

JCP Risk Assessment Questions and Answers

General Questions

1.0 Demographics

2.0 School

3.0 Peer and Other Relationships

4.0 Behavior

5.0 Family Functioning

6.0 Substance Use

7.0 Attitudes, Values and Beliefs

Following are actual questions asked by Juvenile Counselors who conduct the JCP Risk Assessment. This document is intended to facilitate inter-rater reliability. The answers provided here have been vetted by a combination of NPC Research staff and other experts involved in the JCP Risk Assessments development.

If you need guidance within a specific domain and regarding a specific JCP Risk Assessment question, you can look here to see if guidance has been provided.

Selecting a domain (above) moves you within this document to that domain.

General Questions

Question: Should we be doing Risk Assessments on 7 year olds? If so, should we depend more on judgment than we normally would?

Answer: Technically we have used the tool on 7 year olds and there isn't anything wrong with doing that, except for the likelihood that the types of risk and protective factors we have might not have happened yet but if they are present then they count.

One issue is going to be how to get accurate information, so part of the adjustment may be making sure to do good information gathering from others besides the youth. Yes, I imagine you might need to use more judgment than usual.

1.0 Demographics and JCP Program Evaluation Questions

- 1.1 Is English youth's primary language?**
- 1.2 [IF NOT] Ask youth to describe his/her understanding of English:**
- 1.3 If youth's primary language is not English, what is it?**
- 1.4 Self-identified race/ethnicity/cultural heritage**
- 1.5 Type of Assessment**
- 1.6 Do you expect youth to be referred to JCP Prevention Services within the next 3 months?**
- 1.7 First JCP Service Start or "Open" Date**
- 1.8 Last JCP Service End or "Closed" Date (if applicable)**
- 1.9 Program/Service Status (check only one)**
- 1.10 What date was case placed on inactive status?**
- 1.11 Did youth complete program requirements?**
- 1.12 JCP services provided to youth's identified risk factors (check all that apply)**
- 1.13 Other JCP Services Provided**
- 1.14 Completed or satisfactorily participating in program/activities as directed?**
- 1.15 Completed or satisfactorily participating in planned skill development?**
- 1.16 Completed or satisfactorily participating in treatment programs?**
- 1.17 Risk areas focused on by JCP service plan during the report period (check all that apply)**
- 1.18 Other area focused on by JCP Service Plan (specify)**

2.0 School Issues

Question: *What if the youth has a GED or completed school, how do I answer?*

Answer: If they completed school or some educational program successfully, it usually isn't appropriate to count any of the risk factors against them if they did something productive after leaving their regular school.

Question: *What if the youth is working on a GED?*

Answer: *Timing is important with this question. If the youth just recently began a GED program, you should refer back to the time that the youth was in school or some other education program.*

If it has been some time (i.e., 6 months) since the youth attended school and the youth is in GED program (or technical school) you can use that experience to answer the school questions. We will count school attachment, truancy, etc. regarding their technical training or GED program so that we can see what risks they have accumulated.

Question: *What if the youth is not attending school, i.e. Dropped Out?*

Answer: Generally, refer back to the last time that the youth was in school or in an educational program. However, if it has been a while since attending school and they have done some technical training or GED work in between, then you can look at, and use, that experience instead of their actual school. If the youth is older and hasn't been to school in years but is working, it would make sense to use that as the proxy for school (are they showing up regularly, are they succeeding, etc.).

We will count school attachment, truancy, etc. regarding their technical training, GED or work so that we can see what risks they have accumulated.

Question: *What if the youth is currently suspended?*

Answer: *Answer the questions based on when the youth last attended school. Use the last month of attendance for the "past month" questions.*

Question: *What if the assessment is being done during the summer and school is out?*

Answer: *If youth is being assessed during the summer, answer the questions based on the last regular semester and use the last month of school for the "past month" questions.*

There are lots of possible scenarios, so trying to keep in mind the intention of the items and the history that we know of in terms of the youth's academic foundation, behavior, support, etc. to help make judgments in the cases that aren't clear cut.

