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Stability & Supports Snapshot

Elizabeth A. Schoenfeld, PhD
Krystan A. Farnish, PhD
Afshan Kamrudin, PhD

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For permission requests or technical assistance, please contact:

Dr. Liz Schoenfeld

Email: liz.schoenfeld@lifeworksaustin.org

Phone: 512.735.2130

Mailing address: 835 N. Pleasant Valley Rd., Austin, TX 78702

www.lifeworksaustin.org

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Overview of LifeWorks

LifeWorks Mission

LifeWorks is a fierce advocate for youth and young adults pursuing a life they love and a stable future for themselves and their families.

Our Purpose

LifeWorks is a direct service organization and community influencer serving young adults with histories of homelessness, systems involvement (e.g. foster care, juvenile justice), early parenthood, or complex trauma.

Every year, LifeWorks supports more than 3,000 youth and families on their path to personal success and a more stable future. Through the power of transformative relationships—with the young adults we serve as well as our community partners, and funders—LifeWorks helps our clients become advocates for themselves as integral members of our community. Our programs focus on housing, counseling, education, and workforce development, considering the specific circumstances, strengths, and needs of the individuals we serve.

We are committed to innovative problem solving, purposeful systems change, shared accountability, and a relentless focus on achieving sustainable and measurable results for the individuals we serve.

Guiding Principles

Each of LifeWorks programs, as well as our research and advocacy efforts, are designed to promote these three guiding principles of well-being:

- **Everyone deserves a place to call home.** On any given night, we shelter or house more than 200 emerging adults, but we know the need is much greater. There are more than 1,600 youth who experience homelessness in Austin every year. One of our primary goals is to make youth homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- **Everyone deserves the opportunity to learn and work.** The young adults we serve need skill-building opportunities and support to find their place in the workforce or in traditional school settings. LifeWorks is committed to applying evidence-based solutions to reduce the barriers encountered by those who have grown up in foster care or spent time in the juvenile justice system or on the streets.
- **Everyone deserves a chance to heal.** Young people with these life experiences are at increased risk of PTSD, substance misuse, and suicide. LifeWorks office- and community-based counseling, peer support, and psychiatric services offer a caring place for youth and families to address conflict and trauma so that they can build a life they love.

LifeWorks is an applied learning organization. The data we collect are used to inform service delivery, continually improve programs, guide the selection of new service models, build upon existing research, and advocate for resources and solutions that will have greatest impact.

For more information about LifeWorks or to download additional resources, please visit www.lifeworksaustin.org.

Overview of the Stability & Supports Snapshot

The Stability & Supports Snapshot represents a unique approach to outcome measurement—it is a tool that was developed in direct response to the needs and preferences of clients and staff, with equity as a primary driver in both the creation and utilization of the tool.

The purpose of this manual is to provide an overview of the Stability & Supports Snapshot, its creation, and recommendations for its use.

What is the Stability & Supports Snapshot?

The Stability & Supports Snapshot is an outcome measurement tool that evaluates individuals' quality of life across a range of domains, allowing service providers to capture a holistic view of their clients **quickly** and in a **non-invasive** manner. The tool assesses nine aspects of clients' lives:

- Housing
- Income & Employment
- Education
- Mental Health
- Social Support
- Safety
- Basic Needs
- Self-Advocacy
- Other Socioemotional Indicators of Well-Being

The Stability & Supports Snapshot can be used across different program types and target populations. For instance, at LifeWorks the tool is used by housing programs (e.g., emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing), workforce providers, counselors, and other service providers. Although most of LifeWorks programs serve transition-age youth, the tool is also used with older adults and children as young as 10. It has been used to inform service delivery for individuals experiencing homelessness, systems involvement, early parenthood, family conflict, and other challenges.

