

Family Connect and Support Common Assessment Tool

An early supports approach

November 2023



Contents



Our commitment to Aboriginal people, the traditional owners and custodians of Country	2
About this Common Assessment Tool	3
The CAT Guide	4
Section 1: Getting started	5
Section 2: Stages of the assessment	9
Section 3: Doing the assessment	12
Eight Life Domains	15-33



Our commitment to Aboriginal people, the traditional owners and custodians of Country

The term 'Aboriginal' in this document refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is used to refer to the numerous nations, language groups and clans in NSW.

We acknowledge the Stolen Generations, including Aboriginal children, young people and families currently affected by the statutory child protection system.

We acknowledge the needless suffering and trauma inflicted on Aboriginal children, young people and families through colonisation and forced assimilation. We acknowledge that this trauma continues to affect Aboriginal people today and that Aboriginal children and families continue to be disproportionately affected by the statutory child protection system. We undertake to shape our practices accordingly and use the expertise and knowledge provided by Aboriginal families, communities and Elders.

All early intervention services funded by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) must be committed to delivering culturally safe services for Aboriginal children, young people and families, driven by the principle of Aboriginal self-determination, and working with families and communities to keep families safely together and strong.

Aboriginal Case Management Policy

DCJ-funded programs and this Common Assessment Tool aim to align with the best practice principles outlined in the Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP) to promote culturally safe ways of working with Aboriginal children, families and community.

The ACMP aims to empower Aboriginal families and communities to participate in decision-making and keep their children safe at home and connected to kin, community and Country.

This Common Assessment Tool has been reviewed against the ACMP and shows strong alignment with the principles of **active efforts** and **Aboriginal family-led assessment**.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge our Aboriginal colleagues and the service providers, communities and families who partnered with Curijo¹ and DCJ to ensure the design of this tool was Aboriginal-led and culturally inclusive.



¹ Curijo is a majority Aboriginal-owned organisation and was engaged by DCJ to develop the Common Assessment Tool. While the final version of the CAT has been edited by DCJ, it is based on the work of Curijo.

About this Common Assessment Tool

This Common Assessment Tool (CAT) is for practitioners conducting comprehensive assessments. It is made up of three resources that are designed to be used together.

Before using the CAT, review the [Family Connect and Support Common Assessment Framework](#), which outlines the foundations for assessment.

This CAT includes three resources:

1. **This CAT Guide**, with information on the different stages of the comprehensive assessment, the domains being assessed and questions to support assessment conversations with families.
2. **The CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template**, which practitioners fill in with and for families during assessment and which is also provided to referral agencies.
3. **The CAT Family self-assessment template**, a survey for families to fill in themselves if appropriate, to support the assessment.

While the CAT has been developed in alignment with the Aboriginal Case Management Policy (ACMP), please also refer to the [ACMP resources](#), which provide detailed information about Aboriginal family-led assessment and other principles of working in a culturally safe way with Aboriginal families.

Use this CAT, alongside the [FCS Common Assessment Framework](#), when a comprehensive assessment is needed.

Background

Family Connect and Support (FCS) started in January 2021. Since then, FCS providers have shown a desire to adopt a single assessment tool to be used alongside the [FCS Common Assessment Framework](#), which was developed by the Parenting Research Centre and released in 2022. A common assessment tool should increase consistency in intake, assessment and triage for families, while still allowing for professional judgement.

In 2022, DCJ engaged Curijo to develop this **FCS Common Assessment Tool**. Curijo conducted an extensive review, consulted with the sector and families, and drew on the foundational work of the FCS Common Assessment Framework.

The vision for this tool is that it will be made available to other DCJ-funded early intervention programs, including Targeted Earlier Intervention, to support practitioners across the service system who conduct assessments with children and families.

How Family Connect and Support helps families

The FCS program is a voluntary early intervention service for vulnerable families in NSW, with a focus on building family strengths to make positive change. FCS supports a diverse range of families with varying issues and levels of complexity, some of whom require comprehensive assessment.

To learn more about the FCS program, see the [FCS Program Specifications](#).

How terms are used in this tool

- The term 'Aboriginal' in this document refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is used to refer to the numerous nations, language groups and clans in NSW. The FCS program supports children, young people and families from diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and backgrounds across NSW.
- The term 'family' captures all different types of family and kinship groups. We acknowledge that family compositions are unique and encompass many cultural factors. Extended family members often have a role and cultural responsibility in caring for children.
- 'Kid' or 'kids' can also refer to 'the child' or 'children'.
- 'Parent' refers to a child's primary carer and can include a biological parent, mum, dad, grandparent, aunty, uncle, carer, caregiver or guardian, as well as the broader kinship roles that Aboriginal families carry out in caring for children.

The CAT Guide

This **Common Assessment Tool Guide** provides information for staff completing a comprehensive assessment using the CAT.

Section 1

includes information about getting started and the approach to assessment.

Section 2

is an overview of the **three stages** in the comment assessment process.

Section 3

covers **doing the assessment**, and especially gathering information in all the domains of a family's life.



Section 1: Getting started

This first section of the CAT guide discusses the importance of information sharing and the general approach you can take to assessments. It also reminds you of your mandatory reporter obligations and provides useful crisis contact numbers.

1. Information sharing

When you first start working with a family, tell them about their right to privacy and confidentiality and explain that you will ask for their consent to share information. Explain when this will be necessary – for example, when referring to outside agencies for additional support.

Chapter 16a of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* also allows prescribed government and non-government bodies to share relevant information about children and young people to collaboratively promote their safety, welfare and wellbeing. In such cases, this information sharing does not require consent from the related person.

Be mindful of the language you use when recording conversations and observations in this assessment tool. Information captured should be accurate, factual and necessary. Offer a copy of the assessment to the family. Remember that information in a practitioner assessment may also be subpoenaed (ordered to be provided) for court proceedings.

2. Approach to the assessment

Explain the process

Give families an overview of the assessment process and the topics that may be covered. Explain that there is an information-gathering phase, and then you will analyse the information together to agree on how to take action.

Explore whether families would prefer to discuss the domains in a particular order. Note if there are topics they feel uncomfortable talking about at that time or at all.

Families may prefer to address some topics later in the process when they are not as crisis focused or after trust has been developed.

Not all families will need a deep assessment of all domains. Adjust the depth of assessment according to the family's circumstances to focus more on some domains over others.

Work with the family and use your professional judgement to work out how best to conduct the assessment. It might be useful for the family to do a self-assessment, before you discuss things together.

Families should only need to tell their story once. Review all incoming referral information before an assessment and prefill sections where you can. This also provides an opportunity to 'check in' with families to ensure information is accurate and current.

