

# **Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) And Life Skills Guidebook Manual**

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Edited by:

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## Program Overview

### Casey Family Programs Foundations for the Future

The mission of Casey Family Programs is to support families, youth, and children in reaching their full potential. Casey provides an array of permanency planning, prevention, and transition services such as long-term family foster care, adoption, kinship care, job training, and scholarships. Through advocacy efforts, national and local community partnerships, and by serving as a center for information and learning about children in need of permanent family connections, the Programs aim to improve public and private services for children, youth, and families affected by the child welfare system.

Casey Family Programs is a Seattle-based private operating foundation, established by Jim Casey, founder of United Parcel Service (UPS), in 1966. The program has offices in 14 states and Washington, D.C. For more information, visit our web site at [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org).

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## **Executive Summary**

This manual provides complete, easy to understand instructions on how to use the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA), ACLSA Individual Report (IR), and Life Skills Guidebook (Guidebook). We describe each product, explain how they relate to each other, and provide a brief history of product development. The manual also offers a discussion of the value of assessment and how assessment informs good practice. It is available for printing from a web site hosted by Casey Family Programs, [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org)

# **I. ACLSA and Life Skills Guidebook Manual**

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Kimberly A. Nollan

### **Overview**

This manual is a companion to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA), its summary Individual Report (IR), and Life Skills Guidebook (Guidebook). We explain their development, purpose, content and use. Finally, we describe the statistical characteristics of the ACLSA. Our goal is for the manual to contain essential information so readers may use the ACLSA and the Guidebook in a manner most suitable to their needs.

### **Purpose**

Recent changes in federal policies regarding foster care heightened attention on preparing youth for living on their own. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P. L. 106-169) mandates evaluation of services for all states receiving federal independent living funds. Similarly, Council on Accreditation standard S23.7.05 requires accredited organizations “[to have] used standardized assessment tools at defined intervals and at case closing and can demonstrate that the youths or adults who use the service have achieved the specific treatment goals anticipated in their plans.” Unfortunately, most life skills assessment tools developed for child welfare agencies lack technical psychometric analyses and norming.

A few instruments have been well researched (e.g., the Scales of Independent Behavior, Bruininks et al., 1984; the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Sparrow et al., 1984), but they were designed for use primarily by youth with developmental disabilities. Youth who show no apparent delays may show scores at the top end of the range, and additional gains they make may not be measurable. Furthermore, the assessments designed for child welfare audiences were usually targeted for youth ages 16-19, and gather information from either foster parents or youth, but not both.

With this background, Casey Family Programs (Casey) from 1994-2000 developed a tool for use by the child welfare field to assess life skills. Readiness to live on one’s own is a life-long process, and thus, four levels of the ACLSA were created for youth ages 8-10 (I), 11-14 (II), 15-18 (III), and 19 and older (IV). In addition, a short form was developed for youth ages 11-18 to be used as a high level screening and/or research tool. The purpose of all five assessments is to indicate life skills mastery across several domains. The ACLSA is not an exhaustive list of all the skills one needs to live

on one's own. Rather, it provides an indication of skill level and readiness for living on one's own. The assessments are designed as the *first step* in preparing youth for living on their own. Other steps include goal-setting, action planning, instruction, learning, and application, followed again by assessment to measure progress.

In response to a growing number of requests from the child welfare field and Casey personnel for a companion tool to help translate the results of the ACLSA into practice, Casey developed the Life Skills Guidebook (Guidebook). The Guidebook is the next step in teaching youth life skills. It is used for goal setting and action planning, as well as teaching, learning and application of skills. The Guidebook provides Learning Goals and Expectations that parents, teachers, or social workers can use to further explore youth readiness to live on one's own, set goals, and teaching. Activities linked to the Learning Goals are included for both individual (e.g., parents) and group settings (e.g., life skills group).

We hope the ACLSA and Guidebook will increase life skills knowledge and ability and ultimately lead to better preparation and successful living once youth leave home.

## Chapter 2. Description of ACLSA and Life Skills Guidebook

Kimberly A. Nollan and A. Chris Downs<sup>1</sup>

### The ACLSA

The ACLSA is a measure of life skills acquisition, available in youth self-report and caregiver report formats. For each format, there are four age-related levels: Level I (8-10 years), Level II (11-14 years), Level III (15-18 years), and Level IV (19 years and older). The youth format contains items to measure self-reported knowledge and behaviors, as well as a brief performance section to test actual knowledge of life skills. The caregiver form asks a parent or other adult to rate the youth on the same set of knowledge and behavior items used in the youth self-report. The caregiver form does not have a performance section. There is no caregiver form for ACLSA-IV.

The ACLSA takes about 20 to 30 minutes to complete, depending on the ACLSA level and reading level of the respondent. A 20-item short form was developed for youth ages 11-18. It is used for screening, research, or other purposes when the longer form is not feasible due to time constraints. We strongly encourage use of the appropriate longer form, however, for general use and for application of curricula found in the Guidebook.

**On-line Access.** The ACLSA is completed electronically via the Internet. Hard copies can be printed from the web site<sup>2</sup>. The youth or caregiver connects to the ACLSA web site, selects the appropriate form to complete, then logs in with an Organizational ID, Youth ID, and e-mail address. When finished, an Individual Report is automatically generated. The site also contains "preview" and "print" features. Selecting the preview button allows the user to examine ACLSA pages without having to complete them. The print button generates a hard copy that can be used for "paper-and-pencil" administration.

**Life Skill Domains.** The ACLSA assesses life skills domains. Within a domain, items tap a variety of skills and practical knowledge. The ACLSA is composed of four to six domains, depending on ACLSA level. Exhibit 2.1 presents summaries of the domains, including the numbers of items on the youth form. Reading grade levels are currently being estimated for each ACLSA form and will be reported later. These updates will be available as they are produced at [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org).

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<sup>1</sup> We thank and acknowledge Michael Horn and Richard Bressani for their contributions to earlier versions of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> For users without computers or internet access, most local libraries can access the site and print the ACLSA.

**Exhibit 2.1. ACLSA 3.0 Domains and Items Overview**

Domains	ACLSA-I (8-10 Years) No. of Items	ACLSA-II (11- 14 Years) No. of Items	ACLSA-III (15-18 Years) No. of Items
Daily Living Tasks	8	8	11
Self-care	8	6	9
Social Development	9	16	17
Work & Study Skills	8	12	16
Money Management <sup>a</sup>	--	6	8
Housing & Community Resources	--	--	9
<i>Number of domain items<sup>b</sup></i>	33	48	70
<i>Number of flagged items<sup>c</sup></i>	4	4	8
<i>Number of performance items<sup>d</sup></i>	0	10	12
<b>Total number of questions<sup>e</sup></b>	37	62	90

<sup>a</sup> Level II Money Management domain includes two items newly added for Version 3.0.

<sup>b</sup> Includes items newly added to each domain for Version 3.0.

<sup>c</sup> Flagged items are items used for screening and indicate potentially serious outcomes. They are not included in domain scoring.

<sup>d</sup> Performance items are in youth forms only.

<sup>e</sup> Total includes domain items, performance items, new items, and "flagged" items.

**ACLSA Forms and Chronological Ages.** The ages associated with the four ACLSA levels are recommended ages only. They reflect previous research and benchmark studies of mainstream youth. Specific youth and developmental levels may require use of an ACLSA different from chronological age. Parents, teachers, social workers, and youth are encouraged to use the form that fits best for the youth and situation.

Due to the challenges inherent in the reading levels and computer familiarity of youth under the age of 8, we were not able to successfully create an ACLSA for that age group. We recognize that life skills learning begins prior to age 8 and is indeed a life long process free from age restrictions.

**Response Scale.** For domain items, a 3-point response scale is used. The single dimension used is "similarity to me," which allows the ACLSA to present variations in content and wording that can be answered using a single scale. The response scale used is: (1) "Not Like Me" (2) "Somewhat Like Me" and (3) "Very Much Like Me." This response scale is used for all the items in the ACLSA except for a general information items section at the beginning (e.g., age) and performance items at the end. The response scale answers are collected together to provide a score for each domain and an overall score. The ACLSA yields four, five, or six domain scores, depending on the ACLSA level used. For performance items, four answer choices are present, one of which is correct.

**Performance Test Items.** A new feature of the ACLSA 3.0 was the addition of performance questions that capture a youth's general life skills competence. These items are completed only by youth. The multiple-choice performance questions increase the validity of the assessment by providing a multi-modal assessment approach (i.e., using a different format from the other items in the ACLSA) (Nunnally, 1978). Performance



items test a youth's ability to recall which life skills to apply in certain situations. A sample performance question is, "What do you do when a cashier gives you incorrect change at the store?" (ACLSA-III 3.0, performance question 1). While performance items are not behavioral or empirical confirmation (i.e., convergent validity) for the other self-report items, they do enhance the trustworthiness and overall validity of those items.

**Short Form.** The ACLSA tool is also available in a short form for youth ages 11-18, in youth self-report and caregiver rating forms. The short form is appropriate for brief screenings, research purposes, or where there are serious time limitations. We do not recommend using the ACLSA short form with youths under age 11 because the reading level may be too advanced and the psychometric support for younger ages is unknown. The estimated completion time is 5 to 10 minutes. Short form questions and the response scale are derived from the domains of the regular-length forms. The short form does not contain multiple-choice performance items. Because the short form does not assess domains of life skills, the single score provides an index of generalized life skill ability. An Individual Report, summarizing responses and total scores is sent to the e-mail address provided at login. Technical information about the short form can be found in Chapter 6. Practitioners, parents, and youth should use the longer ACLSA versions if they are interested in a more thorough life skills assessment and accompanying Individual Report.

## Individual Reports

An Individual Report (IR) summarizes the youth and/or caregiver's responses and reports ACLSA scores. The IR provides both a summary of the actual responses to each question as well as the domain scores, overall scores, and a performance score. Scores are based on psychometric measurement principles and reflect a youth's ability for that area of life (see Chapter 5 for further details).

The item summary and scores are calculated when the respondent clicks the "I'm Finished" button on the last page of an assessment. A link to this report is immediately sent to the e-mail address provided by the user at the login page. Clicking this link will open the scored report. Exhibit 2.2 shows a sample IR page. Youth and caregiver scores and responses are matched within the same IR if the same login ID information is used by both. Youth and Caregivers have 42 days to complete both assessments in order for a match to occur.

**Exhibit 2.2 Individual Report Sample Page**



**Individual Report - ACLSA Level III**

(3.001)

**Organization ID:** 1234567890      **Youth ID:** xxxxxxxx  
**Youth Completed:** 10/08/2000      **Youth Gender:** Male  
**Caregiver Completed:** 10/08/2000      **Youth Age:** 17  
**Caregiver Relationship:** Birth, step, or adoptive parent

ACLSA Domains	% of Mastery		Mastery Y = █ CG = █
	Youth	Caregiver	
Daily Living Tasks	44%	22%	
Housing & Community Resources	44%	22%	
Money Management	43%	29%	
Self-Care	56%	33%	
Social Development -Community Values -Communication -Relationships	50%	33%	
Work & Study Habits -Career Planning -Decision-Making -Study Skills	47%	29%	
Performance Items:	50%		
<b>ACLSA Total Mastery Score:</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>29%</b>	

**Exhibit 2.2 Individual Report Sample Page (Continued)**

ACLSA Domains	Raw Score		
	Youth	Caregiver	
Daily Living Tasks	22	20	27 points possible
Housing & Community Resources	22	20	27 points possible
Money Management	17	16	21 points possible
Self-Care	23	21	27 points possible
Social Development	45	42	54 points possible
Work & Study Habits	42	39	51 points possible
<b>ACLSA Total Raw Score:</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>207 points possible</b>

- % of Mastery:** This is the percentage of questions answered at the highest possible level. At least 75% of the questions must be answered.
- Performance Items:** This score is the percentage of performance items answered correctly by the youth (only level II & level III forms).
- Rating Scale:** 1. Not Like Me | 2. Somewhat Like Me | 3. Very Much Like Me
- Raw Score:** The sum of all answers in this section. If questions are unanswered, no score is calculated.
- Insufficient number of responses to score.
- \*** On the summary pages that follow, these items are noted for special attention and review as they are important for youth self-sufficiency. They are not included in the score calculations.

**Summary of Responses**

Daily Living Tasks	Youth	Caregiver
Knows how to wash clothes according to the label (for example, hand wash, dry clean, cold water)	Somewhat like me	Somewhat like the youth
Protects against possible break-ins	Very much like me	Somewhat like the youth
Fixes his/her clothes when they need it, like sewing on a button	Somewhat like me	Very much like the youth
Can fix meals on his/her own	Very much like me	Somewhat like the youth
Uses things in the kitchen, like the microwave, electric mixer, and oven	Somewhat like me	Somewhat like the youth
Stores food so it doesn't spoil or go bad	Very much like me	Very much like the youth
Follows the basic fire prevention and safety rules for where he/she lives	Somewhat like me	Somewhat like the youth

Note: Additional items from the entire ACLSA are included in the ACLSA IR.

**Descriptive Information.** The Individual Reports are organized into three components: descriptive information, scores, and summary of responses. The descriptive information section contains useful information for identifying and tracking youth and caregiver data. Organization and Youth IDs, youth demographic data, and youth and/or caregiver assessment completion dates are provided in this section. In addition, the caregiver's (reported) relationship to the youth is provided.

**Percentage of Mastery Scores.** Next, the scored section details youth and/or caregiver percentage of mastery scores for each ACLSA domain area. Percentage of mastery is provided both numerically and graphically. To represent scores graphically, a bar graph depicts the scores on a “0 to 100” scale. A total mastery score is also reported for all domain items.

Percentage of mastery scores offer a straightforward interpretation of ACLSA results. The percentage of mastery score is the percentage of *mastered* items, which is calculated by counting all the “Very Much Like Me” responses and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent answered for that domain. For example, in the ACLSA-III Self-care domain, if a youth responded with “Very Much Like Me” to 8 of the 9 items, the percentage of mastery for Self-care would be 89% (8 divided by 9 and multiplied by 100).

Similarly, if a caregiver answered “Very Much Like the Youth” on only one of five items for a domain, the percentage of mastery would be 20% (1 divided by 5 multiplied by 100). “Not Like Me” and “Somewhat Like Me” are not considered *mastery* of a skill or knowledge. Consequently they do not contribute to the percentage of mastery score. Only “Very Much Like” responses are counted toward mastery for each domain.

