

North Carolina Family Assessment Scale – American Indian Version (NCFAS-AI)

The American Indian version of the North Carolina Family Assessment Scales (NCFAS-AI) was developed for use with urban American Indian families. Items were modified from the original scales (NCFAS Version 2.0¹) by a process of focus group examination of item content and wording. Focus groups were held with both American Indian family members/elders and staff from the Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC). This process of item review to ensure the validity of a scale for different cultural groups has been used by a variety of researchers, primarily in mental health research².

The NCFAS-AI retains the same scale structure and number of items as the NCFAS Version 2.0 and many items remain unchanged. The changes that were made reflect the unique circumstances and cultural values of the American Indian community related to parenting and family functioning. A few examples of changes suggested by the focus groups were:

A. Environment:

- *Housing Stability* renamed *Housing Adequacy*, focused on adequacy rather than length of stay
- *Habitability of Housing* renamed *Safety in Home*, focused more on environmental safety issues
- *Financial Management* renamed *Use of Financial Resources*, with recognition that even though resources may be scarce, it is a value to share with the community

B. Caregiver Capabilities:

- *Provision of Developmental/Enrichment Opportunities* – added that these provide spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical balance for the child
- *Mental Health* renamed *Mental Health & Emotional Balance*, with more emphasis on dealing with stress

C. Family Interactions

Bonding with Child – added that the children feel ‘safe and bonded’ as well. Also, fostering ‘independence’ was changed to fostering appropriate ‘interdependence,’ helping the child connect with the community

D. Family Safety

- *Absence/Presence of Sexual Abuse of Children* – redefinition of Clear Strength to reflect that there has never been sexual abuse. If there has been but it is being appropriately dealt with, the item would be rated as Moderate Strength or Acceptable
- Changed the wording ‘excellent progress in treatment’ to ‘engaged in a healing process’

E. Child Well-Being

- *Child(ren)’s Mental Health* – added consideration of child’s feelings, also cultural identity
- *Child(ren)’s Behavior* – added that cooperative behavior is not due to fear of abuse
- *School Performance* renamed *Relationship to School* – added consideration of school atmosphere
- *Relationship with Caregivers* – added the concept of respect for the family and community

Further scale validation on the NCFAS-AI, including research on scale reliability and factor structure, is being done by James Moran, Ph.D. and Marian Bussey, Ph.D. at the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver, in collaboration with the original NCFAS authors.

¹ Kirk, Raymond & Reed Ashcraft, Kellie, (1996). North Carolina Family Assessment Scale, Version 2.0, Definitions and User’s Guide available from: <http://ssw.unc.edu/jif/publications/>

² See Knudson et al, (2000). Translation and cross-cultural adaptation of outcome measurements for schizophrenia, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177; also the National Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research: <http://www.uchsc.edu/ai/ncaianmhr/>