2.1 Significant school attachment/commitment (has significant involvement/commitment to school)

Question:

Answer:

2.2 Academic failure (recently failed, or currently failing two or more classes)

Question:

Answer:

2.3 Chronic truancy (skips school at least once a week, or has more than four unexcused absences in past month)

Question:

Answer:

2.4 School drop-out (has stopped attending school or is not enrolled)

Question:

Answer:

2.5 Suspension(s) or expulsion(s) during past 6 months

Question:

Answer:

2.6 Suspensions(s) or expulsion(s) from school during past month

Question:

Answer:

2.7 Family actively involved in helping youth succeed in school

Question:

Answer:

2.8 Diagnosed learning disability or concrete evidence of cognitive difficulties

Question: *I know IEP's are supposed to be included but some IEP's are not about cognitive functioning or disability. Some are about behavior, some are about speech, some are about staying focused on a task, etc. These IEP's don't seem to hit the "learning disability" focus of this question. Do I answer "Yes" for any IEP or only when it is about Learning Disabilities or Cognitive Difficulties?*

Answer: I agree that the intention of the question is to identify learning or cognitive problems, so IEPs that are specific to those issues are the ones we'd really be looking for. It's a good point that the way the definition/help description is worded it seems like any academic IEP counts here, but if the IEP is not related to learning disabilities or cognitive disabilities, it would not be relevant. We can make a note of clarifying that for future tool revisions! What do you think?

3.0 Peer and Other Relationships

Question: *If a youth keeps referencing an online “friend” for his “Yes” answers do I include that as a “Friend” and mark the answer “Yes”*

Answer: The original intention was, I believe, to define friends as the people the youth identified as their social network, and we took that to mean the people the youth hung out with or were in regular contact with (at school or in the community, for example), and that these peers (whether or not in the same age group as the youth) would have an influence on the youth’s attitudes and behaviors. Now that so much interaction happens on line, and we know that influence occurs there (take bullying for instance), it seems relevant to include. The issue is that if youth has 400 online “friends” but they don’t really all know each other, how much influence does one of them have individually? If the youth actually knows them personally, but also happens to communicate (or even mostly does) by electronic means, that makes sense to include. For the Internet-only acquaintances we should only include them if there is regular communication.

If a youth is regularly communicating with a negative peer online, even if they’ve never met in person, it could still create a negative influence. This is an area where the counselor may need to do some probing to get at the amount of contact, the regularity, and the degree to which the youth’s contacts with others are influential/meaningful.

Therefore, when asked about friends who disapprove of or engage in various types of behavior, if the youth recognizes/realizes that an online “friend” behaves one way or another, that seems important to include in the scoring of the peer items.

The criteria should be, a) if the youth is “regularly communicating with” their online “friend” and b) knows their “friends” “attitude about” (positive or negative) the issue being asked in the assessment, then you should include that online friend when answering the question.

3.1 Friends disapprove of unlawful behavior

Question:

Answer:

3.2 Friends engage in unlawful or serious acting-out behavior

Question:

Answer:

3.3 Has friends who have been suspended or expelled or dropped out of school

Question:

Answer:

3.4 Has friends who are academic achievers

Question:

Answer:

3.5 Has substance abusing friends

Question:

Answer:

3.6 There is an adult in youth's life (other than a parent) she/he can talk to.

Question Help: Youth reports having good conversations or connections with an adult, other than a parent, within the last month.

Question: We are wondering if having a juvenile department staff, representative, volunteer or service provider being the “adult in the youth’s life” should generate a “Yes” answer?

Some staff are saying, “We see these kids. We are in programs with these kids. They talk to us, they share with us and they seek us out.” If we answer “literally”, then, if the youth talks to us, the answer should be “Yes” regardless of how the adult fits in the youth’s life.

Staff understands that the answer should be provided “from the youth’s point of view.” We also understand if the “person” is a “mentor” and the youth sees the mentor as someone he/she can trust, rely upon, access and talk to, then a “Yes” is appropriate.

Answer: There is no “right” answer, but keep in mind the intent is to consider the *youth’s community network* (relatives, church, neighbors, etc) rather than the professional group that the referral put them in contact with.

The concern about this question and how to answer it from a staff perspective is understandable. The best case scenario is that a youth has a person other than a parent in her/his life who is in the *natural environment* and will be there after the youth leaves services or juvenile justice involvement.

We would not expect the youth’s “family counselor” or psychologist to be an “adult in the youth’s life” for the purpose of this question and therefore, generally, “No”, the answer should not include Juvenile Department staff, representatives, and volunteers, etc.