A score of 100% means perfect mastery and 75% represents about three-quarters of the way between zero and a perfect score. Percentage of mastery domain scores should be examined for highest and lowest scores, and for changes over time (if the ACLSA has been previously administered to a youth). Users should not place too much emphasis on differences between scores that are relatively similar.

**Raw Scores.** Raw scores for each domain are also presented in a second table of the IR. These scores are calculated by adding the numeric value of each response for items in a domain, where the response “Very Much Like Me” has a 3-point value, “Somewhat Like Me” has a 2-point value, and “Not Like Me” has a 1-point value. Raw domain scores are calculated *only* when *all* of the questions in a domain have been answered. An overall raw score is also reported in the IR for the ACLSA as a whole.

**Use of Scores.** Together, the reported mastery and raw scores in this section provide an indication of a youth's abilities in key life skill areas. Celebrate high mastery scores and use middle to low mastery scores for goal setting and case planning. Use differences and similarities between youth and caregiver scores for family discussions or case planning with a youth. (Please refer to Chapter 3 for specifics on how to use the Individual Report in practice.)

A domain score may not be generated if the youth answers less than 75% of the questions in a domain. However, an overall percentage of mastery score will still be calculated. Use caution when interpreting the overall score if there are incomplete

domain scores since the domains that were completed would be over-represented in the overall score.

**Performance Scores.** The ACLSA levels II, III and IV include items designed to assess how well a youth has acquired practical knowledge. These performance test items contain four response options, from which the youth chooses one. Correct answers are counted and divided by the total number of questions answered and then multiplied by 100 to provide a single ACLSA performance score.


**Summary of Responses.** The final component of the IR is the summary of responses. In this section, each assessment question is provided along with youth and caregiver responses. The item summary provides the reviewer (social worker, caregiver, or youth) with the ability to peruse the entire assessment and all of the responses at a glance. It provides a broad yet concise “snapshot” of the youth’s range of life skills development as rated by both the youth and the caregiver. This list is useful for identifying differences of opinion between youth and caregivers and is another entry point for dialogue on these issues and for setting goals in domain areas.

**Flagged Items.** Some items serve an important safety screening function and indicate areas for immediate attention. In the Summary of Responses section of the Individual Report, several of these items thought to be of special interest for safety or self-care are "flagged" with an asterisk (\*). For example, parents or service providers would want to know the youth's answer to, " I can turn down a sexual advance." The youth and/or caregiver's responses to these flagged items should be examined in the IR for answers that may indicate immediate attention is needed.

Flagged items are not scored as they have limited psychometric value for the assessment as a whole, as most youth and caregivers report mastery (“very much like me/the youth”) on these items. However, when the youth does not report mastery for a flagged item, immediate attention is needed. In short, while flagged items have little psychometric value, they have great practical and clinical significance.

**Short Form Individual Report.** The IR generated for the ACLSA short form provides the same three components: demographic information, summary scores, and a summary of responses. It is important to note that the short form, since it is intended for research purposes or for quick screening, provides only the total scores, not domain scores, as shown in Exhibit 2.3. Total raw scores provide more variance, which may make them more useful for research purposes. However, both total raw scores and percentage of mastery scores can be used to document program effectiveness.

### Exhibit 2.3 Sample Short Form Individual Report



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**Individual Report - ACLSA Short Form**

(4.001)

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<b>Organization ID:</b> 1234567890	<b>Youth ID:</b> abcdefghi
<b>Youth Completed:</b> 10/29/2000	<b>Youth Gender:</b> Female
<b>Caregiver Completed:</b> 10/29/2000	<b>Youth Age:</b> 14

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Y = ■ CG = ■

Youth	Caregiver	0%	50%	100%
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<b>ACLSA Total Mastery Score:</b>	50%	65%	
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<b>ACLSA Total Raw Score:</b>	50	53	60 points possible
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<b>% of Mastery:</b>	This is the percentage of questions answered at the highest possible level. At least 75% of the questions must be answered.
<b>Performance Items:</b>	This score is the percentage of performance items answered correctly by the youth (only level II & level III forms).
<b>Rating Scale:</b>	1. Not Like Me   2. Somewhat Like Me   3. Very Much Like Me
<b>Raw Score:</b>	The sum of all answers in this section. If questions are unanswered, no score is calculated
---	Insufficient number of responses to score.
*	On the summary pages that follow, these items are noted for special attention and review as they are important for youth self-sufficiency. They are not included in the score calculations.

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**Exhibit 2.3 (continued). Summary of Responses**

**Summary of Responses**

	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Caregiver</b>
Knows how to wash clothes according to the label (for example, hand wash, dry clean, cold water)	Somewhat like me	Somewhat like the youth
Can fix meals on his/her own	Very much like me	Very much like the youth
Follows the basic fire prevention and safety rules for where he/she lives	Somewhat like me	Very much like the youth
Can explain how to establish and maintain a good credit rating	Very much like me	Somewhat like the youth
Can name two ways to save money on things he/she buys	Somewhat like me	Very much like the youth
Can contact places around where he/she lives to get information on sex or pregnancy	Very much like me	Very much like the youth
Asks questions to make sure he/she understands something someone has said	Somewhat like me	Somewhat like the youth
Gets help if his/her feelings bother him/her	Very much like me	Very much like the youth
Deals with anger without using violence	Somewhat like me	Very much like the youth

Note: The ACLSA IR summarizes all items on the short form.

**Life Skills Guidebook**

The Life Skills Guidebook (Guidebook) is designed to offer teaching curriculum and individual learning plans for youth. Like the ACLSA, the Guidebook is divided into six domains:

- Daily Living Skills
- Housing & Community Resources
- Money Management
- Self-care
- Social Development
- Work & Study Skills

Each domain contains several skill areas. The Guidebook identifies Learning Goals, Expectations, and activities for 30 life skills areas. Descriptions of the domains are as follows.

- **Daily Living Skills** includes skill areas used on a daily basis like nutrition, menu planning, grocery shopping, meal preparation, kitchen cleanup & food storage, home management, and home safety.
- **Housing & Community Resources** addresses skill areas needed for a youth to make a positive transition into the community. This domain includes housing, transportation, and community resources. While the Learning Goals included within housing are targeted for young adults ages 19 and older, it is recognized that some young adults begin transitional living programs as young as age 16, and thus these Learning Goals need to be considered for younger youth as well.
- **Money Management** focuses on skill areas that help youth make sound financial decisions, both now and in the future. This domain includes beliefs about money, savings, income tax, banking & credit, budgeting/spending plan, and consumer skills.
- **Self-care** includes skill areas that promote a youth's healthy physical and emotional development. This domain includes personal hygiene, health, alcohol, drugs & tobacco, and sexuality.
- **Social Development** focuses on skill areas necessary to relate to others both now and in the future. This domain includes personal development, cultural awareness, communication, and relationships.
- **Work & Study Skills** addresses skill areas needed to help youth complete their educational programs and pursue careers of interest. This domain includes career planning, employment, decision-making, and study skills.

### Definitions

There are a variety of terms used in the Guidebook. Exhibit 1 contains definitions and their frequently used equivalents in the field of education. Some of the terms correspond to terms used in the ACLSA. For instance the 6 areas of life skills clusters assessed in the ACLSA are called domains. They are also called domains in the Guidebook. The same is true for items and skills.



**Exhibit 2.4 Definition of Terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Domain</b>	Cluster of skills organized into six major areas; daily living tasks, housing & community resources, money management, self-care, social development, and work & study habits.
<b>Items</b>	Discrete measurement of a representative aspect of a domain.
<b>Learning Goals</b>	Also known as competencies. Specific statements of knowledge and ability.
<b>Expectations</b>	Also known as Objectives or Indicators. Guidelines to achieve Learning Goals that may be used as session learning objectives or individual case planning goal indicators.
<b>Resource</b>	Broad array of teaching materials (e.g., curricula, CD-ROM, workbooks, games) that can be used to teach to an Expectation to help youth learn life skills.
<b>Curricula</b>	A set of activities that lead to mastery of Learning Goals in one or more skill areas.
<b>Life Skills Learning Plan</b>	An online template that guides the user to determine the essential elements for the development of a life skills curriculum, one session at a time, or an individual learning plan based on selected Learning Goals and related Expectations. The template is used to record selected Learning Goals and activities the instructor will use during the life skills learning session. Completed, it is a unit of planned life skill instruction, which may be completed one-on-one or in a group.
<b>Out-of-home-care</b>	Refers to a living situation that is not with a youth's immediate biological family, such as, family foster care, group homes, and residential treatment.

**Developmental Progression**

The Guidebook is intended to match the three highest developmental levels of the ACLSA: ACLSA-II (ages 11-14), ACLSA-III (ages 15-18), and ACLSA-IV (ages 19 and older). The first developmental level of the ACLSA, ACLSA-I (ages 8-10), was not included due to the unique learning needs of this age group. All the Learning Goals for a skill area are listed together because young people do not necessarily learn skills in a chronological sequence. For example, an older youth may have missed learning a skill that his/her peers learned at an earlier age. This is particularly true for youth living in out-of-home care who have experienced multiple placements and interruptions in their education. The Learning Goals are also listed together to encourage youth in choosing their own goals.

The intended developmental stage or age range is indicated in parenthesis at the end of the Learning Goal. Stage 2 (II) is geared towards youth ages 11-14; stage 3 (III) is geared towards youth ages 15-18; and stage 4 (IV) is geared towards young adults ages 19 and older. When a (II, III, and a IV) appear at the end of a Learning Goal, the goal is primarily for 11-14 year olds but may be appropriate for an older youth if he/she missed this at an earlier age. Exhibit 2.5 is an example that indicates that the Learning Goal is

appropriate for young adults ranging in age from 15 and older, but would not be appropriate for typical 11-14 year olds.

**Exhibit 2.5 Learning Goals and Expectations**

Learning Goal	Expectations
Can complete a job application. (III, IV)	Define the terms commonly used on job applications.  Interpret application questions and provide appropriate responses.  Develop a personal fact sheet to use when completing job applications.  Complete two applications without supervision.

**Learning Goals**

Learning Goals are sometimes called competencies, statements of knowledge and abilities, or outcome goals<sup>3</sup>. They are written to complement a developmental approach to learning. This approach recognizes that learning takes place over time and that youth progress through a series of stages or levels as learning takes place. The levels of learning used in the developmental model are listed in Exhibit 2.6. Most youth have a basic awareness of the life skills needed for transition. The verbs at the beginning of the Expectation indicate the level at which the Learning Goal is written.

**Exhibit 2.6. Learning Levels**

Learning Level	Definition
Level 1 – Awareness  Level 2 – Knowledge and Understanding	At levels one and two, the student is acquiring information. At this level in the learning process, the student should be able to identify, describe or explain information about the subject matter being taught.
Level 3 – Know how	At level three, the student is beginning to apply the knowledge learned through instruction. At this level, the student should be able to demonstrate some ability with the skill in an instructional setting through simulation, learning laboratory, or real life experiences.
Level 4 – Can or is able to	At level four, the student is using the knowledge learned outside of the learning environment. At this level, the student is able to demonstrate the skill on a regular basis and reports on his/her progress.

<sup>3</sup> We use learning goals for simplicity. The user is free to substitute language (e.g., competencies) that is more appropriate to their situation.

Using the examples above, the “knows and understands” Learning Goal requires the instructor to present information in a way that will increase the youth’s knowledge base. At the end of the session the youth will only be expected to describe or explain what he/she learned about financial institutions.

In the next example, “knows how,” the instructor must create an opportunity for the youth to practice making a purchase using a check. Generally, “knows how to” Learning Goals are completed in a classroom or home environment. They may only simulate real life situations. Often, they are ones that a youth will need in the future but not now.

In the last example, “can set the table for daily meals,” the Learning Goal is written at the highest level and requires the instructor to provide an opportunity for practice in the real world. For example, just showing the student what a table setting looks like would not be sufficient. With the right kind of instruction, the student should be able to demonstrate setting the table for three daily meals.

### **Expectations**

Expectations, sometimes known as Indicators or Objectives, describe what the youth should be able to do as a result of teaching and indicate how the Learning Goal was achieved. They are the guidelines to achieve a Learning Goal. Beginning with an action oriented verb, they indicate whether or not a youth mastered the Learning Goal. Expectations can be translated into case planning or group planning by simply adding the words “At the end of the X time period or session, the youth will be able to...” before each Expectation. For example, “At the end of the group session, the youth will be able to develop a personal fact sheet to use when completing job applications.” The underlined part of the example is an Expectation.

### **Resources and Activities**

The Guidebook identifies the activities and exercises from existing life skills resources that can be used to teach the Learning Goals in either group or individual sessions. In an effort to minimize resource cost, the mostly widely used, cost-effective resources were selected (see Appendix A). The core resources used in the Guidebook are:

- *Making It On Your Own*- A workbook for youth
- *Creative Life Skills Activities* – A collection of 100 group activities
- *Life Skill Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs* – 190 ready-to-use lessons with reproducible worksheets
- *Social Skills Activities for Secondary Students with Special Needs* – 180 ready-to-use worksheets
- *I know Where I am Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up)*– A two part workbook for youth
- *I know Where I am Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up): Caregiver’s Handbook* – A handbook for parents with activities and tips on how to use the “I Know Where I am Going” youth workbooks
- *Our Place* – Video curriculum with 16 units for group activities

- *Power Through Choices* - A curriculum targeted to youth in foster and group care teaching sexuality education
- *Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent’s Guide to Teaching Life Skills* – Strategies for parents to use to teach life skills as part of daily life
- *How to Survive Teaching Health* – Games, activities, and worksheets for grades 4-13

The resources listed in the Guidebook are periodically reviewed and revised based on currency. Consequently, some may be removed from the Guidebook and others added (e.g., websites that no longer exist). We encourage readers to inform us of new resources they find useful. We will review them for future inclusion in the Guidebook.

Activities and exercises from these resources are cross-referenced to the Learning Goals. Each activity is listed by name, page number, and activity number (if provided). See Exhibit 2.7 for an example.