Be family-led and flexible

You may need to build rapport before starting the full assessment process. This might require several visits, phone calls or interactions with the family.

Be led by what is important to families. Use your professional judgement to determine which domains (see below) of a family's life you should focus on in the assessment process.

Some families may find themselves in crisis. You might need to be more direct to guide the conversations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of each family member.

Aim to seek support for the family through culturally appropriate and trusted local service systems within the family's community.

Be conversational

Engagement and relationship building are crucial in the early stages of working with individuals and families and help to build trust and set the scene for their interaction with the program.

Where appropriate, have conversations with families instead of a structured interview and allow families to lead the way. It is important when working with Aboriginal families to ensure you are using principles of Aboriginal family-led assessment (see the [ACMP resources for further guidance](#)).

Use strategies such as mirroring body language, culturally appropriate eye contact, active listening and paraphrasing to ensure the family feels heard and understood.

Use strengths-based language and minimise the use of jargon to ensure families feel comfortable and engaged.

Section 2 of this guide provides plenty of examples of questions which may support conversations.

Consider whether families require an interpreter or support person to help them through the assessment process, to ensure language is not a barrier to participation.



Explore all domains of a family's life

The CAT covers eight life domains:

1

Social and
community



2

Family
relationships



3

Health (physical
and mental health)



4

Home



5

Safety



6

Economic



7

Education and skills



8

Empowerment

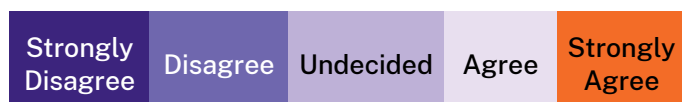


You don't need to complete every section of the CAT in order or in one sitting, but you should cover **each** domain at some point in your assessment. Any one domain may not be the primary focus for support or referrals, but it might be an area where the family has strengths and protective factors to draw on. Further, covering all domains ensures you don't miss underlying areas of need not yet identified by a family or the referring agency.

Use the scaling questions to understand strengths and needs

The rating scale questions in this CAT are designed to provide a snapshot of the domains where families are doing well and where they need the most support.

The tool uses a 5-point scale of:



Responses to the scaling questions can form a basis for identifying priority areas to support the family and any required urgent actions.

Record the responses in the **CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template**. You can also include comments and **notes** for referral. Record these from the perspective of the family, using their voice.

While you should assess all outcome domains, you don't have to record a response to all the scaling questions. In future, DCJ may require some responses to the scaling questions to be reported in the Data Exchange platform to capture client outcomes.

Family-led self-assessment

To support family-led assessment when appropriate, families can complete the **CAT Family self-assessment template**, which includes all the scaling questions.

If you provide a template for the family to complete, let them know they can discuss the questions with you at any stage and that you will go through their responses with them as part of the joint assessment.

Offer families a copy of all the information. This minimises the need for the family to tell their story again when you refer them on to another provider.

3. Mandatory reporting

You must be aware of mandatory reporting obligations.

You should tell families if you are making a report, but this might not always be possible, especially if there are safety issues placing children at risk, if the family is not contactable or if there are worker safety issues.

Tell families about your mandatory reporting requirements. Depending on what’s disclosed during discussions with families, use your professional

judgement or consult with your manager to determine whether any disclosures, observations or circumstances uncovered during the assessment meet the mandatory reporting threshold.

Learn more about your mandatory reporting obligations at the [ChildStory Reporter Community](#) website.

4. Crisis contacts

Be ready to provide these crisis contact points if needed.

Police	000
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800
Child Protection Helpline	132 111
Lifeline	13 11 14
NSW Domestic Violence Line	1800 656 463
NSW Sexual Violence Helpline	1800 424 017





Section 2:

Stages of the assessment

The common assessment process has three stages:

Stage 1: Gathering information

Stage 2: Analysing information

Stage 3: Working with the family to take action

This CAT includes assessment templates for recording the outcomes of stage 1 and stage 2, in preparation for making referrals and working with the family to take action in stage 3. Note that the CAT does not cover stage 3 of the common assessment process.

Stage 1: Gathering information

The Common Assessment Framework outlines the components of an **initial** assessment and a comprehensive assessment. This CAT provides guidance and templates for **comprehensive** assessment against the eight life domains.



Social and Community

Elements to consider

- Social integration
- Participation in organised activities
- Positive relationships
- Access to informal support (e.g., family members and kin, neighbours, and broader community)
- Identity, self-esteem
- Cultural or spiritual connections, practices, values and beliefs

Family relationships

Elements to consider

- Warm, nurturing parenting
- Parenting skills
- Family functioning
- Consider both the family in the household, broader family members and kin

Health (physical and mental health)

Elements to consider

- Mental and physical health (including existing disabilities)
- Access to health services and specialised support (including current and past service involvement)
- Self-care

Home

Elements to consider

- Appropriate and stable housing



Safety

Elements to consider

- Basic care (including living skills)
- Ensuring safety and protection
- Cultural safety

Economic

Elements to consider

- Food and nutrition
- Employment and finances (financial literacy and financial management skills)

Education and skills

Elements to consider

- Participation in education or work
- Progress and achievement in learning
- Developmental milestones

Empowerment

Elements to consider

- Families are well-informed and can make informed decisions
- Families feel supported to navigate the service system with confidence

To help you and families assess each domain, Section 3 of this guide provides:

- **scaling questions** to help you understand where the family currently sees themselves against each domain
- explanatory **notes** about the significance of each domain and things to keep in mind
- **example questions** to support the conversation about each domain if you need to go deeper.

You don't need to use all the example questions. They are optional. Use your professional judgement to adjust the language and framing for the family you are working with.

Using the templates

Record the details collected during this stage of gathering information in the **CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template**.

You might also offer the family the **CAT Family self-assessment template** if you think it's appropriate for them to answer the scaling questions themselves. You can record the self-assessment outcomes in the joint-assessment template.

Talk with families about how they have assessed themselves and why they placed themselves at a particular rating. Let them know that this will help inform what areas to focus on in the work you do together.

Stage 2: Analysing information

Aim to reach a mutual understanding of the issues identified with the family during stage 1. Use this understanding to prioritise needs and solve immediate problems.

Take time to identify family strengths as this could identify informal supports.

Record priorities for action in stage 2 of the **CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template**.

Explain to the family that identifying the 'most important' areas they wish to focus on does not mean other areas will be overlooked.

Stage 3: Working with the family to take action

The Common Assessment Framework sets out that taking action in stage 3 happens after assessing the family's situation and developing a plan. This CAT does not cover stage 3 of the process.

