

CAFAS
Fact Sheet for Affiliate Users
April 15, 2003

What is CAFAS? CAFAS (the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale) is a clinician-rated measure used to assess changes and degree of youth functioning. CAFAS is an observational measure and is not administered to children. Eight subscales assess youth functioning. Three are within Role/Performance (school/work, home, community); others are behavior towards others, moods/emotions, self-harmful behavior, substance abuse, and thinking). In addition, the family is assessed on two scales (material needs, family/social support). Functioning/impairment in each subscale is measured as severe, moderate, mild, and minimal/no impairment level.

How reliable and valid is CAFAS? Data from two large evaluation studies (Fort Bragg Evaluation Project, 1996; and the national evaluation of demonstration service grants, 2001;) as well as data from a statewide database of youth referred for to community mental health providers (2002), has been used to determine reliability and validity. Tests in inter-rater reliability have ranged from .73 to .99, based on the particular sub-scale used. In addition, there has been validity support for both subgroups of youth with differing levels of impairment, as well as significant predictive validity.

How is CAFAS completed for each child? Completing CAFAS for a child takes approximately ten minutes, and can be completed by a clinician knowledgeable about the child's functioning. Ideally, CAFAS can be used for children age 6-17. For each scale the clinician begins by reviewing items in the severe level. If at least one of the items describes the child's functioning, the item is circled and the child is given a score of 30 for this category. If no items in the severe level describe the child, the clinician moves to the moderate level to assess functioning. This process continues until an appropriate descriptor is found. If the clinician feels that the child is at a certain level of impairment, but there is no descriptor, the clinician can rate this as in an "exception box".

How are CAFAS scores computed? After determining the level of impairment score, the score is indicated in the scoring summary. Total scores can be calculated for the different scales, in order to ascertain an overall level of dysfunction, ranging from no or minimal impairment to need for intensive treatment.

What data will be submitted to the Prime Contractor? The Prime Contractor would like affiliates to submit the eight scaled scores, the caregiver's material needs and family/social support scores, and the level of overall dysfunction score with the initial assessment, as well as scores from follow-up CAFAS assessments.