**Exhibit 2.7. Learning Goals, Expectations, and Activity Resources**

Learning Goals	Expectations	Resources & Activities
Complete a job application. (III, IV)	Define the terms commonly used on job applications. Interpret application questions and provide appropriate responses. Develop a personal fact sheet to use when completing job applications. Complete two applications without supervision.	<i>Making It On Your Own</i> , page 12

**Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent’s Guide to Teaching Life Skills**

A companion to the ACLSA and Guidebook, *Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent’s Guide to Teaching Life Skills*, is a collection of developmentally organized activities that parents may use to teach life skills to youth. It is useful for any parent seeking information on how to teach life skills at home. Also, child welfare professionals may use this resource to provide education for caregivers about teaching life skills. As a guide for parents and/or child welfare professionals, the resource offers many creative suggestions to help youth reach their life skills goals. Often just reading about these activities provides ideas for parents to create their own activities that may better fit their child’s needs. *Ready, Set, Fly!* can be accessed from [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org) and the activities are printable from the web site. Printed copies of *Ready, Set, Fly!* can also be purchased (see [www.caseylifeskills.org/rsf](http://www.caseylifeskills.org/rsf)).

## **Chapter 3. Practice and Program Uses of the ACLSA and Guidebook**

**Kimberly A. Nollan & Richard Bressani**

### **The ACLSA**

The ACLSA is a flexible tool with various individual and programmatic uses. Although the ACLSA is designed to be self-administered, it can be modified to an interview format where youth actually demonstrate or describe their behavior and knowledge. The ACLSA Individual Report is useful for practice, as it summarizes youth and caregiver responses for a particular youth in both scored and summary of responses sections. The scored section provides domain and overall percentage of mastery scores as well as raw scores. Youth and caregiver responses are also summarized for each assessment question in the summary of responses section. The Individual Report then provides a starting point for several individual and programmatic uses (see chapter 2 for a complete description).

#### **Test Administration**

The ACLSA is appropriate for parents, teachers, youth, clinicians and social service professionals. Administering the ACLSA does not require specialized training, certification, or licensure, nor are there educational requirements for test administrators. While there is little risk in its use, we strongly encourage ACLSA users to have an understanding of the principles and limitations of assessment.

We encourage parents to seek assistance from teachers, caseworkers, or other professionals to help them make the most out of the ACLSA assessment and to design interventions based on the ACLSA results. The Life Skills Guidebook links ACLSA results with strategies and resources for promoting life skills.

#### **The ACLSA as a Practice Tool**

While the ACSLA has good psychometric properties and is useful as a research tool, it was originally designed as a practice tool to provide a snapshot of youth ability and knowledge and start a conversation with the youth and appropriate caregivers. This conversation about readiness to live on one's own is the most important reason to administer an ACLSA. Because of the practice focus, it is fine to vary ACSLA administration by circumstances. For instance, if a youth has reading or visual challenges, the ACLSA may be read out loud to the youth and responses entered for him or her. Variation in administration does not negate the psychometric or testing value of the ACSLA.

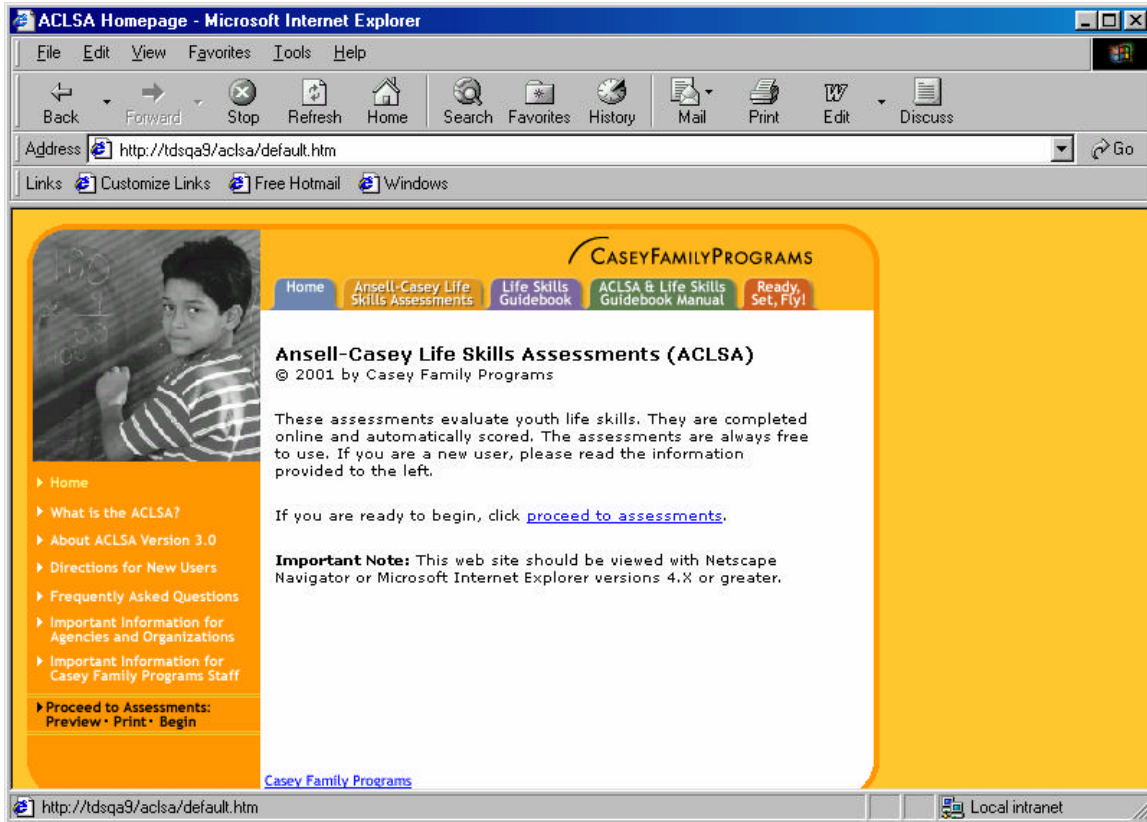
#### **Online Instructions: How to Access and Complete the ACLSA**

The ACLSA is available free via the Internet at <http://www.caseylifeskills.org>. To access the ACLSA online, users need only a computer with a connection to the Internet. For best results, the ACLSA web site should be accessed by using either Netscape

Navigator (Version 4.0 or higher) or Microsoft Internet Explorer (Version 4.0 or higher), and for browsers on computers running either Microsoft Windows 95, 98, NT operating systems, or Macintosh OS 7 or higher.

From the ACLSA homepage, detailed information regarding the assessments, frequently asked questions, instructions on use and information for agencies and organizations can be easily accessed (See Exhibit 3.1).

**Exhibit 3.1. Casey Life Skills Home Page**



To complete an assessment online, follow these steps:

1. From the ACLSA homepage, click the **Proceed to Assessments** link.
2. Choose the assessment you want to complete. Then select either the youth or caregiver version of the form. Click the **Begin** button.
3. Read the Terms and Conditions page and accept by clicking the "**Yes, I Agree**" button.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We realize the Terms and Conditions page is highly technical and written to legally protect both users and Casey Family Programs. We also acknowledge the importance for youth and parents to understand what they read and agree to. Casey is working on a set of simple statements to help users understand these Terms and Conditions more fully.

4. Enter the appropriate Organization ID (optional), Youth ID (optional), and e-mail address (required) information at the login page.
5. Read the assessment instructions and answer the assessment questions.
6. When finished, click the **"I'm Finished"** button.

Online assessments for the ACLSA I, II, III, and IV take from 20 to 30 minutes to complete. The ACSLA short form takes about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Once the "I'm Finished" button has been clicked, a Summary of Responses report is displayed. This report provides the user's responses to each of the assessment questions. This report can be printed out for the user's records.

At the same time that the Summary of Responses report is displayed, the Individual Report containing both scores and responses is generated. Within moments after completing the assessment, an e-mail containing the link for accessing the IR is delivered to the e-mail address entered at login. By clicking this link, the IR is displayed online. The IR can then be printed for starting a conversation, teaching, case planning, and record keeping.

It is important to note that assessments are submitted and scored only after the "I'm Finished" button on the last page of an assessment is clicked. Users are not able to complete part of an assessment online and then return to it at a later time. If more than 40 minutes lapses between user responses, the assessment will "time out." Users will need to begin a new session to complete an ACLSA if they time out. If a user needs more time than the ACLSA online permits, please print a copy, complete the assessment offline, return to the online version and enter the answers.

### **Use at the Individual Level**

The ACLSA and the ACLSA Individual Report helps youth and caregivers acknowledge youth strengths, develop a realistic picture of youth readiness for emancipation, and identify areas in which youth may need to learn more or develop additional skills. The ACLSA encourages youth to think about the life skills necessary for successful living as an adult. Involving youth helps them identify their goals and invest in securing the services they need (Taber & Proch, 1988). In the words of a youth "When I finished the ACLSA, I got a list of my answers right a way. I printed the list and knew what I had to learn. I liked that a lot." (Youth, Age 18, Salem, OR).

**Important conversations.** Because both caregivers and youth may complete the ACLSA, differences in their perceptions are captured. Areas of discrepancy and agreement facilitates dialogue between caregivers and youth, helping them learn from each other's perceptions. This creates opportunities to discuss areas of strength and areas needing work, facilitating increased understanding among all team members. Completing the ACLSA and reviewing the ACLSA Individual Report together also helps youth, caregivers, and service providers get to know each other better, thereby strengthening their relationships.

**Goal-planning.** ACLSA items can be translated into goals that are specific, behavioral, and measurable. Often these goals are based on youth and caregiver reports of areas in which youth need to improve. Some older youth can evaluate the ACLSA results

and identify an area where he/she wants to improve. An example of an ACLSA item transformed into a goal is, "I will be able to make oral presentations before a group" (item 78 of the ACLSA-III 3.0). Progress can be recorded in a personal portfolio and in the youth's case record, or in goal setting forms completed by the youth at goal setting meetings.

Compiling personal portfolios with youth can enhance ACLSA use. A portfolio is a collection of samples of the youth's work that communicate his or her interests and give evidence of his or her talents (Kimeldorf, 1994; Ansell & Morse, personal communication, 2002). Personal portfolios, building upon the strength-based nature of the ACLSA, improve youth self-confidence. By documenting specific competencies, recognition of developmental growth can enhance relationships between youth and caregivers. Portfolios used in conjunction with the ACLSA often facilitate outcome-oriented planning. It may also lead to greater youth involvement in teaching peers these skills and participating in community activities. Caregivers may recognize areas they can work on with a youth outside of the youth's formal case plans and goals.

The ACLSA is interlinked with the Guidebook. The ACLSA may be used as an overall pre/post test to using the Guidebook in developing the skills of a youth. As with the ACLSA, Guidebook work should involve the youth, caregiver, and service providers.

**Youth involvement.** The ACLSA is a strengths based assessment. A youth's strengths, perhaps previously unknown to the caregiver or service provider, may be identified. The ACLSA provides encouragement to caregivers, as they learn more about what youth say they do and know. In addition, the ACLSA and Guidebook breaks skills into concise, concrete steps. It provides focus for caregivers, giving them specific skills for teaching life skills. The ACLSA "has been helpful in focusing on problem areas. Also, it has helped me appreciate how well my foster children are acquiring these life skills" (personal communication with foster parent from a state agency, 1996).

The ACLSA also keeps everyone focused on the youth's eventual emancipation and the skills he or she will need at that time. If a youth moves to a new location or the youth's case is transferred, the new caseworker or educator can refer to the ACLSA to gain a sense of skill level and the work that needs to be done.

**Administration.** For optimal use, the ACLSA should be administered every two to three years and certainly more often for more intensive or short-term programs. Actual administration is at the discretion of the agency, case worker, educator, school, parent, or youth. In one western state, all independent living providers administer the measure every six months to assess the effects of independent living training and delivery of independent living services.

**Interpretation.** In addition to progress on specific items, response patterns may indicate areas where more general training is needed. For example, if the ACLSA Individual Report reflects low skill acquisition (as indicated by a low percentage of mastery) in an area domain, training and opportunities to use these skills via organized groups or activities may be needed in that area. Training could be provided formally by service providers in groups or individual exercises, or informally by the caregiver. Monitoring changes in percentage of mastered items or domain and overall scores can show progress toward specific knowledge development and skill acquisition.



**Youth with Special Needs.** There are circumstances where youth have few or no measurable life skills. However, many of these youth have potential for improving life skill knowledge and behavior. For instance, youth who experienced severe neglect, trauma, or prolonged illness may report limited life skill ability. In these situations, it is imperative to begin work with youth by teaching some life skills using Guidebook resources before administering an ACLSA. This approach increases the likelihood that the youth can report some life skills mastery and success, thus engaging him or her in the life skills learning process. This approach is consistent with Casey Life Skills overall strengths-based approach.

### **Use at the Program Level**

The ACLSA and the accompanying Individual Report may also be used at the program level. Aggregate reports of youth served by the agency can be useful for group planning. Areas in which a number of youth need skill development, as indicated by the ACLSA, can serve as topics for group discussion or curriculum development using the Life Skills Guidebook. For example, Money Management may be an area of focus if several youth indicate low skill acquisition. The ACLSA can also be used to identify areas for staff or caregiver training. Consistently low responses from youth in a particular scale may indicate a topic needing greater staff attention.

Similarly, the ACLSA can be used in a pre/post fashion to show the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a life skills training group. Programmatic outcomes and effectiveness are assessed by examining percentage of mastery or a summative score improvement, which indicates organizational progress in a domain. Aggregate reports, as well as pre/post differences and analyses, provide useful information for funding sources on the effectiveness of an intervention. Aggregate results became even more meaningful with the passage of Federal legislation authorizing the John Chafee Independence Program. The program requires agency-level evaluation (see Foster Care Awareness Project, 2000). Given the variety of uses for the ACLSA and the ACLSA Individual Report, agencies can develop creative and flexible methods by which to measure progress and identify program needs.

At this time, Casey is not providing aggregate reports for agencies and organizations. These data can easily be captured and tracked by an agency in a spreadsheet, however. One method for creating aggregate reports is for staff to collect copies of Individual Reports. Domain and overall scores can be entered into a spreadsheet to provide aggregate, descriptive statistics on ACLSA performance for the agency. Casey may be able to provide an electronic file of all ACLSA scores with the same organization ID, if individual ID codes are provided. However, by providing identifying information to Casey, the user's data are no longer anonymous. Please contact us via [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org).

