



NCFAS-G Sample Scale & Definitions

North Carolina Family Assessment Scale
for General Services

Introduction

The NCFAS-G is used to determine how a family is functioning. There are 9 domains, each comprising several subscales. For each subscale, rate the family along the following six-point continuum: +2 = Clear Strength, +1 = Mild Strength, 0 = Baseline/ Adequate, -1 = Mild Challenge, -2 = Moderate Challenge, and -3 = Serious Challenge. There are also the options of Not Applicable and Unknown.

This is how the subscales appear on the NCFAS-G tool:

	Not Applicable	Clear Strength	Mild Strength	Baseline/ Adequate	Mild Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Serious Challenge	Unknown
Intake	n/a	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	uk
Interim	n/a	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	uk
Closure	n/a	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	uk

Use the definitions for the NCFAS-G scale as guiding language to help assign ratings. The **Baseline/Adequate** level of functioning *is the threshold above which there is no legal or ethical reason for public intervention*. If the family is under-resourced or functioning below the Baseline/Adequate level (i.e. in the “Challenge” range), services may be warranted, either on a voluntarily or mandatory basis, depending on circumstances and law.

Complete the *intake ratings* as early as possible, but only after sufficient family contact (preferably in their home environment) and supportive information has been obtained to assign the ratings confidently. *Service plans* should be closely tied to challenges identified during this assessment. It is optional to assign *interim ratings*, if needed due to the length and type of services. *Closure ratings* are based on the functioning of the family at the end of the service period.

The following are samples from each domain. To purchase the NCFAS-G, please contact the National Family Preservation Network (NFPN) at 888-498-9047 and/or director@nfpn.org. NFPN is the sole distributor of the NCFAS-G package. Training on the NCFAS-G is also provided by NFPN.

A. Environment

There are 6 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Housing Stability, Safety in the Community,** and **Environmental Risks.**

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Safety in the Community	
+2 Clear Strength	Refers to a safe and secure neighborhood for the children. Parents can allow children to play outside without fear. Neighbors look out for each other (neighborhood watch).
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to minor disturbances in the neighborhood, but disturbances do not prevent family members and children from spending time outside in the community.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to many disturbances such as fights and/or outbursts in the neighborhood. The neighborhood is not safe for children to play outdoors or walk to the bus or to school. Evidence of violence, boarded up or barred windows, gun fire, the use of alcohol or drugs, and/or drug trafficking in the neighborhood. Neighbors fearful of getting involved.

B. Parental Capabilities

There are 8 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Supervision of Child(ren), Disciplinary Practices,** and **Provision of Developmental/Enrichment Opportunities.** This section refers to biological parent(s), if present, or current caregiver(s).

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Supervision of Child(ren)	
+2 Clear Strength	Refers to caregivers' provision of age-appropriate supervision, such as setting limits for activities based on the children's ages. Caregivers are careful and attentive to children's needs in selecting substitute caregivers (babysitter, neighbor). Makes sure children feel comfortable and safe with substitute caregivers. Keeps track of children and knows children's friends. Infants and toddlers are under constant, consistent care and supervision in conditions and in surroundings that put the child at ease.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to caregivers providing satisfactory supervision of children. Some limits are set on activities based on the children's ages. Some consideration given to selecting substitute caregivers, and some concern with children's comfort with the substitute caregivers. Caregivers have a basic knowledge of location of children and children's friends. Infants and toddlers are under constant and adequate supervision, assuring that the child is safe, but circumstances may require a variety of caregivers, settings and surroundings.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to caregivers' lack of age-appropriate supervision, or any supervision. Limits on activities of children are not set or set inconsistently. Little or no consideration given to selecting substitute caregivers (strangers, known abusers, persons under the influence of drugs/alcohol). No thought about children's comfort and feeling of security with substitute caregivers. Children's friends are not known, and location of children is not regularly known. Infants and toddlers are sometimes left unattended, or supervision is provided by other children incapable of attending to child's needs or assuring safety, or child is left in the care of incompetent or uncaring adults or in surroundings that pose risk to child safety or induce serious discomfort.

C. Family Interactions

There are 8 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Bonding with Child(ren)**, **Communication with Child(ren)**, and **Expectations of Child(ren)**. This section refers to family members living in the same or different households.

