Safety & Wellness Benchmarks Manual

for ORR's Support for Trauma-Affected Refugees (STAR) Program[1]

Contents

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[1] Adapted from the original Safety & Wellness Benchmarks with permission from the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

The Safety & Wellness Benchmarks are a compilation of individual scales that measure observable change during the provision of case management for forcibly displaced populations in the United States.

1.1   Key Concepts and Definitions

For the purposes of this tool, **case management** is defined as a method of providing services in which a professional case worker assesses the needs of a client and the client's family, when appropriate, and arranges, coordinates, provides, monitors, evaluates and advocates for a package of services to meet the specific client's complex needs. Case management addresses both the individual's expressed needs as well as the state of the social system in which the case worker and client operate, therefore interventions occur at both the client and systems levels. This means working with clients on individual level change through accessing needed services and opportunities and working with and without clients on systems level change to improve access, remedy inequitable systems, and create stronger opportunities for clients and communities. Throughout the provision of case management, case workers and clients develop strong relationships that are predicated on mutual respect, equity in care and access, a commitment to do no harm, the right to self-determination, and a client-centered, strengths-based, and trauma-informed approach.

While STAR is not an intensive case management program, case managers play a pivotal role in coordinating and arranging care for STAR clients.

Clinicians are mental health professionals licensed within the state in which programs are administered.

1.2   Creation of the Benchmarks

The Benchmarks are a tool to document progress towards client well-being and goals. They are also meant to be used as a tool to help caseworkers or other intake staff in the process of assessing for needs, identifying strengths and resources, setting goals, and providing resources and services.

2.1   Frequency of Use

The Benchmarks are meant to be used at least quarterly:

- As a part of intake and assessment, and
- At quarterly intervals from intake, and
- At case closing.

2.2   Categories of Support

The Benchmarks are a compilation of 15 categories of support. ORR reduced to **seven** categories relevant to the STAR program. These categories are meant to represent the main areas of case management work done in medium to long term programs focused on improving safety, health, and power. This means that the seven categories are not exhaustive and do not include all the potential areas in which clients may set goals or seek services. In the goal setting process, you may set a goal with the client to enroll in a mechanics certification course. This goal will not be reflected in a category specific to professional certifications or education; however, it is still an important component of the client's case management services.

The Benchmarks are meant to support caseworkers in identifying needs and progress and are NOT intended to replace working collaboration with clients to identify their own service goals. Clients may score low on a category of support (i.e. score 1 or 2) and may choose NOT to include that category in their Wellness Plan goals. For example, a client may score 1 or 2 in Physical Health and choose NOT to identify improving physical health as a goal. This self-determination is an important component of the Wellness Plan process and caseworkers are responsible for respecting their clients' rights to self-determination, especially as it pertains to goal setting.

In this manual, there are sections below each category of support that explain the purpose of measuring the category, define key terms, provide suggested assessment questions to help gather information pertaining to the category, and provide suggested responses for categories in which a response is necessary for scores of 1 or 2.

2.3   Levels of Need

Each category of support should be scored based on the level of need. This scoring is defined as:

- Significant (1) meaning the client has immediate/imminent unmet needs in this category and/or may be in crisis in the category
- Moderate (2) meaning the client has emerging needs in this category
- Some (3) meaning the client can meet some of the needs in this category
- Minimal (4) meaning the client can meet most or all of the needs in this category.

Each category has specific examples of the criteria for each level of need, meaning that a client in 'significant needs' for Community Safety will have different examples and indicators than that same client being in 'significant needs' for Mental Health.

All of the individual categories provide an option for **"not enough information at this time"** and a few of the categories have an option of a specified version of **"not applicable".**

What happens if I don't know enough information to fill out a section?
When working with clients, especially at the time of intake/enrollment, you may not have enough information to assess them in various areas in which case, categories may be scored as "not enough information at this time". Once you have enough information, that score will change to an actual score during a follow-up assessment. However, intake workers must have enough information to score the Mental Health category in order to enroll the client in STAR.