Purpose of the Stability & Supports Snapshot

There are five main purposes for using the Stability & Supports Snapshot:

1. As a **service planning tool**, to help case managers, counselors, and other providers identify their clients' strengths and opportunities for growth, and to use this information when identifying client goals and supporting their completion.
2. As an **outcome measurement tool**, to help agency staff track client progress (and identify key predictors of client progress) for both internal and external monitoring purposes.
3. As a **quality improvement tool**, to help managers and staff identify opportunities for service expansion and/or refinement.
4. As a **communication tool**, to share outcome trends with clients, funders, and other stakeholders.
5. As an **alignment tool**, to allow providers to share (a) a common language regarding clients' strengths and needs, (b) a holistic and person-centered understanding of clients' lives, and (c) a mutual focus on critical areas for potential intervention.

The Development of the Stability & Supports Snapshot

The Stability & Supports Snapshot was created in partnership with both staff and clients. LifeWorks Research & Evaluation team began by conducting a series of 24 focus groups with program and department staff from across the organization. The goal of these focus groups was to better understand how agency staff conceptualize client success in various aspects of their lives (e.g., with respect to their housing stability, mental health, educational attainment). Around the same time, the Research & Evaluation team also solicited comparable input from clients; through this process, 66 clients shared what they were hoping to get out of their time at LifeWorks and how they define success for themselves.

LifeWorks Research & Evaluation team found significant similarities in the feedback provided by staff and clients. This information was used to identify the key domains included in the Stability & Supports Snapshot, as well as potential questions for inclusion. When possible, existing single-item measures or other brief assessments were drawn from the literature and included as potential candidates.

These domains and questions were shared with clients to learn which questions they preferred, if the questions made sense, and to gather any other relevant feedback. Through this process, the Research & Evaluation team gathered input from over 100 clients. The questions were also shared with a small group of staff to see if they had any additional feedback or concerns about the potential questions.

When clients provided conflicting recommendations from one another or from staff, the Research & Evaluation team prioritized the preferences of clients of color and incorporated their suggestions.

Completing the Stability & Supports Snapshot

This section offers suggestions regarding the cadence at which the Stability & Supports Snapshot should be completed, pointers for introducing the tool to clients, and other recommendations for effectively completing the assessment.

Timing of Completion

At minimum, the Stability & Supports Snapshot should be completed at program intake and program exit. It is also strongly recommended that the assessment be completed at regular intervals over the course of service delivery. The frequency of these interim assessments can vary depending on the length of the program. For programs of shorter duration (e.g., six months or less), the assessment should be completed at monthly intervals. For programs of longer duration (e.g., more than six months), the tool should be completed at quarterly intervals. The Stability & Supports Snapshot can also be used for follow-up purposes (i.e., during any check-ins that occur with clients following program exit).

For organizations that have more than one program using the Stability & Supports Snapshot, a “baseline” assessment should be completed for each unique program enrollment. Similarly, each program should complete a “closing” assessment at program exit, even if the client is still enrolled in other services at the same agency.

Finally, it is important for clients to select the response that best reflects their **current** situation. In other words, responses should not reflect the client’s recent past or anticipated changes in their life circumstances—for instance, if an individual is experiencing homelessness but is scheduled to move into an apartment within the next few days, the score should reflect the client’s housing situation on the day the assessment is completed (i.e., literally homeless) and not their expected housing situation (i.e., not literally homeless).

Introducing the Stability & Supports Snapshot to Clients

When introducing the Stability & Supports Snapshot—especially if it is a client’s first time answering these questions—it is important to explain why the assessment is being completed and to let clients know what they can expect when completing the assessment.

Before completing the Stability & Supports Snapshot with a client, it is recommended that users:

- Explain what the Stability & Supports Snapshot is and why it is being completed.
- Acknowledge that the tool may touch on parts of clients’ lives that may not feel directly relevant to the specific service they are seeking/receiving. Explain that these questions are asked to gain a fuller understanding of clients’ lives, to better understand their strengths and available resources, and to inform service planning and/or potential referrals.
- Remind the client that they are free to skip any question without jeopardizing their access to services.
- Provide an estimate of the amount of time it will take to complete the assessment.
- Let the client know that the tool will be completed at regular intervals in order to monitor their progress and any emergent needs/strengths.
- Give the client the opportunity to ask questions or seek further clarity.