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Expectations of Child(ren)	
+2 Clear Strength	Refers to caregivers possessing age-appropriate expectations for the children, and clear expectations of children. Above average understanding of children’s development cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally. Infants and toddlers: caregivers fully understand infants’/toddlers’ total dependence on parents to provide care and assure their well-being. Caregivers understand infants and toddlers limited abilities to communicate effectively, and interpret crying, screaming or infantile behavior as attempts to communicate or to have their needs met. Caregivers understand and react appropriately to successes as well as accidents relating to developmental processes such as toilet training and changing sleep patterns.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to caregivers’ expectations for children as mostly age-appropriate. Caregivers appear to have an average understanding of children’s developmental needs, or occasionally fail to attribute normal or age-appropriate expectations, but this behavior does not warrant intervention. Infants and toddlers: parents may not fully understand the ages and stages of child development and processes such as toilet training and changing sleep patterns. Caregivers may be frustrated by these changes, lack of progress, etc. Caregivers may not be accepting of excessive crying or infantile behavior but do not react in ways that are detrimental to the child or place the child at risk.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to caregivers having unrealistic and unclear expectations for the children. Do not tolerate mistakes in children. Children are expected to take on adult responsibilities. Or, children are not allowed to engage in age-appropriate behaviors (e.g. sports, dating). Little or inappropriate understanding of normal child development. Infants and toddlers: caregivers are intolerant of normal processes associated with age and stage of development, especially with regard to toilet training, excessive crying, infantile behavior and changing sleep patterns, etc. Caregiver interprets normal child development and skill acquisition as abnormal or willfully disobedient and expresses anger or inflicts discipline on child inappropriately.

D. Family Safety

There are 8 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Absence/Presence of Domestic Violence Between Parents/Caregivers**, **Absence/Presence of Other Family Conflict**, and **Absence/Presence of Physical Abuse of Child(ren)**. This section refers to family members living in the same or different households.

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Absence/Presence of Domestic Violence Between Parents/Caregivers
Note: This item may not be applicable in all cases. This would be the case if there were only one caregiver involved, and there is no significant other. If this is the case, use N/A.

+2 Clear Strength	Refers to families in which violence has never occurred between caregivers, and all family members are encouraged to solve problems nonviolently. Also refers to families in which domestic violence has occurred, but no longer occurs due to family's success in counseling, and family actively discourages violence.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to families in which domestic violence has occurred, but no longer occurs. Family is involved in counseling and making some progress. Also, families in which violence has never occurred. Disputes occur, and family members solve problems without violence.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to incidents, complaints, or arrests for domestic violence. Violence between caregivers negatively affects ability to parent and/or has resulted in physical or emotional harm to children. One caregiver lives in fear of the other, and/or children fear for safety of one caregiver or themselves.

E. Child Well-Being (Age 0-12)

There are 8 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Child(ren)'s Behavior**, **School Performance**, and **Child(ren)'s Relationship with Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)**. This section pertains to all the children in the family ages 0-12. If more than one child, children may have different issues. Rate the family; thus if any child has, for example, a behavioral issue, the family as a whole experiences that challenge. In this way, all children in the family contribute to the assessment ratings.

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Child(ren)'s Relationship with Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)	
+2 Clear Strength	Refers to children accepting discipline and supervision. Having open and clear communication with caregivers. Express or exhibit strong affiliation with caregivers.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to children having some problems in accepting discipline and supervision. Also, some problems in communication with caregivers, but this doesn't warrant intervention.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to discipline and supervision problems with children. Lack of open and clear communication, or no communication with caregivers. Do not respect boundaries and have an abusive or hostile relationship with caregivers. Express desire to leave family as soon as possible.

F. Youth Well-Being (Age 13-21)

There are 8 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Youths' Behavior**, **School/Employment Performance**, and **Youths' Relationship with Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)**. This section pertains to all youths in the family. If more than one youth, they may have different issues. Rate the family; thus if any youth has, for example, a behavioral issue, the family as a whole experiences that challenge. In this way, all youths in the family contribute to the assessment ratings.