Refer to the [Common Assessment Framework](#) and the [FCS Program Specifications](#) for detailed guidance around the next steps of stage 3, including:

- Safety planning
- Goal setting and case planning
- Making referrals
- Active holding

For outbound referrals, ensure the family are aware of the referral and that you still have their consent.

Make a 'warm' referral by contacting the referral service to introduce the family or offer to take part in an introductory meeting.

With the family's consent and in most cases, you can attach the completed joint assessment to the outgoing referral documents.



Section 3:

Doing the assessment

This section of the guide follows the flow of the joint assessment, which starts with collecting high-level information about the family and details of the children before assessing each outcome domain. Finally, you will identify current strengths and priorities for support.

For each outcome domain, there are **scaling questions**, explanatory **notes** and plenty of **questions that may help** and support your conversations to gather in-depth information.

Use the **CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template** to record all the details.

Stage 1: Gathering information

The first part of this stage involves gathering high-level information about the family and details of the children.

From this first question, you are looking to gain an understanding of the reasons the family is seeking support or why they have been referred to you.

What is the main reason you are seeking support for yourself and/or your family?

Questions that may help

Can you tell me more about what has been happening for you and your family?

You shared this information during intake / referral / the first phone call with [staff member]. Does this sound right? Is there anything you'd like to add? How long has this been going on?

How are you coping with the challenges that you are facing right now?

What have you done in the past when facing challenges?

What's worked well?

What have you learnt from past challenges?

How does it feel to overcome challenges?

Can you tell me about a time when things were going well for your family? What was different then?

Is there anything you feel uncomfortable talking about?

Are there any topics you'd like to talk about later?

What are you hoping to achieve by working with FCS?

The next question is about identifying services that may currently be involved with the family and what supports they may already have. This question may also help to identify gaps and coordinate services in, for example, housing, health, mental health, drug and alcohol, justice and education areas.

Are any other services or supports currently involved with your family?

Questions that may help

Are you connected with any other services? What do they support you with?

Do any other services come out to support you and your family? Do you go to other services for support?

How is that going for you and your family? What's working or not working?

How do you connect with your supports? (e.g. face to face, by phone)

How often do you meet with them?

When connecting with other services in the past, what has worked or not worked for you and your family?

Are there services you've tried to access but haven't been able to?

Are there any services you don't want to connect with? Can you tell me why?

Who else spends time with your kids and supports them? How is that going?

Details about children

Questions that may help

This is the information that I have about the kids, and I'd like to make sure that it is correct. This helps us to identify what's happening for your family and how we can help you seek support.

Can I check if my information is correct? Is there anything you'd like to add?

How many kids do you have? How many kids are you caring for?

How are the children going?

Have any of your kids been diagnosed with a disability?

Do any of your kids identify as LGBTQIA+?

Is there someone they feel comfortable talking to? Is there someone you can talk to as a parent/carer?

Can you tell me about your relationship with your kids? What would you like it to be?

What do you think your kids need from you?

How would you describe your kid's personality? What are they good at? What are they most proud of? What are you most proud of them for? What do they like/dislike? Does this have any impact on you/your family members? (Ask about each child or young person.)

What's the hardest thing about being a mum/dad/carer to your kids?

Do you have a routine in place at home? Can you tell me about this?

Do your kids have hobbies? Do they play sport / play a musical instrument? Are they artistic? What do they do out of school? What do they like to do for fun?

The next part of this stage involves gathering information about the eight life domains. Remember that you don't need to complete the domains in order or in one sitting, but you should cover each domain at some point in your assessment. The guidance for each domain includes scaling questions, notes and a range of questions that may help your conversations.



Domain 1: Social and community

Scaling questions:

My family and I are connected to our culture

I have a clear sense of what my culture means to me

I feel connected to my community



Culture, religion and identity

Try to gain an understanding of the family's needs relating to their identity, culture, spirituality or religion. Explore their connection and involvement with their community. Be curious about the family's connections.

The principle of **active efforts** in the [ACMP](#) asks practitioners to take meaningful and all possible steps to support Aboriginal families to address risks to keep a child with their family.

Families are provided with access to family supports, aligned to identified needs, at the first point of contact and may be offered these more than once. Understanding whether a family or individual identifies as Aboriginal as early as possible is important in embedding the principle of active efforts into your work with a family.

Find out if there are services that the family feel uncomfortable speaking with or don't want to be referred to due to privacy, religious or cultural value systems in their community. This will help in seeking appropriate support services for the family.

Where possible and appropriate, arrange a cultural consultation when working with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse families to develop a deeper cultural understanding.

Remember to ask if anyone would feel more comfortable using an interpreter.

Culture is defined as the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group, or the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or way of life) shared by people in a place or time. (Merriam Webster Dictionary)

For Aboriginal families

Some Aboriginal families may find questioning about their culture by a non-Aboriginal person intrusive. Wherever possible, include an Aboriginal worker in the assessment process.

Be culturally sensitive and understand the history and transgenerational trauma of policies and practices of previous governments and non-government organisations.

Gain an understanding of the family's connection to their mob, their culture and their identity. How does this make them feel? Are they connected with the local community? Are they connected to their Country/mob of origin?

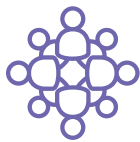
Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership and application of data about Indigenous communities, peoples, lands and resources. During the assessment process, the family may be willing to talk about and share information about their culture and traditions, or sometimes they may not. This may come later when trust has been built. If the family shares information about their identity, cultural practices, spiritual connections, values or beliefs, ask for permission to record this where appropriate. Explain where the data will be stored, who will have access to it and what it might be used for.

Be aware that historically (and currently) the misuse of data has reinforced a narrative of inequality and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

At times it may not be necessary or appropriate to record specific answers if they relate to men's or women's business, cultural knowledge or ceremonies. The use of this information needs to be approved by the family and should only be used to explore the family's access and connection to culture and if they can identify any familial/cultural support.

Always be open and transparent and ensure families have the opportunity to tell their own story in their own words.

For culturally and linguistically diverse families



Gain an understanding of the family's connection to their cultural community.



Always consider whether interpreting services may make conversations easier for the family. Relying on family members or friends to act as an interpreter is not recommended when discussing sensitive information.



Be culturally curious. Ask how the parent/carer would like to be greeted and addressed. Check if the seating arrangements are appropriate.



Family members might decline to answer some questions due to cultural values and make little or no eye contact. Respect their decisions.

Questions that may help

If the parent hasn't already identified as Aboriginal

Do you, your child or any of your family members identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Who's your/their mob? Where are you/they from? Is that your/their traditional Country?

If the parent has identified as Aboriginal

Is this your traditional Country?