Sample Script

Here is a sample script for introducing the Stability & Supports Snapshot to clients:

If it’s okay with you, I’d like to go through a series of questions with you where we’ll talk about different parts of your life, so we can get a sense of what’s going well and where I might be able to help. Some of the questions may not feel relevant to receiving [type of services], but that’s because I can help connect you to other resources that you might find useful, if that’s what you want. You are welcome to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you don’t want to answer for any reason. All told, this should take around 10 minutes to complete. If there’s a particular topic that we touch on that you want to discuss in more detail afterwards, just let me know and we can come back to it. I also just want to let you know that we’ll have the chance to revisit these questions every so often during our time working together, so we can see how things have improved or if there are other areas that you want to work on. Sound good? Do you have any questions for me?

Other Collection Guidelines

Age Considerations

Although the Stability & Supports Snapshot can be used with a wide range of clients, it is not recommended to complete the tool with individuals under the age of 10. The “Income & Employment” section should not be administered to clients under the age of 18 unless they are emancipated or otherwise unaccompanied (youth who are in foster care should not be considered unaccompanied).

When completing the assessment with a client who is a minor (and who is not emancipated or unaccompanied), question should **not** be directed to their parent or guardian. It is possible that this will result in responses that do not reflect the “reality” of the client’s situation but instead capture the client’s perceptions; this is most likely to occur for questions in the “Housing,” “Safety,” and “Basic Needs” sections. For instance, a client may indicate that they “never” worry about having enough food to eat, but their parents may be grappling with significant food insecurity. Users should feel free to present these questions to clients’ parents/guardians to gain a fuller picture of clients’ environment.

Promoting Reliability

Users are strongly encouraged to complete the Stability & Supports Snapshot as an interview with their clients, reading each question and set of response options aloud. It is not recommended that clients complete the tool independently, nor should users make assumptions about their clients' circumstances (i.e., users should not select a response without asking the client directly). Completing the assessment as an interview helps to ensure that data are collected in a consistent, uniform manner across programs and users, thereby promoting the reliability of the tool. Asking the questions directly to clients also makes it easier to use the tool for service planning purposes and to ask follow-up questions as appropriate.

Finally, users should be trained in the tool prior to implementation in order to promote consistency in scoring. For training resources, please contact the author.

Completing the Stability & Supports Snapshot in Other Languages

If an agency serves clients who are not fluent in English, they should have the Stability & Supports Snapshot professionally translated. A Spanish version of the Stability & Supports Snapshot is available from the author upon request.

Using the Stability & Supports Snapshot for Outcome Measurement

Because the Stability & Supports Snapshot can be used to measure client progress in multiple ways, this section offers some basic recommendations for organizations interested in using this tool for outcome measurement. For additional technical support, please contact the author.

Key Recommendations

- Client outcomes can be examined on an item-by-item basis or on a domain-by-domain basis. If the decision is made to assess client progress at the domain level, it is recommended that benchmarks or targets be established in lieu of treating the individual items in a given domain as a single latent variable.¹ Similarly, it is not recommended to collapse multiple domains into a single measure.
- All scores of "I'm not sure," "I don't want to answer this question," or "N/A" should be treated as null values.
- Because progress in certain domains of the Stability & Supports Snapshot may reflect substantial changes in clients' lives (e.g., transitioning from homelessness to housing, obtaining an educational credential), users should not underestimate the amount of time it may take to see progress, nor should they overestimate the number of areas in which they expect to see progress. Users may find it helpful to limit sample of clients eligible to be included in the denominator of the outcome to those who participated in services for a minimum amount of time (e.g., three months).
- Agencies may want to focus their outcomes on the domains that are most relevant to their programs or areas of service delivery. For instance, a counseling program may want to focus on measuring their success based on clients' responses to the "mental health" questions instead of the "housing" questions.

¹ Agencies interested in developing domain-level benchmarks are welcome to contact the author for additional information or guidance.



