment of Needs and Strengths is used to identify the child’s needs and strengths, identify situational concerns and prioritize the needs that must be addressed in the Treatment Plan and Services Agreement (FOM 722-08C).

The FC worker identifies the **top three** need items (priority needs) for the child after completion of the tool as those with the highest negative point value. **Referrals for services are made in accordance with these priority needs.** If less than three needs have been assessed, it is not required to identify three priority needs.

The FC worker identifies **all** situational concerns.

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The FC worker identifies up to three strengths as scored on the assessment scale **and** any other strengths identified through the assessment process. Strength items are to be incorporated into the worker's service plan.

### When

**Prior to** completion of the written portion of the ISP and each USP or any service referrals beyond crisis intervention. The worker begins collecting information to complete the scale items through interviews with the family, the child, if old enough to be interviewed, the placement resources, collateral contacts and review of available documentation.

### Appropriate Completion

Each child is assessed, using the assessment for the child's age, completing all items on the child's assessment of needs and strengths scale. Each item is scored according to the definitions (See public Web site, WORD templates or RFF-433, 434, 435 and 432 for definitions). The form is used at both the initial assessment and all subsequent reassessments. The form has a check space and date completed space to show whether the assessment is an initial assessment or reassessment.

In cases where the parent or caretaker refuses to participate in interviews and credible information from other sources to complete an item is unavailable, the worker may enter a "US" (unable to score) on the appropriate line. This procedure is only available for use on the initial child assessment. (See FOM 722-08, Initial Service Plan Instructions for a definition of unable to locate, incarcerated and refuses participation.)

At completion of the child's assessment of needs and strengths, FC workers will identify all situational concerns and the priority needs and strengths. Narrative evidence must be provided for the scoring of every domain, regardless of whether a strength, situational concern or need is identified, in the ISP and USP, (see FOM 722-08 and FOM 722-09). Within the parent agency treatment plan & service agreement, the goals and activities for the child will address the priority items in measurable terms.

## CHILD ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AND STRENGTHS DEFINITIONS

The definitions for the child assessment of needs and strengths can be found following each respective form in the DHS public Web site and the WORD templates.

## PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

	Physical	Cognitive
<b>0-4 weeks</b>	Lifts head when on abdomen. Head momentarily to midline when on back. Equal extremity movements. Sucking reflex. Grasp reflex (no reaching, and hand usually closed). Increasing body tone and stabilization of basic body functions, growing capacity to stay awake.	Looks at face transiently. By 3 to 4 weeks, smiles selectively to mother's voice and human voice leads to quieting of cries. Cries if uncomfortable or in state of tension; undifferentiated initially, but gradually varies with cause (i.e. hungry, tired, pain).
<b>1-3 months</b>	Head to 45x when on abdomen, erect when sitting. Bears fraction of weight when held in standing position. Uses vocalizations. By 2-3 months, grasps rattle briefly. Puts hands together. By 3-4 months, many reach for objects, suck hand or fingers. Head is more frequently to midline, and comes to 90x when on abdomen. Rolls side to back.	Increased babbles and coos. Most laugh out loud, squeal and giggle. Smiles responsively to human face. Increases attention span.
<b>3-6 months</b>	Rolls from abdomen to back, then from back to abdomen. Bears increasing weight when held upright. No head lag when pulled to sitting. Head, eyes, and hands work well together to reach for toys or human face. Inspects objects with hands, eyes, mouth. Takes solid food well.	Spontaneously vocalizes vowels, consonants, a few syllables. Responds to tone and inflection of voice. Smiles at image in mirror.
<b>6-9 months</b>	Crawls with left-right alternation. Walks with support, stands momentarily and takes a few uneasy steps. Most have neat pincer grasp. Bangs together objects held in each hand. Plays pat-a-cake. 50% drink from cup by themselves.	Imitates speech sounds. Correctly uses mama/dada. Understands simple command ("give it to me"). Beginning sense of humor.