“Yes” answers can occasionally, under unique circumstances, occur, if: a) the youth feels and reports (without prompting) that the Department staff member or volunteer is the “adult in the youth’s life”, b) there is a trusting relationship and, c) the program/staff/volunteers intention is to make sure that the question is still answered with a “Yes” even after the youth is done with services. In this case, it is still a protective factor even if the person the youth is referring to is not a long-term relationship. Especially so, if that interaction provides important support and skill building for the youth that hopefully he or she will take forward into other relationships (maybe even a better ability to create those relationships). With this backdrop you can let the youth answer the question and allow these staff to “count” if the youth really feels that way.

This answer started with , “There is no ‘right’ answer” to this question, so, use professional judgment and weight the circumstances, the youth’s emphasis and the intent of the question, i.e., the youth’s natural environment and community network. Specifically, in regard to your questions about staff and volunteers qualifying as a “Yes”; a standard “yes” answer would be inappropriate, do not try to “make” the professional “fit” as a yes.

3.7 Lives in low crime and/or stable, supportive neighborhood (youth perceives neighborhood as friendly, stable, supportive, law-abiding)

Question:

Answer:

4.0 Behavior Issues

- 4.1 Chronic aggressive, disruptive behavior at school starting before age 13 (stealing, fighting, bullying, threatening, shunning, starting rumors/malicious gossiping)

Question:

Answer:

- 4.2 Aggressive, disruptive behavior at school during past month (stealing, fighting, bullying, threatening, shunning, starting rumors/malicious gossip)

Question:

Answer:

- 4.3 Three or more referrals for criminal offenses (misdemeanor or felony charges; exclude status offenses, violations, infractions)

Question: *I only have 1 referral on this youth but about two weeks ago he was charged with three mandatory minimum sentence crimes. Do I include these and say "Yes" to the question.*

Answer: Yes please indicate the youth has three or more referrals for criminal offenses. It does not matter where the referrals came from or where they occurred. If there are official criminal referrals then they need to be counted.

- 4.4 Referral for a criminal offense at age 13 or younger (misdemeanor or felony charges; exclude status offenses, violations, infractions)

Question:

Answer:

- 4.5 Involved in constructive extra-curricular activities (sports, clubs, music, theater, arts, etc.)

Question Help: Youth is involved in extra-curricular or after-school activities (within or outside of the school), such as sports, clubs, student or religious groups, practice of music, theater, or other arts.

Question: Can a positive juvenile department managed activity be included as an extracurricular activity, (i.e., an arts program or a theatre program)?

Answer: "Yes if":

1. Youth is totally voluntarily involved
2. There is no "incentive" for youth to be involved, (i.e., pay or community service hours, early case termination).
3. It is a positive and pro-social activity.
4. The activity can continue after FAA/Probation has ended

Question: Can Skills Group involvement be included as an extracurricular activity?

Answer: "Maybe, but cautiously". Certainly not if the youth is required to attend. In order for Skills Groups to apply, the youth must pass the criteria noted below and there should be a pattern of attendance after required attendance has been lifted. (i.e., 3 or more).

1. Youth is totally voluntarily involved
2. There is no “incentive” for youth to be involved.
3. It is a positive and pro-social activity.
4. The activity can continue after FAA/Probation.

We would say “Yes” if the youth is voluntarily taking a “community schools” class, then we can say “Yes” for voluntary “Skills Group” class attendance.

4.6 Chronic runaway history

Question:

Answer:

4.7 Recent runaway (in past month, has run away)

Question:

Answer:

4.8 Behavior hurts others or puts them in danger (check if true at any time in past)

Question Help: Youth has been charged with a *violent* crime or been violent or *extremely* threatening/aggressive to others. *Limit to harm or serious* threats such as robbery, carried a handgun or other illegal weapon, has been in a fight with a weapon, physically attacked someone with the *idea of seriously* hurting him/her, sexually assaulted someone, or driven a vehicle after drinking or using illegal drugs.

Question: This kid was charged with Assault IV is the answer for this kid “Yes”?

Answer: Read the “Question Help” and keep in mind that the risk factor was meant to get somewhere between typical adolescent behavior and severe injury. If the youth uses/used physical force to solve problems the answer would be yes. There is room for judgment with assault IV so keep in mind the “Question Help” use of the terms “violent”, “extremely” and “seriously”; and the youth’s focus on using force to solve problems. For the typical juvenile assault IV the answer would be “No” but if the youth intended to harm another person the answer could be “yes”.