If so: Is this your kids' Country too? Are they from here too? Was their mum/dad from here? (Also explore the other parent's cultural heritage.)

If not: Where is your traditional Country? Where is your kids' traditional Country? Where is their other parent's traditional Country? How often do you return to Country?

Have you heard of the [local Aboriginal organisation name]?

Do you know [worker] at the Aboriginal medical service / housing company / land council / corporation? (FCS providers should have a database of information.)

Are there any services that don't feel comfortable with or don't want to be referred to? Are there any organisations / people / family groups you don't want us to share your information with? This helps us to seek support from services that you're comfortable with.

Would you like someone from your family or a friend to support you in these conversations? An Aboriginal support person in the community? An Aboriginal worker in FCS?

Do your kids take part in any cultural activities? What are those?

Are there any cultural activities that you / your family do that helps keep you / your family connected? How does this make you feel?

Do you have a special place that helps you feel connected to your culture? Is it culturally significant? How does this make you feel?

Overall, do you and your family feel connected to your culture?

Overall, do you and your family feel connected to and a part of your community?

For culturally and linguistically diverse families

How would you describe your cultural identity or ethnicity?

Do you speak another language?

Where were you born? What about your kids?

How long have you been in Australia?

Are there any items of cultural/religious significance for you and your family that we should be aware of?

Are there events of cultural/religious significance that you and your family celebrate that we should be aware of?

What has it been like for you to settle in [suburb/city/town]?

What do you like best about Australia?

Have you found anything difficult or that you / your family can't get used to?

Have you heard of the [local multicultural centre]? Do you know [a worker] there?

Are there any services that you don't feel comfortable with or don't want to be referred to? This helps us to seek support from services that you're comfortable with.

Are there any family members or people in your community who you don't want to know about your information/story?

Would you like someone from your family or a trusted friend to sit in on these conversations to help you understand the questions I am asking? If you are more comfortable with an interpreter, I can arrange that too. What language/dialect do they need to speak? Would you prefer a male or a female interpreter? (Note that there may not be a choice or options at times.)

Do you have a family member or trusted friend that you would like to support you and your family if you go to other services or programs?

Is there something I should know about the different roles people play in your culture?

What else about your culture is important for me to know?

Overall, do you and your family feel connected to your culture?

Overall, do you and your family feel connected to and a part of your community?

For all families

Can you tell me about you and your family's identity and culture?

Does your family have cultural customs? For example, families may have a cultural practice of focusing on family time at dinner and not being available during those times or attending church and not being available during those times.

Is there a preferred contact in your family? (Consider family roles and responsibilities for mums, dads and other adults.)

Are there any family members with specific cultural needs?

Are there religious, spiritual or faith-based considerations we should be aware of?

How long have you lived in this area? Where did you travel from? Where did you live before here?

Overall, do you and your family feel connected to your culture?

Overall, do you and your family feel connected to and a part of your community?

Identity and self-esteem

Gain an understanding of the parent's sense of cultural identity and how they define themselves culturally. Throughout the assessment, notice how they perceive themselves – for example, their gender, ethnicity and race, age, sexual orientation, physical attributes and personality. Cultural identity and self-esteem may be emotionally linked and are not necessarily co-dependent.

Questions that may help

How would you describe yourself? How do you see yourself? Tell me about yourself.

What actions and activities give you purpose? Is there something that you do in life that makes you proud?

Do you participate in cultural activities? What's the best part of these activities? How does that make you feel? Is there anything you don't like about them?

What do you value? What's important to you? Tell me about where your values and beliefs come from.

What are important values for you? Who taught you these? (Be mindful that the parent may have been in care and might have not always been parented in a culturally safe way.)

Who or what makes you happy? Does anything make you unhappy?

What do you do to make yourself feel better?

How do you feel right now?

Who or what inspires you?

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is more than being aware of and respecting other cultures. It is about creating an environment where Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse families can feel physically and emotionally safe, heard and respected, and where they can draw strength from their identity, culture and community. It is about learning, living and working together with dignity.

Questions that may help

Do you have any concerns with the way you are treated by services/organisations that you work with or are supported by?

Have you ever not gone to services or stopped using services because you didn't feel culturally safe?

Is there anything you think we can do to make sure you feel your culture is respected?



Domain 2: Family relationships

Scaling questions:

I have confidence in my parenting and caring skills

My family generally gets along with each other

I have friends and people I can count on outside of my family

My children find it easy to make and maintain friendships



Relationships and connections to family and community

Try to gain an understanding of family relationships in the family home and connections outside the home. Identify strong relationships and supports that the family can draw on. Being connected to community or a broader network can help identify positive relationships to support the family.

Explore kinship and community supports – for example, current or former partners, other parent, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, family friends, neighbours, parents of children's friends and any significant others. Ask the family if they do not want their information or circumstances shared with a particular individual or service.

Consider using an eco-mapping exercise to identify a family's relationships with people, groups and organisations.

For Aboriginal families, try to gain an understanding of the family's connection to local mob and what mob they come from.

Many Aboriginal families have close, intricate family connections and are often supported by extended family members.

For culturally and linguistically diverse families, try to gain an understanding of the family's connection to their local cultural community.

Questions that may help

How do you feel about your parenting skills?

Where did you learn how to be a parent/carer?

What's your favourite part of being a parent/carer?

How does your family usually get along?

Do you have extended family such as cousins, aunts, uncles or grandparents that you're close with?

Do you feel connected and welcome in your community?

Are you a part of any community groups, sporting groups or religious groups? How often do you connect with these groups?

Do you attend local community gatherings?

Are there any other people that you can turn to for support?

Who else knows what's going on for you and your family right now?

If your car broke down or you needed \$20 before payday, is there anyone you could rely on?

If something serious happened with one of the kids, who would show up no matter what?

Are there any other adults that play an important role in your kids' lives?

Who would the kids say is important to them? Is there someone they can turn to for support? What does this look like? Do they have a role in raising your kids?

Are there people who have supported you and your kids in the past who would be good to reconnect with?

For Aboriginal families

How do you connect with your mob?

How do you connect with the community around here?

Do you attend local Aboriginal community events?

Do any of your mob support you with taking care of your kids? What does this look like? Do you want them to be part of the support we (FCS) are providing to your family?

For culturally and linguistically diverse families

How do you and your family celebrate your culture?

In what ways are you connected to your culture and community?

Do you attend cultural community events?

Do you attend a place of worship?

Do any of your community support you with taking care of your kids? What does this look like? Do you want them to be part of the support we (FCS) are providing to your family?

Support

Who do you turn to for support? How do they support you?

Do you feel supported by these people or groups?

Do you feel you can turn to these people or groups when in need?