Stability & Supports Snapshot

Housing

1. What is your current living situation?
 - a. Literally homeless (staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing, on the streets, in a car, in an abandoned building, or in some other place not meant for habitation)
 - b. Not literally homeless
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question

2. **[If Housing Q1 = A]** Is the client currently living in a transitional housing program?²
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure

3. **[If Housing Q1 = A or B]** How long have you been staying there (the place where you are currently living)?
 - a. Less than 1 month (<30 days)
 - b. 1-3 months (30-90 days)
 - c. 3-6 months (91-180 days)
 - d. 6 months-1 year
 - e. More than a year
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

4. **[If Housing Q1 = B]** How long do you expect that you will have a place to stay, either where you are currently staying or somewhere else?
 - a. Less than 2 weeks (<14 days)
 - b. 2 weeks – 1 month (14-30 days)
 - c. 1-3 months (31-90 days)
 - d. 3-6 months (91-180 days)
 - e. 6 months or longer
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

5. **[If Housing Q1 ≠ A AND Housing Q3 = A, B, or C]** Have you been unhoused or stayed in an emergency shelter at any point in the last six months?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question

² Some clients living in agency-provided housing may not know the specific type of housing project in which they are enrolled. As such, it is recommended that the staff member completing the assessment answer this question on the client's behalf, based on their knowledge of the individual's living situation. If the staff member is unfamiliar with the client's living situation, the question can be asked directly to the client (i.e., Are you currently living in a transitional housing program?), but the staff member should be prepared to ask follow-up questions if the client is unsure.

6. How satisfied are you with your current living situation?³
- a. Completely satisfied
 - b. Somewhat satisfied
 - c. A little satisfied
 - d. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - e. A little dissatisfied
 - f. Somewhat dissatisfied
 - g. Completely dissatisfied
 - h. I'm not sure
 - i. I don't want to answer this question
7. Would you like to share a little bit about what you like or don't like about your living situation?

Income & Employment

1. Are you currently able to pay all your bills and meet all your financial needs?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
2. Are you currently employed, or have you accepted a job offer?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
3. **[If Income & Employment Q2 = A]** How long have you worked at your current job?
- a. I haven't started my new job yet
 - b. Less than a month (<30 days)
 - c. 1-3 months (30-90 days)
 - d. 3-6 months (91-180 days)
 - e. 6 months-1 year
 - f. More than a year
 - g. I'm not sure
 - h. I don't want to answer this question
4. **[If Income & Employment Q2 = A]** At any point in the last three months, was there a time when you were out of work for at least a week and didn't have another job lined up?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure

³ This item was drawn from Cuffel et al.'s (1995) California Adult Performance Outcome Measure.

- d. I don't want to answer this question
- 5. **[If Income & Employment Q2 = A]** Is this job something that supports your long-term career goals?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure what I want to be doing long-term
 - d. I don't have any career goals, and I'm not interested in making any at this time
 - e. I'm not sure if this job supports my long-term career goals
 - f. I don't want to answer this question
- 6. **[If Income & Employment Q2=A]** Would you like to share a little bit more about your job and long-term career goals?

7.

Education

- 1. What is the highest grade in school you completed/received credit for, or your highest degree earned?
 - a. Less than high school
 - b. Some high school
 - c. High school graduate or GED graduate
 - d. Some trade school, technical school, or vocational school
 - e. Trade school, technical school, or vocational school graduate
 - f. Some college
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Some graduate school
 - j. Some type of graduate degree
 - k. I'm not sure
 - l. I don't want to answer this question
- 2. **[If Education Q1 = C-L]** Did you receive your high school diploma or GED?
 - a. High school diploma
 - b. GED
 - c. Neither
 - d. I'm not sure
 - e. I don't want to answer this question
- 3. Are you currently enrolled in an educational program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question

4. **[If Education Q3 = A]** In what type of educational program are you currently enrolled?
- a. Elementary school or middle school
 - b. High school
 - c. GED program
 - d. Trade school, technical school, vocational program
 - e. College or graduate school
 - f. Other: _____
 - g. I'm not sure
 - h. I don't want to answer this question
5. **[If Education Q3 ≠ A]** Are you currently interested in continuing your education?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
6. Have you completed the level of education/training you need to meet your professional goals?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. N/A; I don't need specific education/training to meet my professional goals
 - d. I'm not sure
 - e. I don't want to answer this question