	Physical	Cognitive
<b>12-15 months</b>	Stands well alone, walks well, stoops and recovers. Neat pincer grasp. Can put a ball in a box and a raisin in a bottle. Can build a tower of two cubes. Spontaneous scribbling with palmer grasp of crayon. 50% use spoon with minimal spilling. Most drink from cup unassisted.	Three to five word vocabulary. Uses gestures to communicate. Vocalizing replaces crying for attention. Understands "no." Shakes head for no. Sense of me and mine. 50% imitate household tasks.
<b>15-18 months</b>	Runs stiffly. Walks backwards. Attempts to kick. Climbs on furniture. Crude page turning. Most use spoon well. 50% can help in little household tasks. Most can take off pieces of clothing.	Vocabulary of about ten words. Uses words with gestures. 50% begin to point to body parts. Vocalizes "no." Points to pictures of common objects (i.e., dog). Knows when something is complete such as waving bye-bye. Knows where things are or belong. More claiming of mine. Beginning distinction of you and me, but does not perceive others as individuals like self. Resistant to change in routine. Autonomy expressed as defiance. Words are not important discipline techniques.
<b>18-24 months</b>	While holding on, walks up stairs, then walks down stairs. Turns single pages. Builds tower of 4-6 cubes. Most copy vertical line. Strings beads or places rings on spindles. Helps dress and undress self. Can wash and dry hands. Most can do simple household tasks.	Markedly increased vocabulary (mostly nouns). Consistently points to body parts. Combines two to three words. Names pictures of common objects. Follows simple directions. Matches colors frequently, but uses color names randomly. Uses number words randomly. May indicate wet or soiled diapers. Asks for food or drink. Understands and asks for "another." Mimics real life situations during play. Self-centered, but distinguishes between self and others. Conscious of family group.
<b>2 Years</b>	Jumps in place with both feet. Most throw ball overhead. Can put on clothing; most can dress self with supervision. Can use zippers, buckles and buttons. Most are toilet trained. Good steering on push toys. Can carry a breakable object. Can pour from one container to another. By 30 months, alternates feet on stair climbing, pedals tricycle, briefly stands on one foot, builds eight cube tower, proper pencil grasp, imitates horizontal line.	Learns to avoid simple hazards (stairs, stoves, etc.). By 30 months, vocabulary reaches 300 words. Identity in terms of names, gender, and place in family are well established. Uses "I," but often refers to self by first name. Phrases and 3-4 word sentences. By 36 months, vocabulary reaches 1000 words, including more verbs and some adjectives. Understands big vs. little. Interest in learning, often asking, "What's that?"

	Physical	Cognitive
<b>3 Years</b>	Most stand on one foot for 4 seconds. Most hop on one foot. Most broad-jump. Toilets self during daytime. By 38 months, draws picture and names it. Draws two-part person.	Counts to three. Tells age by holding up fingers. Tells first and last name (foster children may not know last name). Most answer simple questions. Repeats three or four digits or nonsense syllables. Readiness to conform to spoken word. Understands turn-taking. Uses language to resist. Can bargain with peers. Understands long vs. short. By end of third year, vocabulary is 1500 words.
<b>4-5 Years</b>	Most hop on one foot, skip alternating feet, balance on one foot for 10 seconds, catch bounced ball, does forward heel-toe walk. Draws three-part person. Copies triangles, linear figures (may have continued difficulty with diagonals, and may have rare reversals). Most dress independently other than back buttons and shoe tying. Washes face and brushes teeth. Laces shoes.	By end of fifth year, vocabulary is over 2000 words including adverbs and prepositions. Understands opposites (day/night). Understands consecutive concepts (big, bigger, biggest). Lots of why and how questions. Correctly counts five to ten objects. Correctly identifies colors. Dogmatic and dramatic. May argue about parental requests. Good imagination. Likes silly rhymes, sound, names, etc. Beginning sense of time in terms of yesterday, tomorrow, sense of how long an hour is, etc. Increasingly elaborate answers to questions.
<b>6-11 Years</b>	Practices, refines, and masters complex gross and fine motor and perceptual skills.	Concrete operational thinking replaces egocentric cognition. Thinking becomes more logical and rational. Develops ability to understand others' perspectives.
<b>12-17 Years</b>	Physiological changes at puberty promote rapid growth, maturity of sexual organs, and development of secondary sex characteristics.	<p>In early adolescence, precursors to formal operational thinking appear, including limited ability to think hypothetically and to take multiple perspectives.</p> <p>During middle and late adolescence formal operational thinking becomes well developed and integrated in a significant percentage of adolescents.</p>