## **The Life Skills Guidebook**

Both the Guidebook and ACLSA address several important aspects of general life skills. While these include aspects of education and employment, those areas deserve

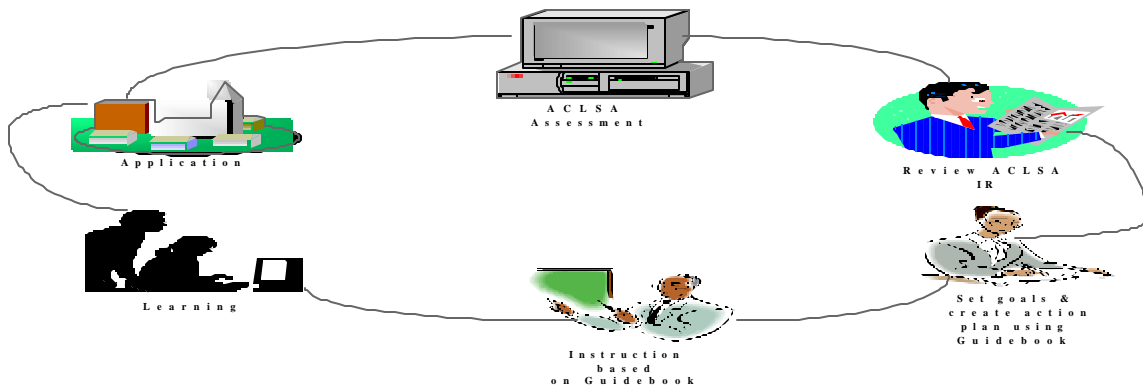
more comprehensive assessment as well. The ACLSA is used to *assess* general life skills. The Guidebook is used to *teach* general life skills.

**Relationships Among ACLSA, Individual Report, and Life Skills Guidebook**

The ACLSA, Individual Report, and Guidebook work together to help practitioners, parents, and youth assess, plan, and teach life skills. Completing the ACLSA is the first step in this process. It is most useful when both a caregiver and youth complete the ACLSA since this heightens awareness for both parties, and increases their investment in planning and learning life skills. Once completed, an e-mail is sent to the user-designated e-mail address indicating how to access the IR, which summarizes the ACLSA responses. The IR provides summary scores by domains and responses on each item. The domain scores indicate areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Youth, caregivers, and practitioners should all be involved in choosing the domains on which to work and set goals.

Once domains for additional work are chosen, the modules of the same domains in the Guidebook can be used to teach and learn life skills. With the Guidebook, a more comprehensive look at youth skills occurs. Either a subset or all Learning Goals in a domain area can be targeted. Expectations are provided so practitioners, parents, teachers, and youth know concretely when mastery is achieved. Selected activities are offered for each Learning Goal to facilitate the teaching of life skills. The ACLSA can then be re-administered to assess growth in targeted domain areas (see Exhibit 3.2.).

**Exhibit 3.2. Life Skills Learning Cycle**



**Learning Styles**

To make the most of life skills teaching, it is important to know how the youth learns best. Different learning styles require different types of teaching. Everyone has a way they learn best. If you tailor teaching to the youth’s learning style more learning will likely occur. An easy way to think about learning style is to consider the sense the youth relies on the most when learning something for the first time. Most people use their sense

of sight, sound, or touch, or some combination of all three. Visual learners like to see things and are aided by such things as flip charts, videos, pictures, and handouts. Auditory learners like to hear and talk about things and find that small group discussions, music, and “lecturettes” promote learning. Kinesthetic learners like to feel things and prefer “hands-on” activities, simulations, and games that involve movement.

To find out how your youth likes to learn, ask his/her teacher or parent and pay attention to the way he/ she approaches homework assignments. Do they draw graphs or pictures to explain projects or activities? Visual learners often do this. Do they like to talk through homework assignments or create songs to remember spelling words? Auditory learners tend to do this. Do they like to trace the shape of things or build models of things being studied? Kinesthetic learners often do this. If you are the parent, watch your youth at home.

Once you know how your youth learns best, you can plan your teaching. If you are working with a group of youth, use a variety of teaching methods, ones that appeal to all three learning styles. The following exhibit is helpful in matching the levels of learning (awareness, knowledge and understanding, knows how to, and can or is able to do) with the three learning styles. It is important to remember that higher levels of learning require instructional modalities that allow for youth to apply and utilize the information learned through simulations, role-plays, field trips, etc. Many of these types of activities incorporate all three learning styles.

**Exhibit 3.3 Levels of Learning and Learning Styles**

	<b>Visual</b>	<b>Auditory</b>	<b>Kinesthetic</b>
<b>Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pictures</li> <li>• Graphs</li> <li>• Poster</li> <li>• Handouts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturettes</li> <li>• Tape Recordings</li> <li>• Panel Presentations</li> <li>• Group Discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Trips</li> <li>• Hands-on Exploration</li> <li>• “New Games”</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge &amp; Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worksheets</li> <li>• Videos</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Examples</li> <li>• Visual metaphors</li> <li>• Outlines</li> <li>• “Mind maps”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debates</li> <li>• Group discussions and consensus building</li> <li>• Brainstorming</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in demonstration.</li> <li>• Craft activities</li> <li>• Challenge initiatives</li> <li>• Theater Games</li> <li>• Puzzles</li> </ul>
<b>Knows how to apply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies with visual images</li> <li>• Make a visual presentation</li> <li>• Prepare illustrations for a demonstration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions of case studies</li> <li>• Make oral presentation</li> <li>• Narrate a demonstration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies with manipulatives</li> <li>• Create a model or sample</li> <li>• Conduct a demonstration</li> </ul>

<b>Can or is able to do</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role Play</li> <li>• Participate in a simulation</li> <li>• Participate in an experiential exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role play</li> <li>• Participate in a simulation</li> <li>• Participate in an experiential exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role Play</li> <li>• Participate in a simulation</li> <li>• Participate in an experiential exercise</li> </ul>
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**Life Skills Learning Plan**

To create a Life Skills Learning Plan, go to <http://www.caseylifeskills.org/lsg> and from the links on the left side of the page, choose the domain areas you want to work on, and then click on the learning goals and activities of your choice. Next click on the yellow button titled “Add Selections to Learning Plan.”

When you are ready to preview and/or print your Life Skills Learning Plan, click on the “Preview/Print Learning Plan“ link at the bottom left of the web page. Then choose to create either an Individual Life Skills Learning Plan or a Group Life Skills Learning Plan. If you want to create an Individual and Group Plan, simply click on both those links.

Note that there are two plan options in the Guidebook. The Group Learning Plan is for teaching life skills in a group format. The Individual Learning Plan is for individual instruction or individual case plans.

For more information on building a Life Skills Learning Plan, see the steps under “Building a Life Skills Learning Plan” at the end of this chapter.

***Group Life Skills Learning Plans***

To design life skills groups, follow the instructions above for developing a Group Life Skills Learning Plan. The Group Life Skills Learning Plan includes the following elements: domain, goals, expectations, activity names, time and type. Domain refers to the ACLSA/Guidebook domain targeted for instruction. "Goals, Expectations, and activities" are automatically recorded in the Learning Plan when you select them by clicking on the box to the left of the Learning goal or activity. "Time" refers to how long an activity will take to complete. "Activity Type" refers to how you will use the activity (as an opening, individual, group or closing activity).

A successful group session starts with an Opening Activity, moves on to include activities that build group cohesion (Group Activity), allows time for introspective thought (Individual Activity), and ends with an activity that brings closure to the session (Closing Activity). When designing a group session, facilitators may find this four-step design formula helpful. A more complete description of each step is found in Exhibit 3.4.

To modify the automatically generated Learning Plan, simply copy it and then paste it into your word processing software, usually Microsoft Word. Then you can fill in the Activity Type (based on your judgment and the definitions provided) as well as approximate completion times. In Exhibit 3.5 you can see a completed Group Life Skills Learning Plan.

**Exhibit 3.4 Group Session Activity Element Description**

<b>Opening Activities-</b>	These activities help the group get acquainted or re-acquainted. They are sometimes called ice-breakers or warm-ups. Even on-going groups need time at the beginning of the session to check-in. Opening activities may also give focus to the group and assess the group’s knowledge. Activities such as “Bingo”, “Have You Ever...,” and “Group Juggle,” provide an excellent way to introduce a topic and generate involvement. These activities are generic in nature and may be used to introduce many skill areas. *
<b>Group Building Activities -</b>	These activities require the group to work together, building group cohesion. These activities may be very short in nature, requiring only 10-15 minutes or take up to 1-2 hours to complete.
<b>Individual Activities -</b>	These activities require group members to think about themselves and to share their insights with others. Individual activities help group members apply to their own lives the content that is being presented in the group. This can be done in the form of worksheets, art projects, and writing assignments.
<b>Ending Activities -</b>	These activities bring closure to the group session. They may be used to summarize or reinforce the content that was the focus of the session. They may also be used to strengthen group spirit and to celebrate the group’s work. The same ending activity may be used each time thus creating an important ritual for the group. Good examples of ending activities are “I learned that...,” “Appreciations,” and “Positive Affirmations.”*
*©Ansell, Dorothy I. and Morse, Joan M. Creative Life Skills Activities, Ansell & Associates, 1994.	

**Exhibit 3.5 Sample Group Life Skills Learning Plan**

<b>Domain: Money Management</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Knows and understands how one’s values influence money decisions.		
<b>Expectations: At the end of the session, the youth will be able to:</b>		
a. Distinguish between personal needs and wants.		
b. Recognize the impact personal values have on money decisions.		
Activity Name	Activity Type	Time
Needs/Wants Polarity	Opening Activity	10 minutes
What is a Need? What is a Want?	Group Building Activity	20 minutes
My Personal Collage	Individual Activity	25 minutes
Reflection Worksheet	Ending Activity	10 minutes

When you are selecting your Learning Goals, consider the needs of the youth who will be in your group. Select goals based on their ages and ACLSA results. The corresponding Expectations appear in the Expectation section preceded by the words “at the end of the session, the youth will be able to.” Your selected activities will appear in the Activity Name section. The Activity Type and Time columns are blank for you to complete. You determine how many Learning Goals and activities can be addressed within your allotted time frame. You decide the order of the activities and edit the Learning Plan accordingly, making sure you have enough time for icebreakers, breaks, arrival and departures in your unique session. Exhibit 3.6 shares tips on running groups.

### Exhibit 3.6 Tips on Running Groups

#### Tips on running groups

1. Arrive early to greet participants.
2. Create an atmosphere that invites youth to participate. Put up posters, play music, provide refreshments.
3. Tailor the learning session to address various learning styles (e.g., auditory - lecture, visual - videos, kinesthetic - small group/moving exercises).
4. Allow time to practice and discuss the skills. Don't over-pack a session. Allow time for questions.
5. Include peer modeling and coaching: having youth who have mastered a skill teach those still learning the skills.
6. Create a group agreement in the early sessions which states codes on conduct, agency rules, etc. Post the agreement at all sessions.
7. Design group rituals for beginnings or endings.
8. Test out any equipment (e.g., VCR, tape/CD player) prior to the session.
9. If you are using videos remember to cue the tapes prior to the session. All VCR's are different
10. Discuss principles of confidentiality.

©Ansell, Dorothy I. and Morse, Joan M. 2001.

#### Individual Learning Plans

To create an Individual Life Skills Learning Plan, follow the instructions above under "Creating a Life Skills Learning Plan" and choose the Individual Life Skills Learning Plan. The Individual Plan is tailored to the unique needs of each youth.

Individual Learning Plans include the following: Goals and Expectations, Action Plan (What, Who, and When), and optional signature lines<sup>5</sup>. The Goals and Expectations are automatically pasted into the Learning Plans when Learning Goals are selected. Selected activities from the Guidebook are pasted automatically in the "What Activities are Going to be Done" column of the Learning Plan.

After copying and pasting the partially completed plan into a Word document, the youth and involved adult (e.g., parent or service provider) complete the Who and When columns. There is an optional space at the bottom of the Learning plan for all involved to sign. This information can be printed and added to the youth case plan, copied into an existing electronic case plan, or printed for personal use. See Exhibit 3.7 for a partially completed Individual Life Skills Learning Plan.

<sup>5</sup> Some agencies require youth and caregivers to sign the Learning Plan to show commitment to the plan.

**Exhibit 3.7 Individual Life Skills Learning Plan**

<b>Domain: Money Management</b>		
<b>Goals &amp; Expectations</b>		
What can I do to reach my goals? How will I know when I reach each goal? Check to make sure your goals are flexible, specific, have a date by which you want to reach the goal.		
<b>Goal:</b> Knows and understands how one’s values influence money decisions.		
<b>Expectations:</b> At the end of the session, the youth will be able to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Distinguish between personal needs and wants.</li> <li>b. Recognize the impact personal values have on money decisions.</li> </ul>		
<b>Action Plan</b>		
The actions you take to reach your goals should be clear so you know exactly what to do. (Identify who will do what to help reach the goals – youth, staff, others)		
<b>What activities or services will be done?</b>	<b>Who is responsible for doing it?</b>	<b>When will it be accomplished?</b>
What Money Means <b>Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills</b> Beliefs About Money #1 <a href="http://www.caseylifeskills.org/rsf">http://www.caseylifeskills.org/rsf</a> Games Reveal our Values <b>Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills</b> Beliefs About Money #3 <a href="http://www.caseylifeskills.org/rsf">http://www.caseylifeskills.org/rsf</a>		

<b>Optional Signatures</b>	<b>Date</b>
Youth: _____	_____
Caregiver: _____	_____
Staff: _____	_____

**How to Use Life Skills Guidebook in Case Plans and Contracts with Youth**

In review, life skills instruction is an intentional process, driven by individual case plans and contract agreements developed with a young person. The Guidebook helps formulate goals and tasks/action steps. The Learning Goals of the Guidebook can be copied in a case plan or contract agreement (e.g., Youth knows and understands the importance of healthy leisure time activities). Expectations are the tasks/action steps to achieve the goal (e.g., describe the difference between healthy and unhealthy leisure time activities). The resources/activities become the “What” or intervention strategies to achieve the goal. After instruction, youth can evaluate their level of achievement based



on the Expectations. This provides them with a renewed sense of control over their learning and the “language” to assess their ongoing life skills needs.

### **Building a Life Skills Learning Plan**

To build a customized life skills learning plan online, follow the steps listed below.

- **Step 1:** Go to <http://www.caseylifeskills.org/lsg>
- **Step 2:** Click on a domain from the list on the left side of the screen.
- **Step 3:** Select and click on a skill area listed beneath that domain.
- **Step 4:** Review the list of learning goals and activities. Click on the boxes next to the desired goals and/or activities you want to select.
- **Step 5:** Click on the yellow button “Add to the Learning Plan.”
- **Step 6:** When finished selecting your learning goals and activities, click on the “Preview/Print Learning Plan” button on the bottom left part of the screen.
- **Step 7:** Select what kind of plan you want to build: Individual or Group.

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

The Learning Plan can be previewed as you are building it by clicking “**Preview/Print Learning Plan**” button on the left side of the screen. Both the Group and Individual Learning Plans are built as you check Learning Goals and Activities boxes. If you want to remove a Learning Goal and/or activity from the Plan, go back to the web page where you made that selection and uncheck the box.

When you are finished building your Learning Plan, you can choose to create a Group and/or Individual Learning Plan.

To print your Learning Plan(s), click "**Preview/Print Learning Plan**" on the left side of the screen. Then click the “print” button on the top of your screen, or go to the file menu at the top of the screen and click on “print.” There is no cost to print the Learning Plan.

To copy the Learning Plan so that you can modify it or save it electronically, click “**Preview/Print Learning Plan**". With your mouse, highlight all the information in the Plan. Then, go to the file menu at the top of the screen and click on "copy." The information will be copied in your computer clipboard and you can now "paste" it into a

new document on your computer. Note: A little formatting may be needed to make it look like the online Learning Plan.

**Please note:** When you leave the caseylifeskills.org Web site, the Learning Plans are permanently deleted.

## II. Development, Measurement, and Technical Information

### Chapter 4. Development of the ACLSA and Life Skills Guidebook

Kimberly A. Nollan, Michael Horn, & Peter J. Pecora

#### ACLSA Development

In 1994, researchers from Casey Family Programs began developing a much-needed life skills assessment tool for child welfare practice. This effort led to the building of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) and more recently the Life Skills Guidebook (Guidebook), the companion curriculum resource guide to the ACLSA.

**Item Construction.** An Independent Living Committee at Casey generated the initial items for the ACLSA in 1994. Experts in the area of self-sufficiency critiqued the items. Focus groups comprised of youth, caregivers, and child welfare staff discussed item selection and instrument format. Additional focus groups and pilot investigations were conducted with caregivers and youth in urban and rural locations. Next, consultants helped ensure that items were developmentally appropriate and suitable for people from different gender, culture, racial, and ethnic groups.

**Field Testing.** The ACLSA-II (for ages 12-15) was field tested in 1995 with 219 Casey youth and caregivers. Differences in skill levels reported by caregivers and youth were assessed, as were general areas of competency and areas needing further development. Age, gender, and ethnic differences were tested, as well as the relationship between life skills and certain risk or protective factors (see Nollan, 1996; Nollan et al., in press; Nollan et al., 1997).

The ACLSA-I (for ages 8-11) and ACLSA-III (ages 16-19) were field tested in 1996. These versions were tested with a broader sample that included, for ACLSA-I, caregivers from the Child Welfare League of America's Odyssey Project<sup>6</sup>, as well as Casey youth and caregivers. For ACLSA-III, the sample included caregivers from the Odyssey Project, youth and caregivers from Casey, and from Washington State's Division

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<sup>6</sup>In response to a growing need to document the outcomes of residential treatment, group homes, and therapeutic foster care in a systematic and credible manner, the Child Welfare League of America, in cooperation with and support of its members, conducted a national, multi-site, descriptive and prospective study of children and youth. For more information, please contact Child Welfare League of America at (202) 942-0294.

of Children and Family Services. Once ACLSA Version 2.0 was completed, Casey released all three level. Version 2.0 was provided for a fee for paper versions and free of charge on the Internet in 1999.

### **Changes from ACLSA Versions 2.0 to 3.0**

Early in 2000, ACLSA 2.0 underwent extensive psychometric testing and development to create Version 3.0. All revisions involved social worker, caregiver, and youth input to integrate practice concerns with sound measurement principles. The resulting ACLSA 3.0 is available in three age-based forms for youth ages 8-10 (37 items), 11-14 (62 items), and 15-18 (90 items). For each age level, the instrument provides a youth self-report format and a caregiver format, which allows a parent or other caregiver to rate the youth. It takes about 20 to 30 minutes to complete, depending on the form. In addition, a 20 item short form was created for use with youth ages 11 to 18. The version goals, guiding principles and major modifications include the following.

#### ***Goals of Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment revisions:***

- Reduce the number of items and completion time.
- Improve measurement characteristics.
- Simplify scale anchors and scoring.
- Clarify a structure that will "map" well to the Life Skills Guidebook.
- Add performance test items, which measures actual youth knowledge as compared to what youth report they know.
- Create a short assessment form of the ACLSA.

#### ***Guiding Principles:***

- Simple is better; do not ask two questions when one will suffice.
- Have a clear justification for retaining each question.
- Follow sound measurement principles while maximizing ease of use.

#### ***Major Modifications:***

- Instead of reporting 13 to 15 sub-scale scores, Version 3.0 reports 4, 5, or 6 domain scores (depending on ACLSA level). These domains are Social Development, Work & Study Skills, Self-care, Money Management, Daily Living Tasks, and Housing & Community Resources.
- Version 3.0 reduced the number of scored items by 44% for level I, 54% for level II, and 66% for level III.
- Version 3.0 added 10-12 performance items (multiple-choice test items) to levels II and III.
- Version 3.0 changed the previous 5-point response scales (e.g., 1="can't" to 5="can") into a 3-point scale: "Not Like Me," "Somewhat Like Me," and "Very Much Like Me."

To list most of the skills that are important for youth to possess would require an unmanageably large checklist. Items retained for Version 3.0 are considered representative of a breadth and variety of skills and knowledge and were derived using established measurement principles and item analysis. The domains are a representative

"sample" of abilities for an area, and the domain score reflects a youth's general ability in that life skills area. None of the domains are intended to be comprehensive.

## Revision Phases

The revision process involved several phases. Unlike typical test development focused on one test, the ACLSA revisions were conducted on three forms (i.e., three age levels) and on the development of the short form. Because of the large scale of this project, a detailed technical discussion of instrument revisions is not included here<sup>7</sup>. ACLSA Version 2.0 already had a solid foundation of key life skill items, content validity, and applicability. The items developed for Version 2.0 ensured that a wide variety of important skills were represented. For revisions to Version 3.0, items were kept that provided the best life skills information, had the best measurement qualities, and enough variety to fairly represent each life skills domain.

Instrument revisions took place in five phases: (1) response scales were examined and upgrades made; (2) analysis of item characteristics using Item Response Theory (IRT) and classical statistical approaches were conducted; (3) item wording was reviewed for clarity, age-appropriate language, and redundancy; (4) a thorough item-to-scale analysis was conducted; and (5) a short form was developed.

**1. Response Scale Upgrades.** The response scale provides the "marks" that youth use to report their answers. Because of a number of measurement concerns, Version 2.0 scales needed simplification. A single 3-point scale was devised to help retain a link to the old forms (and data) and to promote easier and faster ACLSA completion. The wording of the new, Version 3.0, response scale is: "Not Like Me," "Somewhat Like Me," "Very Much Like Me."

**2. Item Analysis.** Item analysis was conducted to identify items to delete or change, as well as those items to move to new domains. Item analysis determined which items had better measurement qualities than other items. Analysis initially focused on item means, variance, and overall distribution. Items with poor measurement qualities, (e.g., items with little variance), were removed for Version 3.0.

**3. Item wording.** Items were evaluated for clarity, meaning, age-appropriateness, content validity, and form. Items that represented crucial abilities or were representative of safety/health concerns but showed poor measurement characteristics were retained as safety "flag" items. For most of these flagged items, the majority of youth gave the same answer. For example, 90% answered "Very Much Like Me" to "I can prepare for a job interview". But to call attention to the 10% or less of youth, who do not have critical competencies or knowledge, these questions were retained as flags in the body of the assessment. These flagged items are not included in calculating scores but are noted in the Individual Report<sup>8</sup> with an asterisk mark in the summary of responses section. Thus, the practice utility of the items is retained without impact to the psychometric integrity of the assessment.

**4. Item to Scale Analysis.** Using scale reliability and factor analysis, an item to scale analysis resulted in sub-scales with few items or poor scale characteristics were

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed description, please contact Jill Leibold or Kim Nollan at (206) 282-7300.

<sup>8</sup> This is similar to the "other problems" list used in the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991).

integrated into Version 3.0 domains or deleted. For example, the Version 2.0 “Communication,” “Emotional Well-Being,” and “Moral” sub-scales were combined into the Version 3.0 domain scale called Social Development.

Analysis confirmed that the new placement of items produced domain scales with high reliability as measured by Cronbach’s alpha<sup>9</sup>. Classic item and Item Response Theory (IRT)<sup>10</sup> analyses of the version 2.0 data found that many of the items were simply too easy. To correct for this, many Level III items, intended originally for the oldest youth, were moved to ACLSA 3.0 Level II (ages 11-14).

For Level II, however, most of the Money Management items were eliminated due to technical or empirical weakness (e.g., poor fit, characteristics, or age-related content). Two items from ACLSA 2.0 Level III money scale were moved into the new ACLSA 3.0 Level II Money Management domain, and two money items from the 2.0 Level II were retained. Additionally, two new items were added to improve the domain. Therefore, for ACLSA 3.0 Level II (ages 11-14), score data for the money management domain are unavailable.

**5. Short Form.** The ACLSA short form is very brief, with only 20 items, has good ability to discriminate age groups, has good psychometric qualities, and correlates very highly (.89) with an overall mastery ACLSA score.

**6. Performance Items.** In addition to the previously mentioned changes, performance items were added to reduce the potential for youth to “fake good” due to a social desirability bias in reporting their answers. An overall performance score for the ACLSA is provided.

## Life Skills Guidebook

Following a national forum on Independent Living and transition issues<sup>11</sup> and in response to other field requests, Casey began development of a companion life skills curriculum resource guide to the ACLSA, the Life Skills Guidebook (Guidebook)<sup>12</sup>. The skill areas covered in the Guidebook correspond with the domains of the ACLSA (e.g., Money Management, Social Development). Each ACLSA domain corresponds to a skill-area module containing a list of Learning Goals and Expectations. In order to be representative of the child welfare field, focus groups of child welfare professionals (practitioners, policy makers, and researchers), foster parents, and alumni who work in the area of independent living designed the Learning Goals were held. The focus groups represented a variety of geographic locations and socio-ethnic groups of professionals in New Jersey, Oklahoma, Florida, Ohio, California, and Colorado. Dorothy Ansell and

<sup>9</sup> Coefficient or Cronbach’s Alpha is based on the consistency of responses to all items in a test. See Anastasi (1997) for more information.

<sup>10</sup> IRT, *Item Response Theory*, provides both item difficulty and item discrimination information. For a review, see Holland & Wainer (1993).

<sup>11</sup> Casey Family Programs and the Child Welfare League of America sponsored an Independent Living Forum on June 22 -23, 1999. The proceedings are captured in a monograph by Nollan, K. A. & Downs, A. C. (Eds.) (2000). *Preparing youth for long-term success: Proceedings from Casey Family Programs National Independent Living Forum*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

<sup>12</sup> The Life Skills Guidebook is focused on the area of life skills. It is recognized that life skills are only one aspect of living independently. Others include education and employment.

Joan Morse, based on the focus group participation, feedback and the Learning Goals, developed the Expectations.

A panel of gender, ethnic, and developmental experts, as well as leaders of innovative independent living/transition programs, researchers, foster youth, and alumni reviewed the Guidebook for relevancy and accuracy. Their feedback was incorporated, refining the Guidebook.

Reviewers examined the Learning Goals of older youth to rank them in order of importance. This information was used to form the first draft of items for the ACLSA-IV (ages 19 and older). The ACLSA-IV is currently undergoing psychometric testing.

## Chapter 5. The ACLSA as an Assessment Tool

Michael Horn

Skill-based assessment often emphasizes a checklist of abilities that are considered important for youth. But a list of all the skills and knowledge important for youth to possess would be unmanageably large and nearly uninterpretable. Checklists have not proven to be an efficient measurement approach nor one that can yield meaningful information that could be articulated clearly or used easily.

In contrast to a checklist approach, the ACLSA uses psychometric measurement principles to assess life skills development.<sup>13</sup> This means the ACLSA revisions from Versions 2.0 to 3.0 moved away from a checklist approach in favor of classic measurement principles used in psychological testing. These principles include establishing the statistical performance of questions, item-to-scale performance, construct validity, item and test reliability. Although the ACLSA is not a psychological test per se, these principles help increase the efficiency, validity, and strength of the ACLSA as an assessment tool.

Because the ACLSA is multifaceted, the items reflect a wide variety of life skills and abilities. But rather than simply list all the possible important skills for a given domain, we retained the best items for that domain and constructed scores that allow users to make inferences about a youth's ability level.

The domain is not simply a set of skills; it represents an underlying fundamental competency that is expressed through many varied behaviors. For example, the Money Management domain embodies a host of complex interactions among behaviors, skills, knowledge, and understanding of tasks. Items in the Money Management domain tap into this complexity, and the domain score indicates the degree of accomplishment in this fundamental area.

### Scoring

The ACLSA uses psychometric measurement principles to provide a score for each domain. This score reflects a youth's ability for that area of life.

Scoring is the process of reducing a large number of responses into one score (or a set of scores) that indicates ability level. Scores must be correctly interpreted and understood for families and others to get the most benefit from the ACLSA assessment process. The ACLSA yields a percentage of mastery score for each domain and for the ACLSA as a whole. Raw summative scores are also provided for domains and the overall assessment. A single performance score is also reported, reflecting the number of correct answers to multiple choice test items, for youth Levels II, III, and IV only. The short form produces summative raw and percentage of mastery scores.

Because the ACLSA is primarily an Internet resource rather than a paper tool, scoring is automatic and immediate. When completing the ACLSA over the Internet, there is no need to calculate scores. More specifically, the ACLSA is housed on a

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<sup>13</sup> See Anastasi and Urbina (1997) for more on the principles of psycho-social measurement.



computer server that automatically records user responses in a data base, calculates the scores, and provides an itemized summary of responses. By clicking the “I’m Finished” button on the last page of an assessment, scores are automatically generated. An e-mail containing a link to the ACLSA scores is then sent to the user’s address. From the web site, paper copies of each ACLSA instrument can be printed. Scoring is relatively simple, so the paper forms can be hand-scored as well, based on the following explanation.