4.9 In past month, behavior hurts others or puts them in danger

Question:

Answer:

4.10 Behavior hurts youth or puts her/him in danger (check if has been true at any time in the past)

Question:

Answer:

4.11 In past month, youth's behavior has hurt or put her/him in danger (suicide, excessive risk-taking)

Question:

Answer:

4.12 A pattern of impulsivity combined with aggressive behavior toward others

Question:

Answer:

4.13 Harms or injures animals

Question:

Answer:

4.14 Preoccupation with or use of weapons (include if referred for offense involving use of weapon)

Question:

Answer:

4.15 Youth has history of setting fires

Question:

Answer:

5.0 Family Functioning

- 5.1 Communicates effectively with family members (both verbal and nonverbal shared communication with healthy relationship boundaries)

Question:

Answer:

- 5.2 Poor family supervision and control (don't know where youth goes, what youth does, and has little influence in such matters)

Question:

Answer:

- 5.3 Serious family conflicts (family often yell at or insult each other in ways that make youth uncomfortable/unhappy)

Question:

Answer:

- 5.4 History of reported child abuse/neglect or domestic violence

Question:

Answer:

- 5.6 Criminal history of family member having impact on youth's behavior

Question:

Answer:

- 5.7 Substance abusing family or household members

Question:

Answer:

- 5.8 Family trauma/disruption during past 12 months (separation/divorce, frequent moves, inadequate finances, illness, death, abandonment)

Question:

Answer:

- 5.9 Family trauma/disruption since last review

Question:

Answer:

- 5.10 Has close, positive, supportive relationship with at least one family member

Question: I was asking if the youth has a positive relationship with at least one family member and the answer was that he is close to his grandmother but she does not live in the home. Is this a "Yes"?

Answer: The original intent for this question was a person in the immediate family/household. We guide people to answer the questions based on how the youth defines what "family" is so that we could be inclusive of the many configurations of family and care-giving that are present in youths' lives. The benefit of keeping with immediate family/household on this item helps to

increase the intensity of the positive support, because the youth would theoretically have more day to day contact with and reinforcement from this person. However, if there is an extended family member who has very regular contact with the youth and the youth defines this person as someone in the family with whom he/she has a very close relationship (grandma, uncle, etc.), it would be o.k. to include that person here. Simply stated, do include extended family if the relative is around or in contact with the youth several times per week. Do not include an extended family member, even if the youth says they have a great relationship, if they see or talk to each other infrequently.

6.0 Substance Use

6.1 Substance use beyond experimental use (uses alcohol and/or multiple drugs regularly)

Question:

Answer:

6.2 Current substance use is causing problems in youth's life (youth is having problems with school, the law, family, friends or community due to alcohol/drug use).

Question:

Answer:

6.3 Substance use began at age 13 or younger

Question:

Answer:

6.4 Youth has been high or drunk at school at any time in the past

Question: So, if a kid says “Yes” and when I ask about it she says, “I went to a football game and I was a little drunk.” Is this a “Yes” or a “No”.

Answer: The question was intended for “at school”, in a school, during the school day. Not for after school or extracurricular activities. The youth’s answer lends itself to a “No” answer on the assessment. (Jan 2013)

7.0 Attitudes, Values and Beliefs

7.1 Anti-social thinking, attitudes, values, beliefs (attitudes or values which are accepting of delinquent behavior, drug use, and/or violence)

Question: I have a youth I'm working with who is in treatment and is not completely clean because of addicted issues but is totally motivated to getting off of drugs and is not accepting at all anymore. How do I answer this question when his behavior and attitude is in conflict?

Answer: If the youth has changed his attitudes, this question can be marked "no" – this is progress if the treatment is having an impact and the youth realizes that substance use is unhealthy, even if he has not been able to stop using yet. We have other items that relate to his actual behavior, so those might not have moved to "no" quite yet, but its fine if the attitudes and behaviors aren't quite lined up.

7.2 Youth does not have empathy, remorse, sympathy, or feelings for his/her victim(s)

Question:

Answer:

7.3 Youth accepts responsibility for behavior

Question:

Answer:

7.4 Youth inaccurately interprets actions and/or intentions of others as hostile

Question:

Answer:

7.5 Youth talks about the future in a positive way with plans or aspirations of a better life

Question:

Answer:

7.6 Youth pre-occupied with delinquent or antisocial behavior

Question:

Answer: