

## The Protective Factors Survey, Short Form

The **Take Root Home Visitation** (TRHV) curriculum uses the Protective Factors Survey, Short Form (PFS:SF) as part of a home visitation program's regular intake process and at 6-month intervals when families are continuing services. The PFS:SF is used in conjunction with the Family Needs Screener (FNS) to help establish priorities for Family Service Plan development.

### Background and Adaptation: Protective Factors Survey, Short Form

The Protective Factors Survey (PFS, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed.) is a publicly available pre-post instrument designed for use with programs that provide child maltreatment prevention services. It was developed and validated in national field trials by researchers at the University of Kansas, Institute for Educational Research and Public Service, and the FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. The PFS utilizes a family strengths framework that engages parents by identifying areas of strength and resilience. More detailed information about the PFS, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. and other editions is available here: <http://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>

The TRHV curriculum uses a shortened, 15-item version of the PFS, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. that maintains all four original subscales, called the Protective Factors Survey, Short Form (PFS:SF). The short form version does not include the Child Development Knowledge questions. The child development questions assess knowledge of parenting and child development but do not form a scale. Thus, these items are not included. There are no other changes. The four subscales, listed below, are identical to the full version of the PFS, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

### Subscales

This measure is designed as a pre-test post-test survey. It assesses changes in four specific protective factors that are associated with reducing risk of child maltreatment.

- **Family Functioning and Resiliency** consists of five items, such as taking time to listen to each other;
- **Social Support** consists of three items, such as having someone to talk to when problems arise;
- **Concrete Support** consists of three items, such as knowing what resources are available if there is a crisis; and
- **Nurturing and Attachment** consists of four items, such as being able to soothe ones child when he or she is upset.

### Administration and Instructions

#### Instructions

If the client has more than one child who is within the range of NPSP Services, please have him or her identify which child he or she thinks would most benefit from these services. If the client believes more than one child will benefit, this is fine; however, the HV should ask the client to focus on one child for completing the measure. This can be accomplished by asking, "What is the age and date of birth of the child you hope will benefit most from your involvement in our services?"

### ***PFS Paraphrasing and Response Choice Explanations***

Sometimes clients do not fully understand a question or are unclear how the response options fit their experiences. A HV can help clients in these situations. The PFS developers have specific guidance on how each item can be paraphrased. The paraphrasing (*in italics*) provides the specific alternative ways of phrasing each item in the PFS.

**1) In my family, we talk about problems.**

*When your family has a problem, how often does your family sit down and talk about it?*

**2) When we argue, my family listens to “both sides of the story.”**

*When there are disagreements in your family, how much of the time does each person get to share their side in an argument?*

**3) In my family, we take time to listen to each other.**

*How much of the time does your family listen to each other?*

**4) My family pulls together when things are stressful.**

*When your family is facing a hard time, how much of the time do you work together?*

**5) My family is able to solve our problems.**

*When your family has a problem, how much of the time are you able to come up with solutions?*

**6) I have others who will listen when I need to talk about my problems.**

*Do you have family, friends, neighbors, or professionals who you can tell your problems to?*

**7) When I am lonely, there are several people I can talk to.**

*Do you have family, friends, neighbors, or professionals who you can talk to when you are lonely?*

**8) I would have no idea where to turn if my family needed food or housing.**

*When you need food or housing, you don't know about any available resources.*

**9) I wouldn't know where to go for help if I had trouble making ends meet.**

*You don't know where to get assistance when you need help paying your bills.*

**10) If there is a crisis, I have others I can talk to.**

*If you are faced with an emergency or an urgent situation, you have others you can talk to.*

**11) If I needed help finding a job, I wouldn't know where to go for help.**

*I don't know where to get help when I need work.*

**12) I am happy being with my child.**

*How much of the time do you enjoy being with your child?*

**13) My child and I are very close to each other.**

*How much of the time do you feel that your relationship with your child is strong?*

**14) I am able to soothe my child when he/she is upset.**

*How much of the time are you able to calm your child down when he or she is upset?*

**15) I spend time with my child doing what he/she likes to do.**

*How often do you do activities with your child that he or she enjoys?*

There are two different response scales in the PFS. The developers have established the following guidance to help explain what the numbers represent on each scale.

**Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6** ask how often the statements are true about you. If a statement is always true about you, select a 7. If it is never true about you, select a 1. The numbers in-between should be used depending on how often the item is true about you.

**Items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11** ask how much you agree with a statement. For example, if you strongly agree with a statement because you feel the statement is very true about you, select a 7. If you strongly disagree that the statement describes you or your situation, you would select a 1. The numbers in-between should be used depending on how much you agree or disagree with the item.

**Items 12, 13, 14, and 15** ask how often the statements are true about you. If a statement is always true about you, select a 7. If it is never true about you, select a 1. The numbers in-between should be used depending on how often the item is true about you.

**Items 12-15** have a special condition attached to them and can only be asked of participants who have a child within the age range of NPSP services. These four items ask participants to focus on the child they hope will benefit most from their participation in NPSP services. You can help participants identify the target child by asking, “What child do you think will benefit most from you being here?” or “For which child were you referred for services?” Remind them that they need to provide the child’s age first before they answer the questions.

**If the client is pregnant and has no other children in the target range for NPSP services, the client will not complete items 12-15.**

In order to simplify this section for clients, two clarification questions have been added, along with a line for entering the target child’s date of birth:

PFS A: Are you currently pregnant?      YES    NO

PFS B: Do you have a child 3 yrs. or younger (5 yrs. for Marine Corps) who would benefit from our services?                              YES    NO

Child’s DOB      MONTH      YEAR

## Data Checking and Scoring

First, while you are still with the client, glance over the survey and ensure the client has completed all of the items. No one wants a surprise of missing answers when it is time to score the measure! If a client has not answered a question, ask to verify whether the client purposefully chose not to answer, or accidentally missed the question. Use your professional judgment and skills to guide an interaction regarding a missing response.

### *Missing Data Protocol*

Missing answers can affect the scoring of this measure; but remember that it is also the client's right to decline to answer a question.

- If a client declines to complete one or more single items in the PFS:SF, still complete the scoring. Directions that follow will guide you in accounting for a missing answer.

*\*\*Remember, if the parent is currently pregnant and has no other children, items 12-15 cannot and should not be completed. This also means that such a client would not have a score for the Nurturing and Attachment subscale.\*\**

Each PFS:SF subscale can only have one (1) missing item and still calculate a valid subscale. **If more than one item is missing per subscale, there will be no subscale score.**

## Scoring Options for the PFS:SF

There are two ways to score the PFS:SF:

- Hand score with a worksheet and/or
- Use the Excel-based score calculator that is available to download from the TRHV Online Repository.

**Hand Scoring the PFS:SF**

A hand scoring worksheet is available if hard copies of the measure scores are desirable (see p. 9 of this guide).

1. **Reverse score Items 8, 9, and 11.** For most items, the number endorsed on the Likert scale should be used. However, three items, 8, 9, and 11, require reverse scoring. For these items, please use the following key for reverse coding/transformation of scores:

Key for Reverse Coding Items 8, 9, and 11
1 = 7
2 = 6
3 = 5
4 = 4
5 = 3
6 = 2
7 = 1

2. **Identify items on each subscale.** Use the following table to determine which items are associated with each of the four subscales and enter the appropriate score.

Subscale	Items					Sum	Mean	Color
Family Functioning/Resiliency	1 =	2 =	3 =	4 =	5 =	_____/5		
Social Support	6 =	7 =	10 =			_____/3		
Concrete Support	8 =	9 =	11 =			_____/3		
Nurturing and Attachment	12 =	13 =	14 =	15 =		_____/4		

3. **Sum item scores on each subscale.** Using the table in Step 2 sum the scores from the items in each scale.
4. **Derive a mean for each subscale.** Using the table in Step 2, derive a mean for each subscale by dividing the sum of each subscale by the number of items in the subscale. \*Remember that missing data affect every subscale score. If more than one (1) item is missing, the subscale score cannot be calculated.
5. **Interpret subscale scores.** Using the table below, determine the color-coded level of risk associated with the subscale mean to assist in interpretation.

A color-coded system is used to assist in score interpretation for the PFS:SF.

- **Low mean subscales scores** are associated with **low levels of protection** from the measured protective factors and higher levels of risk.
- Conversely, **high mean subscales scores** are associated with **high levels of protection** from the measured protective factors and lower levels of risk. Please use the following table to aid in interpretation of scores for the PFS.

