

Supervising the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment



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SUPERVISING THE ANSELL-CASEY LIFE SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment is a free-on-line resource at www.caseylifeskills.org. The ACLA provides an indication of skill level and readiness for living on one's own. It is designed as a first step and to be used in conjunction with goal setting, action planning, instruction, learning, and application. The ACLSA was developed to be developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, gender appropriate, useful for setting case goals, and appropriate for younger adults.

Assessment helps determine a youth's strengths and challenges. With this information, the youth, caregiver, and practitioner can select areas for improvement and build on strengths. Completing the ACLSA is the first step in this assessment process. It is most useful when both a caregiver and youth complete the ACLSA. It heightens awareness, and increases their investment in planning and learning life skills.

Supervisor Competencies

1. Advocates for/allocates resources which respect the diverse needs of youth.
2. Coaches workers to incorporate knowledge of adolescent development, characteristics, behaviors, and social challenges into assessment and case planning.
3. Supervises workers in implementing policy and programs relevant to adolescents in transition.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the value of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment for transition planning.
2. Know how to access and complete the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment*.
3. Know how to interpret the Individual Report.
4. Know the importance of identifying learning styles when developing life skills learning sessions.
5. Introduce the Learning Plan tool.
6. Coach workers in best practices for conversations using the Assessment face-to-face with the youth.

Introduction

Casey Family Programs is the largest national foundation whose sole mission is to provide and improve-and ultimately prevent the need for-foster care. The foundation draws on its 40 years of experience and expert research and analysis to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care in two important ways: by providing direct services and support to foster families and by promoting improvements in child welfare practice and policy.

In 1994, researchers from Casey Family Programs began developing a much-needed life skills assessment tool for child welfare practice. This effort led to the building of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) including other resources.

Life Skill Areas Assessed:

- Communication
- Daily Living
- Work/Study Skills
- Home Life
- Self Care
- Social Relationships
- Housing/Money Management
- Career Planning
- Work Life

The ACLSA was developed to be developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, gender appropriate, useful for setting case goals, and appropriate for younger adults.

Supplements:

There are additional supplements contained in the ACLSA assessment. Current supplements are:

- Pregnancy
- Parents of Infants (birth to 24 months)
- Parents of Younger Children (ages 2-6 years)
- American Indian
- Education: High School level
- Runaway and Homeless Youth
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth

Legislative information

The John H. Chafee legislation promotes an assessment be completed with all youth in foster care. Iowa has chosen the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment as a means to meet this requirement.

Iowa law mandates that an assessment be completed for youth who are of transition age.

ACLSA is the tool of choice that Iowa uses with youth in foster care. Iowa law states assessment must be completed but does not specify ACLSA. The ACLSA can be used for youth in out of home placement as well as youth who are living in their parental homes.

Levels of Assessment

There are five ACLSA versions for four suggested developmental age ranges from age 8 to adult.

Level I through Level IV are different assessments that are based on the developmental stages of youth. The differences in the levels of assessments account for age, maturity and other social learning factors. The older the youth, the higher level of assessment is recommended.

There are levels of ACLSA versions for four suggested age ranges:

- I for ages 8-9 with 37 questions
- II for ages 10-12 with 56 questions
- III for ages 13-15 with 81 questions
- IV for ages 16-and up with 118 questions

The assessments are developmentally based and on the website the age ranges are not listed. When deciding which assessment a youth should complete, their developmental level should be taken into consideration as well as their age. Level I does not cover housing, money management, career planning or work life since it is intended for younger youth, however Level IV is focused on those areas as well as other domains.

Example: If a young person is 16 and developmentally functioning at age 12, then it is more appropriate for the youth to use version II, rather than version IV.

Special circumstances, such as a pregnant or expecting youth.

There are additional supplements contained in the ACLSA assessment. Current Ansell-Casey Life Skills Supplements are:

- American Indian
- Pregnancy
- Parents of Infants (birth to 24 months)
- Parents of Young Children (ages 2-6 years)
- Homeless
- Youth Values
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth
- Education: Levels I-IV

The supplements can be used in conjunction with the ACLSA or can be given without administering the ACLSA. The supplements are designed to address specific needs and/or populations and should be administered only by those who are comfortable and knowledgeable in dealing with those specific issues. The mechanics of giving the supplements are the same as for giving the ACLSA. Youth waiting to go to or already placed at HOM-House of Mercy can take the Pregnancy Supplement, which can help in understanding what the youth knows or needs.

The Report

Matching Score Reports are those containing ACLSA scores for a Youth and up to three Caregivers (foster parent, foster group care staff, therapist/counselor, social worker). The score report appears with the results of the assessment once the “I’m finished” icon is clicked. The report will provide demographic information, mastery scores, raw scores, and actual responses. The score report will be the tool used to facilitate a conversation with the youth to determine life skill goals and a learning plan. Social workers can ask the youth if anyone has talked to them about their results and if not, encourage it.

Results

The “Score Report” is scored electronically and will “pop up” when the assessment is completed. Upon completing the ACLSA, an e-mail containing a link to the report is immediately sent to the address entered on the Login Information page. Open the e-mail and click on the link to open the report. The Individual Report contains the ACLSA scores and a summary of how each of the assessment questions were answered.

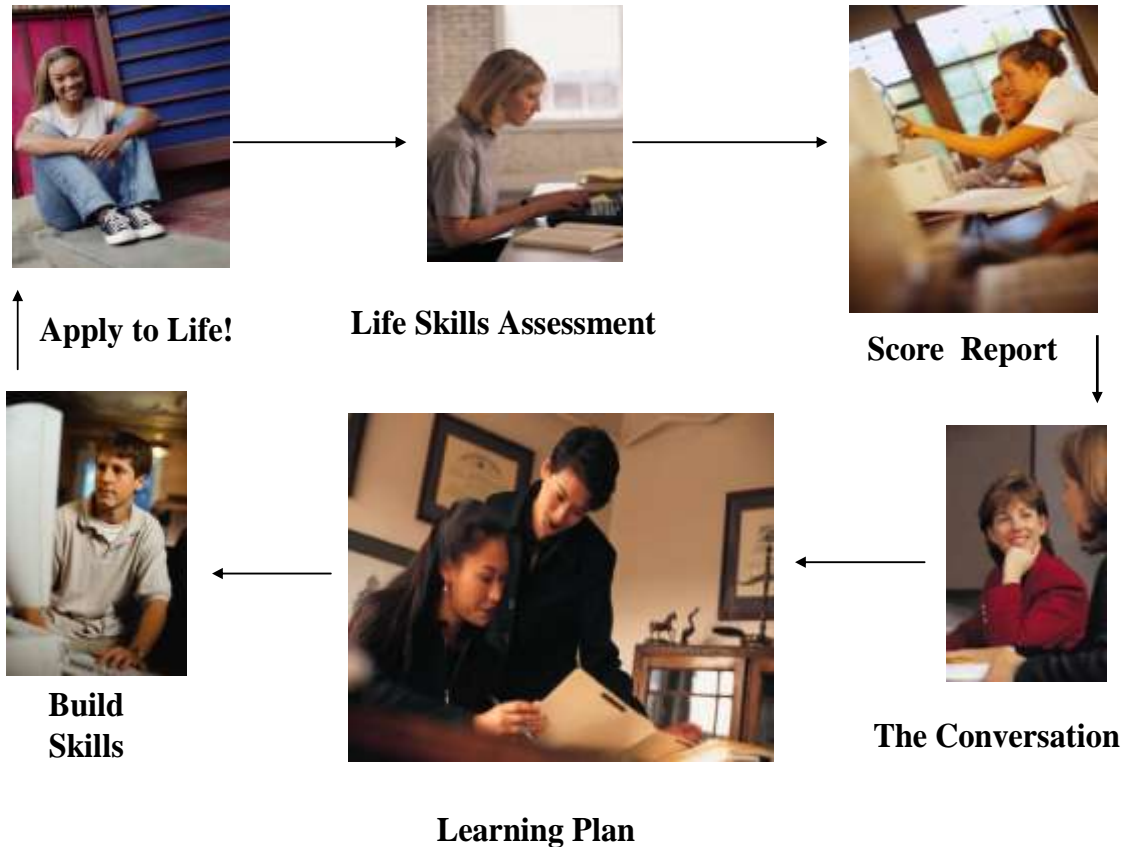
What to expect from the report (what it tells you)

The Score Report includes four sections.

1. Youth Information: Youth ID, Organization ID, date completed, gender & age of the youth and whether the youth has a Social Security Card, birth certificate and photo ID.
2. Knowledge & Behavior Items:
 - Mastery Score-shows the youth’s percentage of mastery for each domain, which is presented numerically and graphically. A total mastery score is included at the bottom of this section. Only those responses at the highest level, “very much like me”, are counted in the mastery score. This indicates strengths, not deficiencies.
 - Raw Score-assigns a numeric value to all the responses given by the youth and the caregiver. For example, a response of “very much like me”=3, “somewhat like me”=2, and “not like me”=1.
3. Summary of Responses-lists each assessment question along with the youth’s and caregiver’s responses.
4. Performance Items-is the score of the percentage items answered correctly by the youth in levels I-IV. At least 75% of the questions must be answered to receive a score.

How to use the results

The ACLSA is a tool that can be a token or very valuable depending on how it is used. If the results are gone over with a youth, shared with all parties involved, results incorporated into the youth's Case Plan Transition Plan, help is provided to the youth to increase their skill level, and the youth is allowed to demonstrate their skills it becomes a winning outcome.



Helping caseworkers have the “The PYD-Positive Youth Development Conversation” with youth

Before a social worker talks with youth about their results they should remember the following:

- Ask them what they think; don't tell them what to do.
- Listen to the answers; ask follow up questions to go deeper into what the youth feel they are doing well and what they need support with.
- Avoid starting the question with “why”. Try using “what” and “how” instead.
- Keep the conversation present and future oriented.

Questions to use to begin the dialogue with the youth and the caregiver*:

What do you both see are the areas of strength?

What do you see as the challenges?

What might be some reasons for the differences that you see here?

To the youth: What do you think you could do to demonstrate your skills in this area?

To The caregiver: What opportunities can you provide the youth to demonstrate his/her skill in this area?

Where do you want to start? Which domain do you want to focus on?

Which area do you think is most important for you to work on?

*Questions taken from: “Teaching Life Skills”, National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development, University of Oklahoma.

Remember the goal is to work with the youth and the caregivers to develop a plan that is relevant to the youth.

Supervising the use of ACLSA on how to train the caseworkers with how to use the results.

Don't need to wait until age 16 – could start this at age 14.

Supervisors need to ask workers if youth over age 16 in out of home placement have completed a life skills assessment. If the answer is “no”, the worker can request the youth complete the ACLSA.

Learning Plan for Youth

The learning plan is another free tool on the website that can be used to get ideas and hands on learning opportunities to help a youth learn and improve their skills in all areas assessed. The Learning Plan menu includes all domains with links to free ideas as well as resources that can be purchased.

Learning Activity: Access Learning Plan tool online

CREATING A LEARNING PLAN ONLINE

Step 1: Go to http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/lp/lp_index.htm

Step 2: Click on the ACLSA Domains.

Step 3: Select and click on the domain(s) of interest. Keep selecting until you get to what you want to use to learn.

Step 4: Review the list of Learning Goals and Activities. Click on the boxes next to the desired goals and/or activities you want to select based on the needs and wants of the participants in your group, combined ACLSA results, and how much time you have in each session **or** for Individual Plans, based on ACLSA individual results and learner wants and needs.

Step 5: Click on the yellow button "Add to the Learning Plan."

Step 6: To remove Learning Goals or Activities, go back to the web page where you made that selection and uncheck the box.

Step 7: When finished selecting your Learning Goals and Activities, click on the "Preview/Print Learning Plan" button on the bottom left part of the screen. This will produce a "new" web page.

Step 8: On the "new" web page, click either *Individual Life Skills Learning Plan*. The Plan will immediately appear and can be printed or saved to your computer.

Repeat steps 2 thru 6 for each domain as desired. All chosen Learning Goals (and accompanying Expectations) and/or Activities appear in the Learning Plan.

SAVING AND EDITING YOUR PLAN (*Microsoft Word, Works, and WordPerfect*)

- **To View Plan:** Click "**Preview/Print Learning Plan**" button on the bottom left side of the screen.
- **To copy:** Use your mouse to highlight all the information in the Plan. Go under the file menu and choose "copy." The information will be copied on your computer clipboard and you can now "paste" it into a new document on your computer. To paste, go under the file menu and choose "paste." You may need to format to make it look like the online Learning Plan. Save the document with your word processing software.
- **To print** your Plan, either click on the "printer" icon at the top of the screen or go under the file menu and choose "print." There is no cost for printing the Individual Learning Plan.
- **To save** the Plan without copying and pasting, go to the File menu at the top of the screen and choose "File Save As," then save the file as an html file.
- **To open the Saved html File**, right click on the file and click open with your word processor software.
- **When finished, save the File** in the format of your word processor software.

PLEASE NOTE: When you leave the caseylifeskills.org Web site, the Plans are permanently deleted, so either "copy and paste" or "save as" to keep the files on your computer.

How to do ACLSA on-line

Go to www.caseylifeskills.org

Youth ID

Organization ID

e-mail addresses

demographic information

There are three types of questions on the assessment:

1. knowledge and behavior questions
2. performance questions
3. extra items

-Knowledge and behavior questions examine specific knowledge and behaviors a youth possesses.

-Performance questions seek specific knowledge or answers from a youth. The youth's responses are either correct or incorrect. These items may periodically change on the assessment.

-Extra items are either important practice questions that do not have statistical reliability or items that are experimental and are being tested for inclusion in subsequent versions of the assessment. They are not included in the overall scores and their responses are marked by a snowflake on the score report.

The youth and caregivers taking the assessment are encouraged to review their answers by clicking on "Previous" before clicking on "I'm Finished". Primarily, this is to check to see all questions are answered.

Best practice in how to use it

By having a youth take the assessment then putting the results in a case file does nothing to help the youth. The results need to be used as a tool to get things going forward.

Re-assessing youth and adjusting their CASE PLAN AND learning plan

The reassessment tool can be used as an outcome measurement tool to show progress in a foster care placement and to assist the youth in improving themselves.

FAQs:

Online answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) can be found at:
www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/assess/faq.htm