For example, if a client enrolls in STAR with an urgent need pertaining to mental health care for a chronic mental health condition, you might focus on that health condition initially and not immediately assess for or discuss physical health. At the time of the initial benchmarks, you would then choose "not enough information" for Physical Health with the intent to discuss Physical Health needs and status with the client for future benchmarks.

What do I do if someone falls in between categories?
If you feel a client falls between levels of need, you have the option to choose a half increment. For example, if you're not sure if a client has moderate needs (2) or some needs (3) in a particular area because they seem to span both levels, you can score them at 2.5.

What if I think a client is a 1 and they think they are a 3?
If you feel there is a discrepancy between the client's perception of where they are and your assessment of where they are, default to the client's perception. For example, if a client feels that they are unsafe in their community, but you feel that they are objectively safe in their community, score them according to the client's perception of safety.

When assessing a client, it is imperative that you focus on ONE CATEGORY at a time. Although some categories may overlap and/or influence each other, you should look at the client through the lens of just the category they are currently evaluating. For example, if a client does not feel safe in a familial relationship, but they have many friends and social supports and are able to navigate their community safely and easily because they live in a supportive community, they will still score 1 in Relationship Safety but will score higher on Community Safety and Support System.

For children ages 0-5: ORR strongly recommends intake staff/case managers administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and reference the CDC Developmental Milestones to determine the client's Safety & Wellness Benchmarks scores.

For children ages 6-16: ORR strongly recommends intake staff/case managers administer the Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC) to clients ages 6-10 and the Y-PSC11 to clients ages 11-16 (including self-report) to help determine the client's Safety & Wellness Benchmarks scores.

According to the age-appropriate assessment listed above (Ages and Stages, PSC, or Y-PSC), select a score of "1 – Significant Needs" if the child reached 0-25% of their milestones, "2 – Moderate Needs" if the child reached 25-50%, "3 – Some Need" if the child reached 51-75%, or "4 – Minimal Needs" if the child reached 76-100%.

2.4 Individual and Household Information

The Benchmarks are meant to represent the state of an individual at a moment in time.

In cases in which the individual being served is a caregiver or there are minors in the individual's home, the relationship safety and mental health of the minors should be considered in the corresponding categories. The assessment may not include the minor in these cases, but you will always want to act on the information received via the caregiver(s). An individual's household wellness naturally impacts the client's wellness. However, score based on the *individual's* level of need.

2.5 Using the Data

On a regular basis, it is important to review and discuss the data collected with your team. The guiding questions below can help you analyze the data:

- What is the quality of the data?
    - Is it complete and accurate? If not, what can be done to improve the data quality?
- What stories does the data tell us?
- What trends are we seeing?
    - Are trends different by demographic?
- Are there any changes in results over time? If so, why?
- Are we achieving the results we hoped to achieve, equally for different populations, regardless of gender, age, and race? If not, why not?
- What successes do we see?
    - Where is there room for improvement?
- What action do we need to take to improve results?

Mental Health

This category measures the client's emotional wellbeing, ability to cope with stressors, and substance use. In cases where there are children, it also measures the caregivers' ability to support the child's emotional wellbeing.

Key Definitions

Mental health or substance use issues
Any distress experienced by an individual due to diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health needs including extreme stress and harmful use of substances to cope

Actively taking steps to promote mental health and wellness
The actions an individual takes individually or with others to positively influence their current and future mental health and wellness. This could include practicing self-care, regularly exercising, engaging in ongoing therapy, or regularly seeking out support systems

Appropriate to age and development
The act of tailoring expectations, materials, and processes to the age and developmental stage of the individual

Developmental milestones
Acquired functions or skills that children predictably develop as they age. For more age-specific milestones, access the CDC's Developmental Milestones

Medical/genetic regression
When a child loses an acquired function or fails to progress beyond a prolonged plateau after a period of relatively normal development; in this case, referring to regression caused by a medical or genetic condition or disease

Minor
Anyone under the age of 18 and therefore legally defined as minors

Negative consequences
Negative consequences can include personal harm or harm to others (physical or emotional), damage to property, and interaction with authorities due to substance use

Youth
Applies to young adults and teenagers (generally aged 16 to 24), depending on developmental status and maturity

Suggested Assessment Questions

- How do you feel about your life most days?
    - Is there anything that causes you stress or unhappiness?
- Do you feel that you are able to manage the things in life that cause you stress?
- Can you tell me about how you spend your time?
    - What things do you like to do?
    - How do you manage stressors in your life?
- Are you concerned about any of your children's development or behavior?