Mean Score	Color Code	Level of Protection	Category of Risk
0-3	Red	Low	High
4	Yellow	Neutral	Moderate
5-7	Green	High	Low

### Excel-based Score Calculator

A simple score calculator has been developed in Excel. It performs all the calculations needed to reverse score items 8, 9, and 11 (see highlighted cells in Figure 1 below) and then totals and gives the mean score for each subscale (see Figure 2). The score calculator will not provide a subscale score if a client has missing data. The calculator also provides the color-coded system with the scores to provide users with clear interpretations for levels of risk and protection.

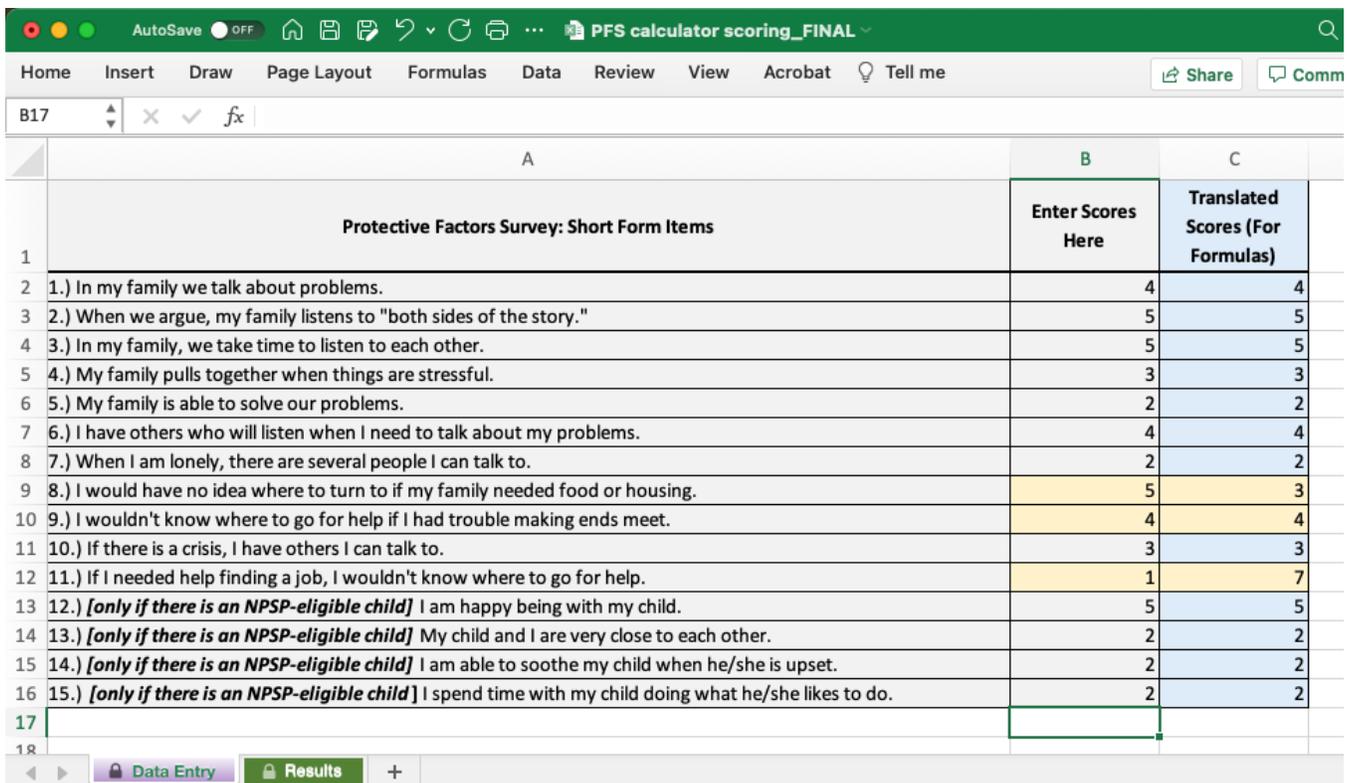


Figure 1: PFS:SF Score Calculator, Data Entry tab.