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Youths' Behavior	
+2 Clear Strength	Refers to youths being well-behaved as appropriate to age, no discipline issues. Youths are cooperative, following rules and doing chores. Youths exhibit minimum externalizing behaviors

	(aggression, disruptive behaviors, impulsivity) and internalizing behaviors (depression, anxiety, mood/thought issues)
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to some issues in managing youth’s behavior, and some discipline issues, but not out of line with normal development. Youths are usually cooperative, may exhibit some difficulties following rules or completing chores, but difficulties do not merit intervention. In the normal course of development, youths may occasionally question caregiver leadership, but issues are satisfactorily resolved.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to challenges managing youth’s behavior at home and/or in school. Totally un-cooperative. Refuse to follow rules or do chores. Highly oppositional or antisocial behavior; possible emotional disturbance, youths seems beyond caregivers’ control. Youths may engage in delinquency, gang-related activities, or provocative appearance (e.g. tattoos, outlandish dress, excessive makeup, body piercings). Youths have a history of, and inclination to commit status offenses (e.g., runaway, truancy) or more serious, chargeable offenses (e.g., burglary, larceny, destruction of property). Youths are engaged in dangerous or self-injurious behavior (e.g., extreme risk-taking, early sexual activity).

G. Social/Community Life

There are 6 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Social Relationships, Relationships with Child Care, Schools and Extracurricular Services, and Connection to Neighborhood, Cultural/Ethnic Community.**

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Relationships with Child Care, Schools, and Extracurricular Services	
+2 Clear Strength	Caregivers’ relationship with schools, childcare providers, and other child serving organizations (e.g., sports, youth groups) is open, respectful, frequent, and honest. Caregivers, teacher or service providers communicate clearly and encourage each other’s success. Interactions focus on and advocate for the best interest of children.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Relationship between caregivers and school, childcare, or other youth service provider is adequate to ensure children’s safety and is respectful. Minor difficulties in communications or advocacy may occur but do not significantly impair relationship.
-3 Serious Challenge	Relationship between caregivers and schools, childcare or youth service providers is un-supportive, critical, disrespectful, hostile, dishonest, or nonexistent. Communication does not focus on best interest of children but may focus on caregivers’ convenience or caregivers’ interest at expense of children’s participation and success.

H. Self-Sufficiency

There are 6 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Caregiver Employment, Family Income, and Financial Management.**

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Caregiver Employment	
+2 Clear Strength	Refers to family having stable, legal employment over the past 12–24 months. Employer provides benefits, such as health insurance, and employer respects caregivers’ need to attend

	to and spend time with family. Caregiver takes advantage of opportunities for training and advancement.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Refers to family having relatively stable, legal employment in the past 12 months. Employment experience may vary between periods of steady employment, layoffs or compulsory overtime that create occasional disruption to family routines or caregiver’s availability to family. Benefits are not available or are available at very high cost.
-3 Serious Challenge	Refers to caregiver losing employment for “negative” reasons (such as being fired, laid off for substance use or poor attendance) two or more times in the past 12 months. Caregivers work only sporadically by choice, placing extreme stress on family finances. Family is without benefits of any kind. Caregivers’ employment may be illegal (unreported earnings, drug trade, prostitution). Caregivers not interested or unable (perhaps due to illiteracy) to participate in advancing employment options.

I. Family Health

There are 8 subscales in this domain. Examples are **Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)’s Physical Health**, **Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)’s Disability**, and **Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)’s Mental Health**.

Sample Definition of one Subscale

Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)’s Physical Health	
+2 Clear Strength	Caregivers enjoy excellent physical health. There are no health problems that interfere with parenting, employment, or participating in everyday life. Caregivers promote good health in family, including keeping watch over diet, exercise, and lifestyle habits of children and other family members.
0 Baseline/Adequate	Caregivers enjoy good basic health. May have some health issues, such as elevated blood pressure or mild diabetes that are under control through medication and routine health care. Health issues may occasionally inhibit caregivers, but do not pose major obstacles in parenting abilities or significantly hinder the caregivers’ ability to parent. Caregivers are knowledgeable about health status and normally make lifestyle and diet choices accordingly.
-3 Serious Challenge	Caregivers suffer from one or more chronic debilitating physical health problems (such as serious obesity, high blood pressure, HIV/AIDS), or progressive diseases (such as cancer, AIDS, etc.) that significantly interfere with daily life. Caregivers do not understand implications of diet, lifestyle, exercise, or proper medication regimen, and therefore do not manage the health condition(s) to the extent possible. Caregivers project personal health problems on children or other household members, or requires children to provide physical care.