Is this something you'd like us to help you build?

Domain 3: Health (physical and mental health)

The health domain is divided into four parts in order to gain a detailed understanding of the health status of children and parents.



Part A: Child's physical health, mental health and disability

Scaling questions:

My children are physically healthy

My children are usually happy and emotionally well

My children can do most things that are expected for their age and ability

Try to gain an understanding of the children's physical health, mental health, disability and anything else that may be impacting them. When children struggle with any of these issues, there can be significant impacts on development milestones, social inclusion, learning and overall wellbeing. Challenges relating to a child's health can also lead to increased worry and stress for parents.

Questions that may help

Physical health

Do your kids go to a baby health clinic / health service? Did they go in the past? Do they still go?

Are your kids meeting their developmental milestones?

Do your kids let you know when they're not feeling well?

Is there a local doctor (a GP or Aboriginal medical service) that you take the kids to when they're not feeling well?

Have any of the kids been diagnosed with a disability?

Do any of the kids have an NDIS plan?

Have any of the kids been diagnosed with a medical condition? Do they take regular medication? Does this help? Is there a plan in place to support them?

Are you worried about your kids using alcohol or drugs? Do you worry about them smoking or vaping?

Do your kids have special dietary (food) needs or preferences?

Do your kids have any allergies? Do they take regular medication for this?

Do any of the kids get specialised support at school or home?

What are your kids good at? What are their strengths?

Overall, how do you feel about your kids' physical health?

Mental health

Do you have any concerns about your kids' happiness? How are they coping?

How easy or hard is it to recognise and identify what your kids are feeling? Can you tell when they're having a good or bad day?

Do they have friends at school or in the community that they like to spend time with?

Are they facing any issues that you know about?

Do you know if your kids have had any thoughts of hurting themselves? If so, do they talk to someone or have therapy? Are there supports in place, like a care plan? How are you coping as a parent with this?

Have your kids ever tried to hurt themselves? If so, are there supports in place? How are you coping as a parent with this?

Do your kids let you know if they're feeling unsafe? Worried?

How do they express their feelings when they're sad/angry/scared?

What do they do to feel good about themselves? For example, how do you think they look after themselves?

Have they been going through Sorry Business? Are they grieving the loss of a loved one?

Do you think they're growing up in two different cultures? How are they coping?

What's your biggest worry about your kids at the moment?

Overall, how do you feel about your kids' physical and mental health?

Support

If you are worried about your kids' happiness, do you have a doctor (GP) or someone (like a trusted friend, relative or person in your community) who can support you to find help?

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) who you can talk to about your concerns for your kids' physical and emotional health and wellbeing?

Do any of the kids have access to specialist support services? How easy is it to make appointments? Is there a waiting list? Is it easy to get to appointments? (e.g. face to face, by phone, by travel)

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Scaling questions:

My children cope well with difficult situations

I feel confident in managing my child's behaviour

Try to gain an understanding of the child's behaviours when they are at home, at school or in the community. Be curious about any issues that may be impacting the child or the family.

Questions that may help

Do you have concerns about your kids' behaviours? How do your kids respond if you say no to their requests? Tell me about what your kids find hard or get upset about. How do you manage when that happens?

What do you think their behaviours mean?

What strategies do you use to address and cope with their behaviours?

How do you know when your kids are happy/sad/angry/unwell?

How does their behaviour affect them and people around them?

What comforts or reassures them?

What strategies do you use at home?

Do your kids see a behavioural psychologist or other therapist to support them/you to manage their behaviours? Has this been helpful?

Have they ever been prescribed medications to help with managing their behaviours? If so, when was the last time this was reviewed?

Overall, how do you feel about your kids' behaviours?

Support

If you had to face a problem that your kids may be experiencing, do you have a doctor (GP) or someone (like a trusted friend, relative or person in your community) who can support you to find help?

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) who you can talk to about any concerns about your kids' behaviours?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Part C: Parent's physical health, mental health and disability

Scaling questions:

I am generally in good physical health

I generally feel good emotionally

Try to gain an understanding of the parent's physical health, mental health, disability and anything else that may be impacting them or the family.

Questions that may help

Physical health

Tell me about your health.

How do you feel about your own physical health at the moment?

What do you do for self-care? How do you take time out or relax?

Do you access support through a local health or Aboriginal medical service? How is that going?

Do you have any health challenges that have been affecting you or your family that you'd like to share or think it's important to share?

Have you been diagnosed with a disability? Do you have an NDIS plan?

Have you been diagnosed with a medical condition? Do you take regular medication? Does this help? Is there a plan in place to support you?

What are your strengths when taking care of your physical health?

Overall, what does being healthy mean to you?

Mental health

How do you feel about your mental health and happiness right now?

If you had to give it a number between 1 and 10, with 1 being not feeling good and 10 being feeling great, what number would you give yourself today? What about this week? What makes it a [number] and not a [higher number]? What needs to change to get to a [higher number]?

Do you have any formal diagnoses? If so, when was the last time this was reviewed?

Do you take any medication for your mental health? If so, when was the last time this was reviewed? Do you think the medication helps?

Do you have or have you had any thoughts about hurting yourself? Do you talk to someone or have therapy? Do you have supports in place, like a care plan?

Do you have or have you had any thoughts about suicide? Do you talk to someone or have therapy? Do you have supports in place, like a care plan?

Support

If you had to face a challenge or a worry about your physical or mental health, do you have a doctor (GP) or someone (like a trusted friend) who can support you to find help?

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) who you can talk to about any physical and mental health concerns?

Do you have access to specialist support services? Is it easy to get to appointments? (e.g. face to face, by phone, by travel)

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Scaling questions:

Drinking alcohol is not a problem for me or my family

Drug use is not a problem for me or my family

Try to gain an understanding of whether alcohol and/or other drugs are an issue for the family. Explore what this means and if there are underlying issues. Explore any past use, how they might have overcome this and what has worked for them before.

This may be a sensitive topic for families. Let them know they're not being judged. Explain that the focus is on ensuring they have support where needed. You should also explain that some disclosures affect the limitations of confidentiality and may prompt mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Questions that may help

Can I ask if you consume alcohol?

On average, how much and how often do you consume alcohol? In what setting?

Do you feel that sometimes drinking alcohol affects your parenting or your kids? How?

Can you tell me about a time when your alcohol consumption was different to now? How was it different?

Has anyone ever told you they worry about your alcohol consumption?

Have you ever hurt yourself physically while drinking or because of drinking?

Has alcohol negatively affected or ended your relationships with others?

How does your alcohol use affect you or your family? (e.g. you run out of money, you get angry when you don't have it, you lost your licence)

Do you feel like this is a challenge for you? Is it something you want to reduce?