- *Percentage of Mastery Scores.* To create the percentage of mastery scores, the responses to the domain items are first translated into their equivalent numerical values of 1 (Not Like Me), 2 (Somewhat Like Me), or 3 (Very Much Like Me). For example, if the respondent marks their answer as “Somewhat Like Me,” the value recorded is 2. For each domain, the number of “Very Much Like Me” is tallied, i.e., a count of the “3s” is generated. This count is divided by the number of items answered for that domain. For example, if there were 8 items with a response of “3” out of 11 items in the domain, the score is the ratio 8/11 or a percentage of mastery score of 73% ( $8/11 \times 100 = 72.7\%$ ). The ACLSA overall mastery score is simply a ratio of all the “3’s” endorsed in the ACLSA form to the total number of items answered, multiplied by 100.
- *Performance Score.* Although performance questions are found in each domain, all correct performance answers are counted to provide a single performance score. The performance score is the ratio of correct answers to the total number of performance questions. The performance items are in a multiple choice test format that presents four response statements, from which the user chooses one. The Individual Report (IR) indicates the correct answer and which answer was chosen. Examination of the IR will indicate if the youth's response was correct. The number of correct answers is divided by the total number of performance questions shown in the IR.<sup>14</sup>
- Partially completed questionnaires present problems because ACLSA scoring and interpretation are most valid when youth and/or caregivers rate all the items. If questions are left blank, certain scores may not appear in the Individual Report. For example, if less than 75% of the questions in a domain are completed, the percentage of mastery score for that domain will not be calculated. If less than 75% of the total assessment questions are left blank, no ACLSA total mastery score will be calculated. Similarly, the raw score for a particular domain will not be calculated if any of the questions are left blank, nor would the ACLSA overall raw score be calculated.

## Interpretation

The ACLSA results can be interpreted based on percentage of mastery scores, performance item scores (Levels II and III only), and the benchmark scores. A benchmark score has been adjusted to reflect the performance of other youth of similar ages. The following discussion explains how each type of score provides unique information. But these scores compliment each other, and individually they provide a solid understanding of the youth's life skill development.

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<sup>14</sup> Performance questions are periodically changed.

To understand ACLSA results, we need to understand test interpretation. There are two main approaches to testing: content-referenced scores and standardized scores (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). These approaches can be used together.

Content-referenced testing (CRT) provides an alternative to the use of norms for interpretation (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). CRT uses the test's content as a reference point. The focus is on what a person can do or knows, not on how the person compares with others. An example of this test is the familiar driver's licensing test, in which a score is determined by the number of correct items rather than how well test takers perform relative to other driver's test takers. In contrast are standardized scores. Standardized scores are interpreted by reference to norms, which represent the performance of a population of people, typically reported as means or percentiles. Interpretation rests on understanding how the individual performs relative to others (e.g., "scored in the 75% percentile"). High school Scholastic Achievement Tests are an example.

The ACLSA was developed primarily as a content-referenced test, which is clearly reflected by percentage of mastery scoring.<sup>15</sup> A benefit of this stance is that percentage of mastery is intuitive, easy to understand, and is most useful for practitioners. We have also elected to provide raw sum scores in response to requests for these scores for research purposes. The ACLSA interpretation also makes use of standard scores.

Most practitioners, parents, and other caregivers will approach interpretation of ACLSA results by asking themselves some basic questions.

1. *How well did the youth score on the ACLSA?* An examination of the percentage of mastery scores will indicate a youth's level of life skills mastery for each of the domains and for the assessment overall.
2. *Where does this youth stand relative to other youth?* Practitioners will want to understand how a youth's scores compare with the scores of other youth. In this instance, a user would consult the benchmark tables to compare the youth's scores to other youth (see Appendix A).
3. *What are this youth's strengths?* An idea of strengths can be gleaned by examining percentage of mastery domain scores and looking for very high percentages. The higher the score, the more ability is indicated. A small difference in scores does not have much "clinical" importance.
4. *Do a youth's self-ratings actually match his or her ability level?* The performance items provide a single score that measures actual understanding and application of life skills. Higher scores mean more items were correctly answered.

**Percentage of Mastery.** A primary score for the ACLSA is the percentage of mastery, which is internally referenced, or a content referenced test (CRT) approach. It offers the most intuitive interpretation of ACLSA results. Most users understand that 100% means the youth scored perfect mastery and that 75% represents about three-quarters of the way between zero and a perfect score with respect to mastery.

The trade-off for the intuitive appeal of percentage scores is that these scores are not as accurate as standardized scores. *Therefore, the best use of percentage of mastery*

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<sup>15</sup> See Nunnally (1978) for a discussion of mastery tests and assessment.

*scores is to examine the pattern of domain scores for highest and lowest scores, or to examine changes over time.*

Individual score patterns (examining domain scores together) help identify specific strengths and weaknesses, and they are useful for making intervention decisions. The user compares the scores on the four to six domains (depending on age format used) to determine the highest and lowest mastery areas. When low ratings are obtained for one of the domains, an item-level examination can be useful in selecting skills for improvement. High (mastery) domains indicate areas of greater competency, and an examination of domain items may help focus attention on strengths upon which the youth can capitalize.

**Overall Mastery Score.** The overall percentage of mastery scores is offered as a measure of general life skill development, or as an index of self-sufficiency potential. With an overall score, high scores on some sub-scales may be cancelled out by lower scores in other scales, resulting in a mediocre overall score. So an individual should consult domain scores in addition to the overall mastery score.

**Performance Score.** The ACLSA asks youth to rate their own abilities, but it also includes items that are designed to indicate how well a youth can actually select accurate information in a test situation. The performance items are in a multiple-choice test format presenting four response statements, from which the user chooses one. Correct answers are counted and divided by the total number answered and then multiplied by 100 to provide a single performance score. General agreement between level of mastery scores and performance scores provides added confidence in ACLSA results.

To enhance understanding of ACLSA results, we do make standard scores available based on ACLSA overall scores, which we call “benchmarks”. The ACLSA benchmark tables aid interpretation by providing an estimate of how well the youth performed relative to other youth who have completed the ACLSA questionnaire. Most people are familiar with this type of test interpretation from teachers who “graded on a curve,” where the curve is the distribution of scores. Standard scores, typically called T scores, provide a uniform metric that is based on the distribution of scores<sup>16</sup>. Standard scores form marks like those on a yardstick. A youth's score shows where on the yardstick the youth placed relative to others who have taken the test.

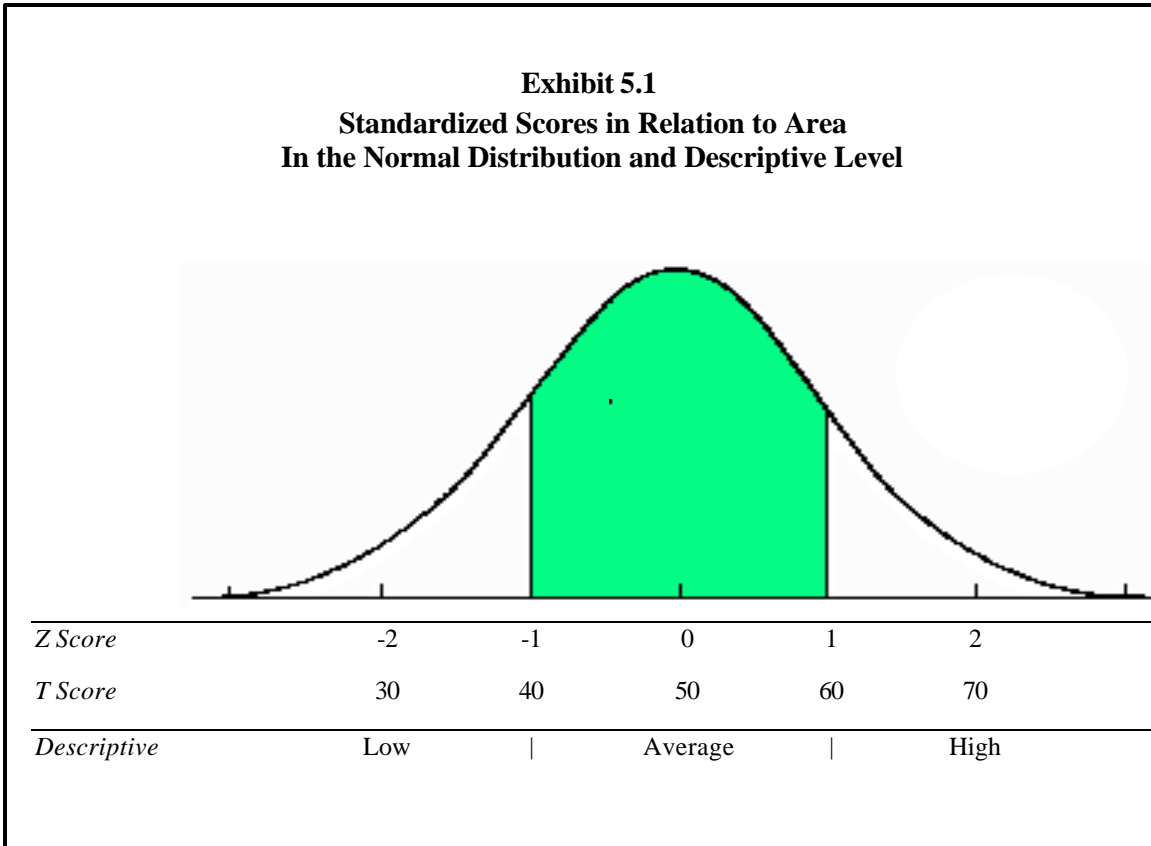
Exhibit 5.1 illustrates how standardized scores are related to a distribution of scores. The Exhibit shows a normal distribution of scores, where most scores cluster around the average, or mean. Both high and low scores decrease in frequency as their distance from the mean increases. Standard Z and T scores are shown. A standard score indicates how far from the group mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of the raw scores. In standard Z scores, the mean is 0 and the shaded area in Exhibit 5.1 is plus and minus one standard deviation (SD) from the mean. T scores are simply another type of standard score, adjusted so the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. The shaded area under the center of the curve shows where the majority of scores fall—that is, where about 68% of scores are found. In Exhibit 5.1, we have labeled this shaded area the “average” ability level. High and low ability levels are depicted as

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<sup>16</sup> See Salvia and Yesseldyke (1998) or Anastasi and Urbina (1997) for a more detailed discussion of standardized scores.

the white areas under the curve, which are scores that are greater than one standard deviation.

ACLSA T scores were developed for this manual based on ACLSA youth self report data collected during the period of 1997 to 1999. Youth completing ACLSA 2.0 forms were with Casey Family Programs, a variety of state and local youth service agencies, or attending mainstream schools. Sample age and ethnicity information is discussed in the technical information chapter, and summarized in Appendix B exhibits.



The benchmark Exhibits in Appendix A present T scores and percentiles (see Exhibits A.1 to A.9) for ACLSA Levels I, II, III, and short form. Standard T scores have a mean of 50 and a SD of 10. This means that about 68% of scores will fall between T values 40 to 60, with 50 as the exact middle. The higher the score, the greater the life skill ability.

In each Exhibit, a shaded gray band is shown around the mean. The band is simply a visual aid to interpretation. The band represent scores within T score values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean. Scores outside the shaded band represent more extreme performance. The high scores are the 15% highest performers. Similarly, smaller scores in the non-shaded band are the 15% lowest in life skill ability. For example, a 13 year old boy who obtained a standard T score of 61.65 rated himself one standard deviation above the mean, which is in the high ability range (see Exhibit A.3).

**Important Note:** *Users should not over-interpret the importance of scores that may be at the margin of the band. There are no firm, cut points for average and non-average scores, and we urge readers not to interpret low scores as abnormal or diagnostic of anything other than lower levels of reported life skill.*

**Locating T scores.** To find a youth's T score, refer to the Exhibits found in Appendix A. Determine the appropriate exhibit for the ACLSA the youth completed (Levels I, II, or III). For Levels II, III, and the short form, exhibits for boys and girls are presented separately because of gender differences at these age levels. After finding the correct Exhibit, locate the youth's overall mastery score in the first column. Then read across the row to find the corresponding T score and percentile rank. For example, a 13 year-old girl (Level II) whose overall mastery score is 55 would have a T score of 50 and a percentile rank of 49. This means she scored almost exactly average (i.e., T of 50), where 49.7% of the youths scored at or below this mark. Because her score is within the shaded band (i.e., between T values 40-60), she is within the average ability level.

**Percentile Ranks.** Percentile ranks indicate the proportion of youth in the comparison population who score at or below a specific score<sup>17</sup>. For example, a percentile rank of 50 is the middle or median ranking, meaning that half the youth scored above that point and half below. Because the intervals between percentile ranks are not equal, the percentiles should be interpreted simply as a ranking rather than as a measure of quantity. For example, the 80th percentile is not twice as much ability as the 40th percentile. Percentiles are not exact intervals, because scores are not evenly distributed; most settle around the average, or midpoint, while fewer scores trail off toward the low and high ends of the scale. This means that the meaningful difference between ranks of 50 and 55 is much smaller than the difference between percentile ranks of 90 and 95, because many more individuals score around the population average (see Exhibit 5.1). Therefore, users should not attach too much importance to differences in percentile ranks, especially when scores are near the middle (40-60). Youth and families are encouraged to view the scores and ranks as estimates rather than as highly precise measures.

In sum, the standardized benchmark T scores provide the most precision, along with percentile ranks. The percentages of mastery are easy and intuitive estimates of life skill domain development. The performance items provide added item-level information and offer a check on the validity of the domain answers.

No single assessment questionnaire can capture all the complexities of life skill development. Observations and judgments by teachers, parents, and others who know the youth should be used to corroborate and illuminate the patterns reported by the ACLSA.

After obtaining and interpreting the ACLSA scores, the next major step is linking this assessment information to intervention or development-related strategies. The Life Skills Guidebook is the ACLSA's companion resource to help turn assessment results into action and growth.

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<sup>17</sup> Percentile rank is based on the sample of youth taking the ACLSA, which is explained in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 6. Technical Information for the ACLSA 3.0 and Short Form

Michael Horn

This chapter presents technical information on the ACLSA 3.0 forms and the ACLSA Short Form. This chapter describes the data samples and procedures used to establish evidence for the reliability and validity of the ACLSA. It concludes with a brief summary. As further studies are completed and new information becomes available, the on-line version of this document will be up-dated. Information on the revision process, of how the prior ACLSA version (2.0) was revised to become the current version 3.0, is provided in chapter 4.