Where resources exist, you can use the RHS-15 as an assessment tool to help measure mental health

Mental Health, cont'd.

Suggested Response Actions

Significant Needs (1) & Moderate Needs (2)

- Connect client to crisis response services, if necessary; create a coping safety plan, as appropriate; work to develop a plan for sustainability; follow the Suicide Prevention Guidance for clients presenting with suicidal ideation

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Mental Health	Not enough information	**Youth & Adult** Mental health or substance use issues are interfering with ability to manage day to day functioning, personal safety or safety of others around them; danger to self or others		**Youth & Adults** Mental health or substance use issues make it more difficult to function but still able to meet activities of daily living with support; currently in SUDs treatment or recently sober		**Youth & Adults** Able to effectively manage mental health symptoms and stressors so that there is little impact on daily life **AND** no or rare misuse of substances but does not result in negative consequences		**Youth & Adults** Able to effectively manage mental health symptoms and stressors so that there is little to no impact on daily life **AND** actively taking steps to promote mental health and wellness **AND** no substance misuse
	Not enough information/ No minors in the home	**Minor** Non-medical/genetic regression in behavior and/or in reaching developmental milestones; unable to recover from emotional upset appropriate to age and development		**Minor** Non-medical/genetic delays in reaching developmental milestones but no regression; difficulty recovering from emotional upset appropriate to age and development		**Minor** Reaching most developmental milestones; can identify strategies to manage emotional upset appropriate to age and development		**Minor** Reaching developmental milestones; successfully utilizing strategies to manage emotional upset appropriate to age and development

Physical Health

This category measures the client's need for physical and/or dental care, access to healthcare and health insurance.

Key Definitions

Healthcare supports or services
Inclusive of screening, diagnoses, treatment, therapies, medications and healthcare supplies and the means to pay for those services.

Barriers
Any condition, resource, or lack of resource that can negatively impact a person's ability to access medical care. This can include things like medical/dental coverage, interpretation, unable or unwilling to manage a chronic condition, and inability to access transportation. This can also include beliefs that are barriers to care such as religious beliefs, misunderstanding or mistrust of medical systems, or a lack of confidence or understanding of treatment options and prognosis (i.e. success rates of early detected treatable cancers, such as breast cancer).

Suggested Assessment Questions

- Do you (or does anyone in your family) have immediate physical or dental health problems or concerns?
- What do you do if you (or someone in your family) is in need of medical or dental care?
    - Are you able to access medical or dental care when you need it?
- Do you (does your family) have health insurance?
- Do you (does anyone in your care) have any medical conditions that you need to take regular medication or need regular services to address?
    - If so, do you have reliable access to the medication/services you need?

Suggested Response Actions

Significant Needs (1)
- Connect client to immediate medical or dental care; create a plan for sustained medical/dental care

Moderate Needs (2)
- Work to develop a plan with client for sustainability of medical/dental care

Physical Health, cont'd.

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Physical Health	Not enough information	Unable to access any needed healthcare supports or services		Able to access some healthcare supports or services but it is insufficient		Able to access needed healthcare supports or services **but unable to do so independently**		Able to access needed healthcare supports or services **and can do so independently;**

Support System

This category measures an individual's sense of connectedness to others in their life, including formal and informal supports such as family, friends, community members, and social organizations such as religious institutions and other community groups.

Key Definitions

Community networks
Consists of a wide range of community-level groups, organizations and collectives that can provide support. This can include affinity groups (LGBTQ, race, ethnic, gender groups), religious groups, community collectives, etc.

Reliable
Able to use and access when wanted/needed.

Suggested Assessment Questions

- Can you tell me about the people in your life that you can talk to?
  - Are you able to reach out to them whenever you need support?
- Do you belong to any community groups or organizations?
- Can you tell me about your faith and the role it plays in your life?

Suggested Response Actions

Significant Needs (1)
- if the client is being actively ostracized by the community, assess their perception of safety and develop a safety plan; work with the client to identify supportive individuals and develop a plan for continued engagement

Support System, cont'd.

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Support System	Not enough information	Individuals and/or community networks/ systems actively causing harm or distress		Unable to identify anyone who can provide them practical or emotional support		Can identify individuals and community networks/ systems who can provide them practical or emotional support but they are unreliable or unavailable		Can identify individuals and community networks/ systems who can provide them consistent and reliable practical or emotional support

Relationship Safety

This category measures the client's experience of safety and well-being within relationships. This measures both adults and minors in the home, regardless of whether the minors are enrolled in services. This category includes abuse by an intimate partner, child abuse and neglect, and abuse perpetrated by family members or individuals with access to the client and their family.

Key Definitions

Caregiving skills
Inclusive of age and developmentally appropriate discipline, interaction, communication, nurturing behavior, and skills to promote positive attachment, etc.

Communication patterns and behaviors
Ways in which individuals interact and communicate with each other that are often repeated, cyclical, or predictable. These can be both positive and negative.

Minor
Anyone under the age of 18 and therefore protected under child abuse and neglect laws

Safety resources
Any resources, services or skills that promote, encourage or ensure safety. These often include informal community safety services such as safe individuals and community safety networks and formal services such as domestic violence service providers, child welfare agencies, police, and emergency medical personnel

Safety plan
Personalized, practical plan to help avoid dangerous situations and to know the best way to react when in danger

Unsafe
There is imminent risk of severe physical or psychological harm caused by abuse, neglect (in the case of an adult in need of care or a minor), or exploitation

Youth
Applies to young adults and teenagers (generally aged 16 to 24), depending on developmental status and maturity

Suggested Assessment Questions

- Tell me about your relationship with your family members (partner, children, parents, etc.).
    - Do you ever feel unsafe or unhappy in those relationships?
- Do you feel unsafe in your home?
    - How often do you feel unsafe in your home?
- Are you or is someone in your home currently experiencing distress?

Where resources exist, you can use the RHS-15 as an assessment tool to help measure mental health for clients age 14+.

Relationship Safety, cont'd.

Suggested Response Actions

Significant Needs (1) & Moderate Needs (2)
- Create a safety plan with the client, including their safe individuals, as appropriate; discuss and connect to formal and informal safety resources, as appropriate. If a child is at risk of imminent harm, follow emergency protocol.

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Relationship Safety	Not enough information	**Youth & Adult** Household and/or relationship is unsafe **AND** client does not have current connection to safety resources and/or a safety plan in place; there are significant barriers to client seeking safety		**Youth & Adults** Household and/or relationship is unsafe **AND** client has current connection to safety resources and/or a safety plan; there are no significant known barriers to seeking safety		**Youth & Adults** Household and/ or relationship is safe; there are some unhealthy patterns of conflict management, communication and/or behaviors		**Youth & Adults** Household and/ or relationship is safe; communication patterns and behaviors are healthy and supportive
	Not enough information/ No minors in the home	**Minor** Current known child abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment; minor is exposed to violence; caregiver(s) is unable to support child emotionally		**Minor** Suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment; caregiver(s) unable to consistently use caregiving skills		**Minor** No known or suspected violence or abuse in the home; caregiver(s) occasionally struggle to use caregiving skills; caregiver(s) express difficulty with minor		**Minor** No known or suspected violence or abuse in the home; caregiver(s) consistently provides healthy/nurturing caregiving

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Community Safety

This category measures the client's perceived and actual safety in their community. It includes having knowledge of and willingness to access community safety resources and knowledge of how to navigate and maintain safety in the community. It is important to note that levels 2 and 3 include a willingness to access community safety resources which is directly related to the individual's perception of those resources as safe, accessible, and capable of helping. This category includes exploitation and trafficking in community settings as well as feelings of belonging and oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, and xenophobia.

Key Definitions

Community safety resources
Any resources, services or skills within a community that promote, encourage or ensure safety. These often include informal community safety services such as community watch associations and community safety networks and formal emergency response services such as police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel.

Unsafe
Any resources, services or skills within a community that promote, encourage or ensure safety. These often include informal community safety services such as community watch associations and community safety networks and formal emergency response services such as police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel.

Suggested Assessment Questions

- Are there places in your community where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
    - Are there places here where you feel comfortable and safe?
- Do you feel safe walking around your community, meaning the area where you live?
    - Do you feel safe doing things like going to the grocery store?
- If you are feeling unsafe in your community, what do you do?
    - Are you able to call anyone?
    - Would you feel comfortable calling emergency response services like the police, firefighters, or emergency medical personnel?

Suggested Response Actions

Significant Needs (1) and Moderate Needs (2)
- Create a community safety plan with the client; discuss and connect to formal and informal community safety resources

Community Safety, cont'd

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Community Safety	Not enough information	Feels unsafe/in danger of being harmed in the community most of the time; active ostracization; no knowledge of available community safety resources; no knowledge of how to maintain safety in the community		Feels unsafe/in danger of being harmed in the community some of the time; knows about community safety resources but is unable or unwilling to access them; knows how to maintain safety in the community but is unable or unwilling to do so		Feels safe in the community most of the time; knows about community safety resources and is able and willing to access them; knows how to maintain safety in the community and does so most of the time		Feels safe in community; knows about community safety resources and feels confident in accessing them; feels confident about navigating and maintaining safety in the community

Rights & Resources

This category measures the client's ability to access the benefits, information, and rights they are entitled to. It also measures the client's ability to access and control what is done with their resources.

Key Definitions

Rights

This category measures the client's ability to access the benefits, information, and rights they are entitled to. It also measures the client's ability to access and control what is done with their resources.

Suggested Assessment Questions

- Do you have all of your identification documents?
    - If not, who has them? Are you able to get them when you need them?
- If you need to access money or resources, are you able to do that on your own?
- How do you manage your finances?
    - Who is responsible for paying bills?

Where resources exist, you can use the RHS-15 as an assessment tool to help measure mental health

Suggested Response Actions

Significant Needs (1)
- Provide client with information about their rights and options for remedy; work to develop a plan for sustainability

Rights & Resources, cont'd

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Rights and Resources	Not enough information	Rights are being actively violated including being denied access to personal resources/ documents		Rights are being actively violated including being denied access to personal resources/documents **AND** client is connected to remedies		No known rights violations **AND** client has limited understanding of their rights		No known rights violations **AND** client knows their rights, how to claim, secure and exercise them

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Self-Efficacy & Advocacy

After completing all of the other benchmarks, the case manager is meant to reflect on the client's general sense of self-efficacy and ability to advocate for themselves across all the categories. Because this is a category for reflection, there do not need to be any specific assessment questions, though some suggestions are included if the case manager has a difficult time discerning the client's sense of self-efficacy and advocacy. This is a category in which immediate action **does NOT** need to be taken if a client scores as Significant Needs (1) or Moderate Needs (2).

Key Definitions

Challenges
A task or situation that tests someone's abilities

Personal rights
The rights an individual has to personal security, liberty, and private property – they include Constitutional rights such as the right to assemble in public places, express one's views, and determine religious beliefs.

Suggested Assessment Questions

- Can you tell me about what you do when you're faced with a challenging situation?
- When things don't go the way you had hoped or planned, how do you respond?

Self-Efficacy & Advocacy, cont'd.

Category	Not enough information	Significant Needs (1)	1.5	Moderate Needs (2)	2.5	Some Need (3)	3.5	Minimal Needs (4)
Self-Efficacy & Advocacy	Not enough information	Unable to try to overcome challenges; needs support and assistance in advocating for needs to be met in most areas of life; no knowledge of personal rights		Tries to overcome challenges but inconsistently or ineffectively; needs assistance advocating for many needs to be met; resources; limited knowledge of personal rights		Consistently tries to overcome challenges; occasionally needs assistance advocating for needs to be met; knowledge of personal rights		Able to overcome most challenges; able to independently advocate for needs to be met; knowledge of personal rights