If you'd like to reduce the amount of alcohol you consume, what would you like to reduce it to?

Have you ever sort help for your alcohol use? When? Who did you engage with? Do you think it helped?

Are there times when you decide not to consume alcohol? Why? (This helps to establish where they may already have strengths.)

Do you feel you need support to reduce or change the way you consume alcohol?

Can I ask if you use any other drugs or substances and what they are? What about prescribed medication outside of the doctor's recommended dose? (Keep exploring other drug use using the above questions.)

Do any other family members in your household consume alcohol or drugs in a way that impacts you or the family? (Keep exploring other family members using the above questions.)

Support

If you or another family member had to face a problem about drinking alcohol and/or taking drugs, do you have a doctor (GP) or someone (like a trusted friend) who can support you to find help?

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) who you can talk to about any concerns?

Have you accessed support services for drug use in the past? Would you consider accessing support again?

Have you ever had a formal drug and alcohol assessment? Is this something you're open to?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Domain 4: Home

Scaling questions:

My family's home is stable

My family's home is appropriate/suitable for our needs



Appropriate and stable housing

Try to gain an understanding of the family's housing situation. Is it secure? Does it meet their needs? Families might not be deemed homeless but may still face housing stability issues (e.g. affordability, eviction, emergency or short-term housing) and employment concerns.

Seek the family's views on their housing situation. They may use their homes in different ways (e.g. for intergenerational needs, extended family, regular visitors, location, closeness to community).

Questions that may help

Do you have stable housing?

Who owns/rents your home? (e.g. a parent, family member, the government, Aboriginal housing office)

Do they do regular repairs and necessary maintenance?

Are you concerned about being able to afford your home? (rent/mortgage repayments)

Are you currently homeless?

What's getting in the way of finding somewhere safe to stay?

Do you have concerns about the future of your housing? Are you worried you may have to move? How far into the future?

Do you have enough room/bedrooms for your family members?

Do you feel safe in your home?

Are there any safety issues? Accessibility issues?

Is your home close to the kids' schools, accessible transport, support networks (e.g. doctors, GP, family) and work?

Do you get along with the neighbours?

Who is responsible for keeping your home clean and tidy? Do the kids help?

Do you struggle with looking after your home?

Overall, is your home appropriate for your family's needs?

What would a more suitable home look like?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Support

If you have concerns with your housing situation, is there someone (like a trusted friend) who can support you to find help?

Are you aware of housing support services in your area? (e.g. tenancy support, housing providers, Aboriginal housing providers)

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Domain 5: Safety

Scaling questions:

My family and I feel safe at home

My family and I feel safe out in the community

My family does not have arguments that lead to aggression or physical abuse



Safety and protection

Try to gain an understanding of safety and protection for the family. Explore any physical and emotional safety concerns, particularly any current concerns that need immediate attention and support. Explore if there is family disagreement or conflict and how this impacts the family.

This may be a sensitive topic for families, particularly for issues relating to domestic and family violence. Keep your own safety in mind. Have sensitive conversations only when and where it's safe to do so.

The conversation should support the victim/survivor to not feel blame or shame. Acknowledge the strengths they already have, which has kept themselves and their children safe.

Consider family dynamics and timing when exploring domestic and family violence topics. Keep things conversational and enter relevant information into the template later or when appropriate.

If you identify safety concerns, refer to your agency's domestic and family violence resources, speak to your manager and consider your role as a mandatory reporter.

Keep up to date with training and knowledge on identifying and responding to domestic and family violence, coercion and control. Refer to the **Safety Planning** section of the Common Assessment Framework as a further guide.

Explain that some disclosures affect the limitations of confidentiality and may prompt mandatory reporting responsibilities.

Questions that may help

How would you rate your family's ability (between 1 and 10) to get along with each other? What makes it that number?

How does your family approach a challenge? What do you do and how did you know to do it?

[If parents are separated or divorced] Are there Family Law Court Orders in place? How do you feel about your kids visiting their other parent? Do they see their mum/dad often? Are visits going well? Where do they meet or live with the other parent? What role does the other parent play in their lives?

Who are most disagreements/conflicts between? (e.g. the kids, significant other, ex-partner, other family members)

What happens if things escalate (get worse)? Has there ever been physical violence?

How often do arguments become aggressive or physical?

When was the last incident?

How do you respond? What are some of the things you do to keep yourself or your kids safe?

What strategies do you use to cope?

How do these disagreements/conflicts impact you or the kids?

Do you have any physical and/or emotional safety concerns for yourself/kids?

How do you resolve these disagreements/conflicts in the family?

Do you feel like this is an area where you are strong?

Do you want more skills to help you in these situations?

Have you or your kids been affected by domestic or family violence? (Some people may not understand the nature of their situation.)

Have the police ever been involved in relation to family conflict?

Are any apprehended violence orders in place? Who are they against? Who is protected? What are the conditions? Do you feel confident to call the police to activate the AVO if needed? When does it expire?

Do you have current or past involvement with DCJ? If so, tell me more about that. Did the kids ever go into care?

Do you ever feel like you struggle to keep yourself or the kids safe?

Are there adults in your kids' life that you feel are not safe?

When was the last time you felt unsafe? Can you tell me more about that?

Who or what makes you and your family feel safe?

Do you think you need help to stay safe and keep your kids safe?

Support

If you have concerns about safety for yourself and your family, do you have someone (like a trusted friend) who can support you to find help?

Have you thought about speaking to a counsellor?

Have you thought about speaking to police? Housing? Legal?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Domain 6: Economic

Scaling questions:

I can afford the things I need for myself and my family

I am employed in suitable work

I have access to healthy food for myself and my family

I can prepare healthy meals for myself and my family



Employment, finances, food and nutrition

Try to gain an understanding of the family's economic situation, including employment, financial literacy and financial management skills, as well as food and nutrition.

Broader economic conditions may impact on this domain. Be aware of payday and Centrelink cycles and avoid being judgemental.

Questions that may help

Do you work full-time, part-time or casually? Are you on a contract / doing temp work? How do you receive an income to pay your family's bills?

Do you receive any other forms of income?

Who cares for your kids when you are at work?

Are you a stay-at-home parent/mum/dad/nan/pop/carer?

How are you coping with everyday bills? On your current income, can you provide food, clothes and other needed items for your family?

Do you have a budget? How do you keep track of spending?

How secure do you feel in your job? What makes you feel this way?

Do you have a car or access to a car?

Can you easily catch public transport in your area or to the places you need to go?

Do you ever have to go without food, rent, petrol/travel or medication because you can't afford it?