### Samples

The information presented in this chapter is based on youth self-report data collected during the period 1997 to 1999. A primary data set was developed for each ACLSA level (I, II, III). To form the primary data sets, samples were compiled from a variety of sources. Many youth completed the ACLSA as part of normal and regular services provided by twelve of Casey Family Programs offices, and a variety of state and local youth-service agencies across the country (18 agencies from 10 states). Other youth completed the ACLSA as part of an effort to collect this data from non-foster care, mainstream school youth, which involved 17 schools from five states. The data were obtained using the "paper and pencil" version 2.0 youth self-report forms; data entry was accomplished by computerized optical scanning of the forms.

Total sample sizes<sup>18</sup> (n) for each of these data sets are level III n= 1087; level II n= 488; and level I n= 163. These main data sets were used for reliability analyses, generating benchmark (norms) tables, age and gender differences analyses, and descriptive information about scale scores (e.g., means, standard deviations). For validity analyses, a subset of these ACLSA data were combined with matched data from other assessment instruments (see the validity section this chapter).

**Ethnic Group and Gender.** Exhibits B.1 to B.3, in Appendix B, report the ethnic group and gender breakdown for samples, ACLSA Levels I, II, and III. For each sample, table cells show the ethnic make-up within gender. The total rows at the bottom of the table give the overall female and male percentages and the last column reports percentages for ethnic groups across gender. ACLSA respondents were able to indicate more than one ethnicity. These multi-ethnic youth were small in numbers and are grouped among the statistics for the "other" group listed in the Exhibits. Generally, males and females were fairly evenly represented across ethnic groups.

**Age and Gender.** Exhibits B.4 to B.6 report the age by gender characteristics for the samples, ACLSA Levels I, II, and III. For each sample, table cells show the age breakdown within gender. The last column reports age group percentages across gender. Ages were calculated based on birthdates and dates the assessment was administered,

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<sup>18</sup> Sample sizes reported in appendix exhibits may vary due to missing data.

then rounded to the nearest whole year. For Level I, age representation across gender was somewhat mixed. Otherwise, age levels were fairly evenly represented across males and females in Levels II and III.

**Living Situation.** Youth's current living situation for each ACLSA-level sample is presented in Exhibit B.7. Across all three samples, the majority of youth report living at home with one or both parents (birth or adoptive parents). Living with foster parents or relatives was the second most common situation. Treatment settings represented less than 5% of the living situation for youth.

### Reliability

Reliabilities<sup>19</sup> for the ACLSA 3.0 were determined using Cronbach's alpha. The overall alpha coefficient estimates consistency among items (e.g., reliability), or the proportion of score variance that is attributable to error variance. Desirable reliability coefficients are 0.80 or higher. The overall alpha coefficient for Level III was 0.94, Level II was 0.92<sup>20</sup>, and Level I was 0.80. The alpha coefficient for the ACLSA short form was 0.86.

Reliability by domain was also assessed. The alpha coefficients for each of the three age levels are found in Exhibit B.8, Appendix B. The alpha coefficients for Level I domains range from 0.65 to 0.72; the coefficients for Level II domains range from 0.55 to 0.88; and the coefficients for Level III domains range from 0.82 to 0.90.

As expected, the alphas improve with an increased number of items per domain. The range and patterns of reliability coefficients suggest that the ACLSA domain scales are fairly homogeneous and reliably tap life skill domains.

### Test-Retest Reliability

Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center conducted a reliability study of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) instrument. A convenience sample of youth from two schools in a rural Mississippi school district was obtained for this study, with approximately 80 youth being administered each of the three levels of the ACLSA and the Short Form of the ACLSA during the month of September, 2000.

**Sample.** A total of 328 students (194 girls and 134 boys) participated in this study at Time 1 (first administration). The age and grade distributions of the sample are displayed in Exhibit 6.1. The ACLSA Short Form (n = 81) does not include demographic variables other than age and gender. Therefore, characteristics of race/ethnicity, grade in school and living situation are based on a sample size of 247. The sample is about half-African American (49.4%) and half white (48.5%). Of the sample, 2.1% indicated that they were either Hispanic or American Indian. Living arrangements of the sample are shown in Exhibit 6.2. The majority of student respondents lived with one or both parents.

<sup>19</sup> Test-retest reliability analyses are in progress and will be released in December 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Level II Money Management domain contains three new items for which complete data are not available.

**Exhibit 6.1: Age and Grade Frequency of Sample at Time 1**

<b>AGE</b>	<b>Frequency (full sample)</b>	<b>Frequency Short Form</b>	<b>Percent (full sample)</b>
8	19	0	5.8
9	30	0	9.1
10	30	0	9.1
11	45	25	13.7
12	35	11	10.7
13	26	6	7.9
14	33	12	10.1
15	34	8	10.4
16	31	7	9.5
17	33	6	10.1
18	12	6	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>

In this sample of students, missing data appear to be a function of the number of items per ACLSA form and the age of the respondent. Specifically, the greater the number of items and the younger the respondent, the greater the likelihood that questionnaire items were skipped or not answered. Two methods were used to handle missing data. Because there were only 20 items on the Short Form, mean substitution was used. The individual’s average score across all answered items was substituted for any missing values. For ACLSA I, II, and III, all cases that had 15% of the items with no response at either Time 1 or Time 2 were deleted. This allowed a much higher level of missing data than is traditionally done to retain as many cases as possible. This procedure reduced the number of valid cases for ACLSA I to 54, but did not reduce the sub-sample sizes for ACLSA II or III.

**Results: ACLSA Short Form.** Item reliability was measured by correlating the Time 1 response with the Time 2 response for each of the 20 questionnaire items. Analyses were performed for the full Short Form sample (N = 81) and also for a sub-sample of younger student's ages 11 to 13 years, which roughly divided the full sample in half. Responses to the short form were summed and test-retest reliability was computed for the summated score. The correlation  $r$  of 0.76 is good for the Short Form total score.

**Results: ACLSA I Form for youth 8-10 years old.** As previously noted, youth ages 8 to 10 years had the most difficulty completing the life skills assessment and thus the findings with regards to the ACLSA I should be viewed cautiously. ACLSA I scale reliability and paired t-test values are displayed in Exhibit 2. None of the t-tests are statistically significant indicating that the mean scale scores did not change significantly.



**Exhibit 6.2: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations & Paired T-Tests for ACLSA I Scales**

ADMINISTRATION	Daily Living Tasks		Self Care		Social Development		Work & Study Skills	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Time 1	2.46	.38	2.40	0.25	2.61	0.27	2.64	.31
Time 2	2.53	.44	2.47	.33	2.64	.37	2.66	.35
Correlation ( r )	.75		.58		.66		.78	
Paired t-test	-1.67		-1.93		-0.72		-0.69	

**Results: ACLSA II Form for youth 11-14 years old.** Eighty respondents completed the ACLSA II. Most respondents answered all of the question items, however the highest non-response among this age group was to the Self Care item #1 "I can contact places around where I live to get information on sex or pregnancy". In general, the item correlation coefficients indicate acceptable reliability (see exhibit 3). The exceptions are the following: Self Care item #3 "I can fix meals for myself on my own," Social Development items #2 "I fix my clothes when they need it, like sewing on a button," and #18 "I respect other people's ways of looking at things, their lifestyles, and their attitudes," and Work & Study Skills items #4 "I think about how my choices affect others," #5 "I think about more than one choice when I decide something," and #9 "I use the library, newspaper, computer/Internet, or other resources to get information." Perhaps these youth are uncertain about whether they can really handle minor injuries/illness, disagreements, and alternative lifestyles or they are not sure about their ability to problem solve and this uncertainty is reflected in the poor reliability of the items. Items with good reliability (Daily Living Tasks #1 "I know how to wash my clothes according to the label (for example, hand wash, dry clean, cold water)" and #8 "I prevent or minimize roaches, ants, mice, mold, mildew, etc.," Money Management #3 "I buy things at the store on my own," and Self Care #8 "I can turn down a sexual advance" are skills that this age group (11 - 14 years old) are likely to have mastered.

ACLSA II scale reliability and paired t-test values are displayed in Exhibit 3. Internal consistency for the ACLSA II at the second administration (Time 2) was good ranging from 0.71 for the Daily Living scale to 0.87 for Social Development.

**Exhibit 6.3: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlation's & Paired T-Tests for ACLSA I Scales**

ADMINISTRATION	Daily Living Tasks		Self Care		Social Development		Work & Study Skills		Money Management	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Time 1	2.42	.34	2.54	0.38	2.35	0.32	2.45	0.32	2.42	0.37
Time 2	2.48	0.35	2.62	0.39	2.38	0.35	2.46	0.36	2.46	0.43
Correlation ( r )	.68		.53		.68		.62		.57	
Paired t-test	-1.968*		-1.875		-1.148		-.252		-.742	

**Results: ACLSA III Form for youth 15-18 years old.** ACLSA III is the most comprehensive of the life skills assessment measures. In addition to 78 life skills items covering six scales, there are 12 performance questions, several demographic questions and questions about whether the youth possesses important documents. Scale test-retest reliability coefficients are displayed along with results of paired t-tests in Exhibit 6.4.

Overall, item reliability is good. Scale reliability is better for the ACLSA III than for the other forms as all scale correlation coefficients closely approach or exceed 0.70. Internal consistency for the ACLSA III at the second administration (Time 2) was very good ranging from 0.80 for the Daily Living scale to 0.91 for Housing & Community Resources.

**Exhibit 6.4: ACLSA III Means Standard Deviations & Paired T-Test Significance**

	Daily Living Tasks		Self Care		Social Development		Work & Study Skills		Money Management		Housing & Community	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	Mean	SD
Time 1	2.30	0.34	2.67	0.34	2.44	0.31	2.49	0.33	2.31	0.46	2.13	0.43
Time 2	2.42	0.36	2.73	0.32	2.48	0.34	2.54	0.33	2.39	0.46	2.23	0.52
Correlation (r)	.77		.69		.67		.72		.74		.76	
Paired t-test	-4.728***		-2.184*		-1.229		-1.637		-2.256*		-2.750**	

\* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Performance Questions.** ACLSA forms II and III have a series of 10 and 12 questions, respectively, that tests knowledge or skill level directly rather than asking the youth to self-report their abilities. The percentage of respondents who answered each performance item correctly were calculated and reported for both Time 1 and Time 2 administration. The number of correct answers and report the average total score for each administration were summed. Finally, the question responses and total scores were correlated to determine the test-retest reliability.

Total Performance scores ranged from a low of only 25% correct to 100% correct. Fourteen out of 80 youth correctly answered all 10 ACLSA II performance items at Time 1 and 17 youth got a perfect score at Time 2. Eleven out of 87 youth correctly answered all 12 ACLSA III performance items at Time 1, but only six got a perfect score at Time 2. Several performance items were identical on forms II and III and as would be expected, greater proportions of older teens marked the correct answer.

**Summary.** All forms of the ACLSA, 3.0 were administered and analyzed: the Short Form (ages 11-18), Level I (ages 8-10), Level II (ages 11-14) and Level III (ages 15-18). Specific analyses conducted for Levels I, II and III included item correlations, sub-scale correlations for test-retest reliability, internal consistency of subscales, and paired t-tests (subscale means at Time 1 & Time 2 administrations).

The Short Form of the ACLSA appears to be reliable with a correlation of 0.76 for total score. Responses to the items were summed and test-retest reliability was computed for the summed scores. Additional analyses were also conducted by dividing this sample into two age groups (11-13) and (14-18). When compared between these two groups, the reliability for the younger group is also reliable, but at a slightly lower correlation level of 0.74.

Contrasted to the Short Form, the reliability levels of ACLSA Level I were more variable, with wide range in individual item correlations. These results for the Level I must be viewed with caution, given the inherent problems with group administration to this age level, coupled with very poor reading level of elementary age children in this school district.

Confidence in the results of both the ACLSA Level II and Level III are much higher, given the much smaller percentage of missing data by items, as compared to Level I. The performance questions for Level II resulted in a reliability correlation of 0.77. Level III of the ACLSA resulted in higher scale reliability with all scale correlation coefficients closely approached or exceeded 0.70.

## Validity

Validity addresses how well the ACLSA measures life skills. Although all types of validity are derived from construct validity, discussion of validity typically involves sub-types (e.g., content, discriminant, criterion), as reviewed in the following (Nunnally, 1978). There is no single validation test, it is typically established over time as a function of different studies.

**Content Validity.** Content validity is the characteristic of having appropriate items for accurate measurement. Content validity is a function of the sampling of items and item-writing processes. Due to the careful early involvement of youth, parents, and experts in item development, we can confidently claim that the ACLSA represents a valid sample of life skill items (for more details, see Chapter 4, *Development of the ACLSA and Life Skills Guidebook*).

To establish content validity further, intercorrelations among the domain scores and overall mastery scores, were obtained<sup>21</sup> and are shown for each level in Exhibit B.9, Appendix B. All correlations were positive and significant, revealing a consistent relationship among the domains and between the domains and overall ACLSA score. For Level I, domain correlations with overall mastery ranged from 0.65 to 0.80. For Level II, domain correlations with overall mastery ranged from 0.58 to 0.87. For Level III, domain correlations with overall mastery ranged from 0.63 to 0.84. The relationships among the ACLSA domains suggests that individuals with ability in one life skill domain also have ability in other domains and in overall life skills (i.e., overall ACLSA score).

To confirm the content validity of the ACLSA short form, we examined the correspondence between the short form and the ACLSA-III<sup>22</sup>. The correlation between the Level III overall summative score and the short form summative score was 0.92, which is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). This high correlation demonstrated that the short form corresponds extremely well to the longer form.

**Discriminant Validity.** To establish discriminant validity of the ACLSA, analyses were conducted comparing high and low age groups for the ACLSA III. Groups were constructed by computing age at ACLSA administration, then grouping cases into a high-age group (16.5 to 18.0) and a low-age group (15.0 to 16.0); ages 16.0 to 16.5 were not included in order to strengthen the distinction between age groups. Given that life

<sup>21</sup> Domain score, overall score analyses were based on main data sets described earlier in "Samples".