	A	B	C	D
1		<b>Key</b>		
2		<u>Mean Score</u>	<u>Level of Protection</u>	<u>Category of Risk</u>
3		1-3	Low	High
4		4	Neutral	Moderate
5		5-7	High	Low
6				
7	<b>Scales</b>			
8	Family Functioning/Resiliency	4	Neutral	Moderate
9	Social Support	3	Low	High
10	Concrete Support	5	High	Low
11	Nurturing & Attachment	3	Low	High
12				

Figure 2: PFS:SF Score Calculator, Results tab.

### Interpretation of PFS:SF Scores

As with the original PFS, the PFS:SF is designed to assess multiple factors that protect against child abuse and neglect and is designed for use in home visitation, parent education, and family support programming (FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2011). **The primary purpose is to provide feedback to agencies for continuous improvement and evaluation purposes. Published research indicates that the PFS is a good measure to assess change over time in family protective factors.** Within the NPSP context, scores provide the following information:

- A snapshot of the families served;
- Changes in protective factors over time and intervention; and
- Identification of areas where HVs can focus on increasing individual family protective factors.

**At intake into NPSP Services,** when the PFS:SF is administered for the first time, the scores will provide information that can guide intervention. These scores can be used in conjunction with the client’s FNS information to build a starting profile of strengths and risks.

Every six months a client is in NPSP services, and/or when a client closes services, the PFS:SF is administered again. Any changes or stability in scores can be considered by the HV for use as a teaching and intervention tool to talk about progress, sustained needs and challenges, and potential for refocusing the intervention plan with the client.

### *Score Range Interpretations*

#### **LOW** Score:

A subscale score from 0-3 indicates a low level of protection in that factor area and, subsequently, a high level of risk. Such a score indicates that this is an area the HV may want to prioritize while working with the client.

#### **MODERATE** Score:

A subscale score of 4 indicates a modest level of protective support in that factor area, but this score also suggests there are some potentially significant resources or connections lacking for the client. This means that the client may still face a moderate level of risk for that factor and benefit from working on that area with the HV.

#### **HIGH** Score:

A subscale score of 5-7 indicates a high level of protection in that factor area and, in turn, a low level of risk due to that factor. The HV can use this information to verify a client's perceptions of his or her own strengths and build on the home visitation relationship.

### *Cautions in Interpretation*

As noted by the developers, the PFS is not intended for individual assessment, placement, or diagnostic purposes (FRIENDS, 2011). Agencies should rely on other instruments for clinical use.

This means that the PFS is not used to determine eligibility for services, such as the FNS is used for NPSP eligibility. It also does not provide a clinical assessment of stress or depression, such as the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Inventory (EPDI) or the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D).

As described in the research literature, the PFS is a good tool to gain a snapshot of a program's families, to assess changes in protective factors over time and intervention, and to identify areas of strength and challenge where services can make a positive impact (Counts, Buffington, Chang-Rios, Rasmussen, & Preacher 2010; FRIENDS, 2011).

### **References**

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*, Volume 34, 762-772.

FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention. (2011). *The Protective Factors Survey User's Manual*. [http://friendsnrc.org/jdownloads/attachments/pfs\\_user\\_manual\\_revised\\_2012.pdf](http://friendsnrc.org/jdownloads/attachments/pfs_user_manual_revised_2012.pdf)

TRHV PFS:SF

Client ID \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

### PFS:SF Hand Scoring Guide

For items 8, 9, and 11, please use the following key for reverse coding/transformation of scores:

Key for Reverse Coding Items 8, 9, and 11* (Concrete Support)	
1 =	7
2 =	6
3 =	5
4 =	4
5 =	3
6 =	2
7 =	1

### Scoring Calculation Table

Subscale	Items					Sum	Mean	Color
Family Functioning/Resiliency	1 =	2 =	3 =	4 =	5 =	_____/5		
Social Support	6 =		7 =		10 =	_____/3		
Concrete Support*	8 =		9 =		11 =	_____/3		
Nurturing and Attachment	12 =	13 =	14 =	15 =	_____/4			

### Color Coded Categories of Risk

Mean Score	Color Code	Level of Protection	Category of Risk
0-3	Red	Low	High
4	Yellow	Neutral	Moderate
5-7	Green	High	Low