Can you tell me about the kinds of food your family likes to eat? Are there any 'fussy eaters' in your family?

Where do you shop for groceries?

Do you have enough fridge and freezer space to store food safely?

How would you rate your budgeting and cooking abilities out of 10?

How often do you or the kids eat takeaway?

Can you afford the food that your family likes to eat or that keeps them healthy?

Support

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) that you can talk to about financial concerns?

Do you know about other support agencies that can help you?

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) that can support you if you need financial help?

Would you like financial management/counselling support?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?



Domain 7: Education and skills



The education and skills domain is divided into two parts, about education and skills and the child's learning and development.

Part A: Education and skills

Scaling questions:

I am happy with my current level of education/training



Try to gain an understanding of the young person or parent's participation in education and training.

Questions that may help

Are you currently working, studying or doing some training? Or would you like to?

Is there a job you'd like to do in the future that you're studying towards?

What's your goal from studying, training or skills development?

What are you working towards? What helps you?

What do you find challenging? What do you think you do well? What would you like to improve on?

How long is the course/training? When do you start? Is it full-time/part-time? Are you working while studying?

Do you have the resources you need for your study? (e.g. books, laptop, internet)

How do you manage study/training/working and looking after your kids?

What supports do you currently have to help you balance work/education/training and your kids?

Do you have access to childcare when you are working/studying/training?

Support

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) who you can talk to about any concerns you may have with education, training and skills development?

Is this an area where you'd like more support? (e.g. childcare, transport, school pick-ups, back-to-work allowances)

Part B: Child's learning and development

Scaling questions:

My children enjoy learning and developing new skills

I am happy with my children's attendance and engagement with school

I have confidence in my children's development or ability to learn

Try to gain an understanding of how the child develops new skills and whether they are functioning appropriately for their developmental stage.

Unidentified developmental delays or medical needs can significantly impact children and how they function at home, at school and in the community.

Questions that may help

Do your kids attend school/preschool/early childhood services?

Do they enjoy it? How are they doing? How do they feel about school?

How do you feel about the kids' education and schooling? What's going well? Do you have any concerns? (e.g. bullying)

Can you tell me about your kids' learning needs? Do they need learning support at school?

Are your kids confident in learning new skills?

If there are challenges in learning new skills, how do you see your kids deal with this?

Are there any barriers to attending school/preschool/early childhood services? Do your kids need extra supports?

Do your kids like trying new activities? Going to new places? Meeting new people?

How do they approach new activities? What are they like with new people?

Overall, how do you feel about your kids' learning and development?

Support

If you had concerns about your kids' learning and development, do you have a doctor (GP) or someone (like a trusted friend) who can support you to find help?

Is there a school liaison/support staff/Aboriginal Education Officer that you can talk to, to seek support for your kids?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Domain 8: Empowerment

Scaling questions:

I feel confident in making decisions for my family

I know about the services that can provide support for myself and my family

I feel confident in talking with services to seek support for myself and my family



Connecting with services and making informed decisions

Try to gain an understanding of the parent's confidence and ability to connect with services and make informed decisions for their family. This domain also provides an opportunity for parents to identify what empowers them, as well as what makes them feel confident to seek information and support.

Questions that may help

Do you know if there are services (organisations/programs etc.) that could help support you and your family?

Do you feel confident in approaching and talking with services to seek support for you and your family?

Do you feel confident in making decisions that affect your family?

What makes you feel confident/strong/empowered when talking to services and seeking support for your family?

How informed do you feel about the Family Connect and Support program?

Support

Is there anything we can do to make sure you feel empowered through this process?

Do you have people in your life (family/friends) who you can talk to about any concerns?

Is this an area where you'd like to feel more empowered?

Is this an area where you'd like more support?

Stage 2: Analysing information

Identify priority areas

Work with the family to identify strengths and priority areas for support and record these in the **CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template**. The priority for support can range from requiring immediate action (most important) to something that needs attention (important) to something for future follow up.

Use the responses to the scaling questions to help identify priorities. For instance:

Responses that Agree or Strongly Agree could be noted as family strengths.

Responses that Strongly Disagree could be considered as a most important priority.

Responses that Disagree could be considered as an important priority.

Responses that are Undecided could be considered for future follow up.

For future follow ups, note a date to check in later to see how things are progressing and if support is required.

Order the priorities

Work with families to identify an order of urgency for their priorities. Identify the top three areas to focus on during their engagement with the program. Selecting a top three does not mean that other areas will be overlooked.

Don't overwhelm the family with too many priorities. Highlight family strengths and point out where progress has been made.

Develop a case plan with the identified priority areas in mind. Case plans and referrals made to external agencies can be included alongside a copy of the assessment, with the family's consent.

Summarise the decisions

In the **CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template**, record an overview of the family's decisions about the kinds of support services they would like to receive and a summary of the reasons for them. Include the main priority areas and how these can be supported by the local service system or the FCS program. This rationale will help with making appropriate referrals.

Explain the next steps

Once the assessment is complete, remember to thank the family for their honesty and for sharing during this process. Acknowledge that sharing personal information can be difficult, and that you'd like to support them to build on all the strengths they have demonstrated throughout the discussions, as well as to make a plan to help with some of their current challenges.

Explain what may happen next. For example:

You might do further assessments with the family to guide goal setting and case planning.

You might arrange a case planning meeting to develop a plan with the family.

Conclude the CAT process

Ensure any developed plan and proposed referrals are mutually understood and the family is happy to proceed.

Ask if there is anything else the family would like to know. Ask how they are feeling about the assessment process and moving forward.

Let families know that you will keep in touch and work with them on any worries they may have or that might come up.

Stage 3: Working with the family to take action

Remember that the CAT does not cover stage 3. Guidance on the next steps to take action with families can be found in the [Common Assessment Framework](#).

CAT Practitioner joint-assessment template

Family Connect and Support Common Assessment Tool

Practitioner joint-assessment template



Key information	Details
Name of parent/carer(s)	
Relationship to child / young person	
Contact details (phone/email)	

Staff member completing assessment	Details
Name	
Date started	

Stage 1: Gathering information

What is the main reason you are seeking support for yourself and/or your family?

In this question we are trying to gain an understanding of the reasons you are seeking support for yourself or your family.

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Are any other services or supports currently involved with your family?

In this question we are trying to identify any services you and your family may already be involved with to understand what support you may already be receiving.

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Details of children

Name	Age	DOB	Gender	School / Day care	Cultural identity	Relationship to primary carer (client)	Medical diagnosis / Medical issue	Disability	Additional needs

Domain 1: Social and community

Culture, religion and identity

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your family's identity, culture, spirituality or religion and any connections you may have to the community. We ask these questions because culture is a strength that should be celebrated, as it can help to keep families strong and connected.