Mental Health

1. I have a clear understanding of what **positively** affects my mental health.⁴
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
2. I have a clear understanding of what **negatively** affects my mental health.⁵
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
3. I feel comfortable reaching out for help or support when a mental health challenge becomes too big for me to handle on my own.⁶
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question

⁴ This item was drawn and modified from Lindow et al.'s (2020) seven-item instrument measuring emotional awareness and knowledge of mental health resources.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

4. How well are you handling the stressful situations in your life, given the circumstances?⁷
 - a. Not well at all
 - b. Slightly well
 - c. Somewhat well
 - d. Very well
 - e. Extremely well
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

5. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.⁸
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

Social Support

1. Apart from staff at **[Name of Organization]**, how many people could you rely on in times of need? (For instance, if you needed a place to stay, money for groceries, or someone to talk to if you were having a hard time.)⁹
 - a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3–5 (specify number): _____
 - e. 6–9 (specify number): _____
 - f. 10 or more (specify number): _____
 - g. I'm not sure
 - h. I don't want to answer this question

2. **[If Social Support Q1 ≠ A or E]** How satisfied are you with the support you receive from these meaningful relationships?¹⁰
 - a. Not satisfied at all
 - b. A little satisfied
 - c. Somewhat satisfied
 - d. Mostly satisfied
 - e. Completely satisfied
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

⁷ This item is a modified version of Aldwin & Revenson's (1987) single-item measure of perceived coping efficacy.

⁸ This item was drawn from Smith et al.'s (2008) Brief Resiliency Scale.

⁹ This item was drawn from the Youth Connections Scale (Jones & LaLiberte, 2013) and streamlined for youth to report on their overall number of meaningful relationships with adults.

¹⁰ This item was adapted from Sarason et al.'s (1983) Social Support Questionnaire..

Safety

1. In the last 24 hours, how safe did you feel in the area(s) you were generally staying?
 - a. Not safe at all
 - b. A little safe
 - c. Somewhat safe
 - d. Mostly safe
 - e. Completely safe
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

Basic Needs

1. Do you currently have enough food to eat (by cooking, family, food pantry, fast food, etc.)?¹¹
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
2. How often do you worry that you will not have enough food to eat?¹²
 - a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Often
 - e. Always
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question
3. Do you currently have the items and the ability to take care of your hygiene the way you want to?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. I don't want to answer this question
4. **[If Housing Q1 = B]** Do you currently have the items and the ability to take care of your housekeeping the way you want to?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. N/A; I don't have any housekeeping/cleaning responsibilities
 - d. I'm not sure
 - e. I don't want to answer this question

¹¹ This item was drawn and modified from Lecomte et al.'s (2014) First Episode Social Functioning Scale.

¹² This item was drawn and modified from Ballard, Kepple, & Cafiero's (2013) Food Insecurity Experience Scale.

Self-Advocacy

1. I feel free to express my own opinions even if they are different from others.¹³
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree
 - f. I'm not sure
 - b. I don't want to answer this question

2. I know how to stand up for myself, when it's safe to do so.¹⁴
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

Other Indicators of Socioemotional Well-Being

1. How much control do you feel you have over your life?¹⁵
 - a. No control
 - b. A little control
 - c. Moderate control
 - d. A lot of control
 - e. Complete control
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

2. I believe that each day has potential.¹⁶
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree
 - f. I'm not sure
 - g. I don't want to answer this question

3. I feel my life has value and worth.¹⁷
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree
 - f. I'm not sure

¹³ This item was drawn from Harris' (2009) Self-Advocacy Readiness Scale.

¹⁴ This item was drawn and modified from Lecomte et al.'s (2014) First Episode Social Functioning Scale.

¹⁵ This item is Bugaighis & Schumm's (1983) single-item measure assessing locus of control.

¹⁶ This item was drawn from Herth's (1992) Herth Hope Index.

¹⁷ This item was drawn from Herth's (1992) Herth Hope Index.

g. I don't want to answer this question

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