We also would like to know if you have any particular cultural requirements we should know about so that we can try and provide you and your family a culturally safe experience.



Culture, religion and identity	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My family and I are connected to our culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a clear sense of what my culture means to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel connected to my community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Domain 2: Family relationships

Relationships and connections to family and community

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your family's relationships within the family home and connections outside the home such as the community or your mob.



Relationships and connections to family and community	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I have confidence in my parenting and caring skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family generally gets along with each other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have friends and people I can count on outside of my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children find it easy to make and maintain friendships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Domain 3: Health (physical and mental health)

The health domain is divided into **four parts** in order to gain a detailed understanding of the health status of children and parents.

Part A: Child’s physical health, mental health and disability

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your child’s physical health, mental health, disability and anything else that may be impacting them.



Child’s physical health, mental health and disability	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My children are physically healthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children are usually happy and emotionally well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children can do most things that are expected for their age and ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Part B: Child's behaviours

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your child's behaviours at home, at school or in the community, and if there are there any issues that may be impacting them or the family.

Child's behaviours	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My children cope well with difficult situations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident in managing my child's behaviour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Part C: Parent’s physical health, mental health and disability

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your physical health, mental health, disability and anything else that may be impacting you or your family.

Parent’s physical health, mental health and disability	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am generally in good physical health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I generally feel good emotionally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Part D: Alcohol and/or other drugs use

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of whether alcohol and/or other drugs are an issue for anyone in your family, now or in the past. We'd also like to learn how you might have overcome this and what has worked before.

Note: We understand this may be a sensitive topic, and the reason we ask is to make sure you have support if needed.

Alcohol and/or other drugs use	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Drinking alcohol is not a problem for me or my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drug use is not a problem for me or my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Domain 4: Home

Appropriate and stable housing

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your family's housing situation.



Appropriate and stable housing	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My family's home is stable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family's home is appropriate/suitable for our needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Domain 5: Safety

Ensuring safety and protection

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your safety. We'd like to explore any concerns, disagreements or conflicts that might impact you and your family.



Ensuring safety and protection	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My family and I feel safe at home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family and I feel safe out in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family does not have arguments that lead to aggression or physical abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Details of any protection orders

Notes for referrals

Domain 6: Economic



Employment, finances, food and nutrition

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your family’s economic situation, including employment, financial literacy and financial management skills, as well as food and nutrition.

Employment, finances, food and nutrition	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I can afford the things I need for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am employed in suitable work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have access to healthy food for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can prepare healthy meals for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Domain 7: Education and skills

The education and skills domain is divided into **two parts** about parental education and skills, and the child's learning and development.

Part A: Education and skills

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your participation in education and training.



Education and skills	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am happy with my current level of education / training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Part B: Child's learning and development

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding of your child's development and how they go with learning new skills and information.

Child's learning and development	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My children enjoy learning and developing new skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am happy with my children's attendance and engagement with school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have confidence in my children's development or ability to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Domain 8: Empowerment

Connecting with services and making informed decisions

In this section we are trying to gain an understanding about how confident you feel to connect with services and make informed decisions for your family.



Connecting with services and making informed decisions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident in making decisions for my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know about the services that can provide support for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident in talking with services to seek support for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (consider strengths, concerns and any comments made by family member/s)

Notes for referrals

Stage 2: Analysing Information

In this section we would like to work with you to identify your family's strengths and the areas most important for you and your family right now, which will help with making referrals to other services. This section is a summary of the overall joint assessment.

Priority areas	Summary
Family strengths	
Most important Requires immediate action	<i>For example, Housing – Family requires urgent support for stable and appropriate housing due to homelessness/access/accessibility requirements</i>
Most important Requires immediate action	
Most important Requires immediate action	
Important Needs attention	
Important Needs attention	
Important Needs attention	
Future follow up Include date	

Summary of decisions and next steps

This section is an overview of your family’s decisions about the kinds of support services you would like to receive and a summary of the reasons for them. It will help with making appropriate referrals.

Summary of decisions and next steps

Date completed:

Date family provided with a copy of the assessment:

Useful crisis contacts	Phone number	Useful crisis contacts	Phone number
Police	000	Lifeline	13 11 14
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800	NSW Domestic Violence Line	1800 656 463
Child Protection Helpline	132 111	NSW Sexual Violence Helpline	1800 424 017

CAT Family self-assessment template

Family Connect and Support Common Assessment Tool

Family self-assessment template



As part of the assessment process, this family self-assessment is a chance for you to indicate the areas of your life that you feel are working for you and your family, and other areas where you might need support. You can discuss the answers with your worker at any time, and they will also go through your answers with you as part of a joint assessment.

Some parts might be hard to answer, and some parts might not be important to you and your family. Answer as best you can based on your experiences and how you feel most of the time. There are no right or wrong answers.

You will receive a copy of this information.

Key information	Details
Name of parent/carer(s)	
Relationship to child / young person	
Contact details (phone/email)	
Date	

Answer the statements by ticking one box about how much you agree with it

Culture, religion and identity	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My family and I are connected to our culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a clear sense of what my culture means to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel connected to my community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Relationships and connections to family and community	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I have confidence in my parenting and caring skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family generally gets along with each other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have friends and people I can count on outside of my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children find it easy to make and maintain friendships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Physical and mental health – Child's physical health, mental health and disability	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My children are physically healthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children are usually happy and emotionally well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children can do most things that are expected for their age and ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Physical and mental health – Child's behaviours	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My children cope well with difficult situations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident in managing my child's behaviour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Physical and mental health – Parent's physical health, mental health and disability	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am generally in good physical health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I generally feel good emotionally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Physical and mental health – Alcohol and/or other drugs use	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Drinking alcohol is not a problem for me or my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drug use is not a problem for me or my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appropriate and stable housing	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My family's home is stable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family's home is appropriate/suitable for our needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Ensuring safety and protection	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
My family and I feel safe at home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family and I feel safe out in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My family does not have arguments that lead to aggression or physical abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Employment, finances, food and nutrition	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I can afford the things I need for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am employed in suitable work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have access to healthy food for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can prepare healthy meals for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Education and skills	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am happy with my current level of education / training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My children enjoy learning and developing new skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am happy with my children's attendance and engagement with school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have confidence in my children's development or ability to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Connecting with services and making informed decisions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident in making decisions for my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know about the services that can provide support for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident in talking with services to seek support for myself and my family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any other comments

Department of
Communities and Justice

Locked Bag 5000
Parramatta NSW 2124.

Switchboard:
02 9377 6000

Website:
www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