<sup>22</sup> Analyses were based on main ACLSA level III data set, described earlier in "Samples".

skills are expected to increase with age, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences between older and younger age groups. T-tests were conducted to evaluate overall summative score<sup>23</sup> means for the low-age group and the high-age group. Comparing means, significant differences were found ( $p = 0.004$ ) between the groups where youth younger than age 16 had lower scores ( $M=149.9$ , Standard Deviation,  $SD, = 19.48$ ) than the group of older youth ( $M=153.6$ ,  $SD=18.96$ ). Youth who reported higher ability tend to be older youth, consistent with the assumption that life skill ability increases with age.

**Criterion Validity.** This is the degree to which the ACLSA is predictably related to other standards or criteria. In this study, correspondence was evaluated between the ACLSA 3.0 items and the Daniel Memorial Objective Assessment Short Form (Daniel Memorial Inc., 1994). The 90-item Objective Assessment Short Form (i.e., Daniel Memorial) asks youth multiple-choice questions from 14 life skill areas.

During fall 1999, the ACLSA and Daniel Memorial Form were administered concurrently to 38 public high-school students in a study hall classroom setting. Students ages ranged from 16.0 to 18.5, with a mean and median age of 17.4 years ( $SD = 0.69$ ). Of students who reported their ethnicity, 35 were Caucasian/White; three students did not provide an answer.

Because the Daniel Memorial is a performance (test) measure with only one correct answer, correlations could not be calculated. Instead, ACLSA and Daniel Memorial items were matched for wording and concept similarity and then correspondence was examined using crosstab analysis. Matched items are presented in the rows of Exhibit B.10. The left columns of the table present ACLSA domains and item wording; the right side presents the Daniel Memorial domain, item number, and item wording. In some cases, more than one Daniel Memorial item matched an ACLSA item. The middle column presents the percent agreement between the matched ACLSA and Daniel Memorial items. Percentages are the percent of youth who answered the Daniel Memorial question correctly and also answered the ACLSA items at the mastery level<sup>24</sup>. Answering a Daniel Memorial item correctly meant a higher probability of also having a mastery rating for the ACLSA item. The reader should be cautious in drawing conclusions, since the data for this study are limited. However, based on these early findings, it is clear that the ACLSA has the essential elements needed for criterion validity.

In another criterion-related validity study, mainstream middle and high school students completed the ACLSA II and III concurrently with a criterion measure, the Student Self Concept Scales (SSCS)<sup>25</sup>, in a classroom setting. The SSCS 72-item Level II, for grades 7 through 12, measures self-efficacy in three domains: Self-Image, Academic, and Social. The SSCS uses three response rating scales: level of self confidence, importance of behaviors, and degree of confidence that positive outcomes will result from performing certain behaviors. To shorten the administration time, only the SSCS Academic and Social domains were used with a self-confidence response scale.

<sup>23</sup> Summative scores use arithmetic sums for cases containing no missing values on all ACLSA items.

<sup>24</sup> Analysis was based on combining the 2.0 data response scale points "5" ("can do this") and "4" ("probably can do this"). The new version 3.0 scoring scheme combined these two levels into one.

<sup>25</sup> Gresham, Elliot, Evans-Fernandez (1993).

Validity analysis compared youth who completed ACLSA level II and SSCS assessments (n = 139). The sample represented the following ethnic groups: 1.5% Asian, 85.1% White, 0.7% Latino, 5.2% Native American, 7.5% other. Ages ranged from 10.6 to 14.4, with a mean of 12.1 years (SD 1.1).

Correlations of the ACLSA II and III Version 3.0 items with the SSCS criterion instrument were used to estimate criterion-related construct validity. Exhibit B.11 present the intercorrelations of the ACLSA domains with the SSCS Academic and Social scales. For Level II, coefficients (Pearson correlations) ranged from 0.34 to 0.59; all correlations were significant at the  $p < .001$  level. For Level III, correlations ranged from 0.27 to 0.61, all significant at the  $p < .001$  level. Correlations between the ACLSA short form summative score and the SSCS Academic and Social scales were 0.70 and 0.69 respectively,  $p < .001$  for both coefficients.

These correlations reveal relationships and are statistically robust. The relationships among the ACLSA domains and SSCS sub-scales suggests that individuals with greater life skills ability as measured by ACLSA scores, are more likely to score higher in academic and social self-efficacy as measured by the SSCS. This pattern of overall strong and positive intercorrelations demonstrates that the ACLSA is predictably related to self-efficacy, which helps establish the construct validity of the ACLSA. In other words, the ACLSA is able to predict variation in another theoretically similar construct and therefore supports viewing this tool as having construct validity.

### **Mastery Scores**

As described earlier, ACLSA scores are presented as percentage of mastery, which is a ratio of the "mastered," i.e., highest rated items, to the total number of answered items for a scale. Percentage of mastery means, based on the main data sets for each ACLSA level, are shown in Exhibit B.12. For ACLSA Level I, mean scores in the four domains ranged from 59.3 to 68.6. For ACLSA Level II, mean scores for the five domains ranged from 43.1 to 61.9. For ACLSA Level III, means for the six domains ranged from 43.6 to 88.1. Examination also shows relative similarity in standard deviations among the means.

Overall mastery means by ethnic group are reported in Exhibit B.13 for each ACLSA level and short form. Figures report overall mastery mean scores, representing all ACLSA domain items in one score. Means and standard deviations are relatively similar across ethnic groups.

Overall mastery score means for females and males are presented in Exhibits B.14 to B.17 for ACLSA Levels I through III and short form. Means are reported for age within gender. With a total sample size of 157, Level I gender by age breakdowns are somewhat limited in the number of cases per cell of Exhibit B.14. The data set available for the short form provides means for ages 14-18.

### **Construction of Benchmark Scores**

To facilitate the interpretation of ACLSA results, benchmark tables were developed to illustrate how youth in general perform on the ACLSA. The analyses were

conducted utilizing the main data sets for each ACLSA level<sup>26</sup>. Because these analyses were not based on a stratified national sample<sup>27</sup>, we refer to score averages as “benchmarks”. The analysis produced benchmark tables by ACLSA level and gender. The tables in Exhibits A.1 to A.9 (Appendix A) present mastery scores, their equivalent T scores, and percentile ranks. The benchmark tables are designed to assist families and professionals in determining relative performance and strengths.

Two types of benchmark scores were derived: standard (T) score and percentile rank. A standard score expresses the distance of a raw score from the mean, using standard deviation (SD) units. The standardized T score is based on a Z score and is used because it is easier to interpret than other transformations. Therefore, mastery scores were transformed into T scores with mean of 50 and SD of 10. In the benchmark tables (Appendix A), the shaded middle band offers a visual representation of the T scores, representing plus or minus 1 SD (for an explanation of how to interpret the tables, see the Interpretation section of Chapter 5). A percentile rank is the percentage of people in the normative sample who scored at or below the score of interest. An important characteristic of percentile rank scale is that the shape of the raw score distribution changes when raw scores are transformed into percentile ranks. Therefore, the relative “distance” between points on the percentile ranks are less uniform. But they provide a general impression of how well the youth scored relative to other youth.

## Summary

This chapter described technical information like score means and presented the empirical evidence for ACLSA reliability and validity. When it was appropriate, technical information on the ACLSA Short Form was also presented. Benchmark table score construction was also discussed.

Internal-consistency reliability coefficients were found to be within acceptable ranges. Three approaches to validity were examined: content, discriminant, and criterion-related. Content validity was established through the comprehensive item-development process. Positive correlations among domains and overall scores also show the content of the ACLSA to be consistent. The Short Form also revealed a high positive correlation to the overall ACLSA, indicating parallel content to the full ACLSA forms.

Examination of discriminant validity suggests the ACLSA is sensitive enough to portray differences in ability. In the growth and development of youth, it is expected that life skills competency increase with age. Comparison of older and younger youth scores revealed the ACLSA captures and discriminates differences in ability.

The criterion validity studies indicate good validity for the ACLSA. Agreement between matched Daniel Memorial and ACLSA items was high – answering a Daniel Memorial item correctly meant a high probability of also having a mastery rating for a similar ACLSA item. The ACLSA and SSCS Academic and Social Scales comparison indicated that life skill assessment provided by the ACLSA is related to a criterion measurement of a similar construct.

<sup>26</sup> For sample characteristics, see the description in the earlier “Samples” section.

<sup>27</sup> Special emphasis was placed on obtaining ethnic minority representation in the benchmark samples. See the earlier “Samples” section.

There are several additional studies to be performed or are underway. Although several validity studies were reported here, more evidence is needed to strengthen our understanding of the relationship of ACLSA scores to later real life outcomes (e.g., predictive validity). Another caution is that the benchmark tables report T-scores not based on a representative national sample. While the ACLSA is not standardized to a national sample, the benchmark tables provide useful information on ACLSA performance to aid with interpretation of scores. Finally, more research is needed to determine ACLSA characteristics with different populations of youth, including special needs populations.

The ACLSA is the only life skill measure developed for child welfare with established reliability and validity. More research remains needed, but the information presented helps establish the ACLSA as an efficient and useful for assessing life skills.

## **Chapter 7. Summary and Future Work**

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This manual described the development and practice uses of the ACLSA, Version 3.0, its accompanying Individual Report, and the Life Skills Guidebook. Data regarding the ACLSA's psychometric properties were presented, indicating both the short form and long forms have mostly strong measurement properties. Data useful for comparing youth with general population youths were also provided.

There are several current and future efforts that will be represented in future editions of this manual. To begin with, data are being collected to determine ACLSA-IV test-retest reliability, predictive validity, and other validity information. In addition the reading levels of Version 3.0 are being determined.

Upgrades to [caseylifeskills.org](http://caseylifeskills.org) are ongoing, with the addition of Training information and a data reporting function. The data reporting function will facilitate the creation of automated aggregate reports.

Casey strives to provide relevant and useful products to the child welfare field. To this end we welcome your comments and suggestions for improvements. Please send your feedback to [lifeskills@casey.org](mailto:lifeskills@casey.org). Closely related, a quantitative evaluation of the effectiveness of the Guidebook is being planned. Based on evaluation and feedback, the Life Skills Guidebook will periodically be updated to include additional widely used and effective activities that can be used to teach life skills.



## Chapter 8. References

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

- Exhibit A.1 Level I, Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles
- Exhibit A.2 Level II, Female Percent of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentile Ranks
- Exhibit A.3 Level II, Male Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles
- Exhibit A.4 Level III, Female Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles
- Exhibit A.5 Level III, Male Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles
- Exhibit A.6 Short Form, Female Summative Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles
- Exhibit A.7 Short Form, Male Summative Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles
- Exhibit A.8 Short Form, Female Percent Of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentile Ranks
- Exhibit A.9 Short Form, Male Percent Of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores & Percentile Ranks

### Appendix B

- Exhibit B.1 Level I Sample, Ethnic Group by Gender
- Exhibit B.2 Level II Sample, Ethnic Group by Gender
- Exhibit B.3 Level III Sample, Ethnic Group by Gender
- Exhibit B.4 Level I Sample, Age by Gender
- Exhibit B.5 Level II Sample, Age By Gender
- Exhibit B.6 Level III Sample, Age by Gender
- Exhibit B.7 Youth's Current Living Situation, Percentages By ACLSA Level
- Exhibit B.8 ACLSA Domain Item N and Reliability Coefficient
- Exhibit B.9 Intercorrelations of ACLSA Domain Scales and Overall Mastery
- Exhibit B.10 Percent of Agreement between ACLSA Mastery and Correct Answers on the Daniel Memorial
- Exhibit B.11 Correlations Between ACLSA Domains and Student Self-concept Scales (SSCS)\*

- Exhibit B.12 ACLSA Domains, Descriptive Statistics
- Exhibit B.13 Overall Mastery Scores, Ethnic Group Means
- Exhibit B.14 Youth Level I, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age
- Exhibit B.15 Youth Level II, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age
- Exhibit B.16 Youth Level III, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age
- Exhibit B.17 Short Form, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age

**Exhibit A.1**  
**Level I, Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
24.00	27.00	2.2
25.00	27.43	4.4
27.00	28.65	6.7
28.00	29.05	8.9
30.00	30.43	11.1
31.00	30.97	13.3
33.00	32.15	15.6
34.00	32.80	17.8
36.00	33.86	20.0
39.00	35.48	22.2
42.00	37.15	24.4
44.00	38.04	26.7
45.00	39.01	28.9
47.00	39.81	31.1
48.00	40.66	33.3
52.00	42.51	35.6
53.00	43.41	37.8
55.00	44.33	40.0
56.00	45.12	42.2
58.00	45.87	44.4
59.00	46.67	46.7
61.00	47.64	48.9
62.00	48.41	51.1
64.00	49.33	53.3
66.00	50.42	55.6
67.00	51.01	57.8
69.00	52.31	60.0
70.00	52.73	62.2
71.00	53.45	64.4
72.00	54.27	66.7
73.00	54.44	68.9
74.00	55.27	71.1
75.00	55.73	73.3
76.00	56.17	75.6

79.00	57.87	77.8
81.00	59.15	80.0
82.00	59.59	82.2
85.00	61.30	84.4
86.00	62.07	86.7

**Exhibit A.1 (continued)**  
**Level I, Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
88.00	62.97	88.9
90.00	64.40	91.1
91.00	64.74	93.3
94.00	66.45	95.6
97.00	68.17	97.8
100.00	69.88	100.0

<sup>a</sup> A **mastery score** is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A **T score** indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> **Percentile** indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.2**  
**Level II, Female Percent of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentile Ranks**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
.00	24.63	.59
2.00	25.68	1.18
11.00	29.86	1.76
13.00	30.90	2.65
16.00	31.95	3.82
18.00	32.99	4.71
20.00	34.04	5.88
22.00	35.08	7.35
24.00	36.13	8.53
26.00	36.69	9.41
27.00	37.17	10.29
29.00	38.22	11.18
30.00	38.53	11.76
31.00	39.20	13.24
33.00	40.31	16.18
34.00	40.66	18.82
36.00	41.44	21.47
38.00	42.40	24.71
40.00	43.44	27.94
42.00	44.49	32.06
43.00	44.94	34.71
44.00	45.53	36.18
45.00	46.01	37.65
47.00	46.58	39.12
49.00	47.62	40.88
50.00	48.14	42.06
51.00	48.67	44.12
53.00	49.63	47.06
54.00	50.16	48.82
55.00	50.28	49.71
56.00	50.76	52.06
57.00	51.67	54.12
58.00	51.80	56.18
59.00	52.42	58.24



60.00	52.85	60.88
62.00	53.89	64.71
64.00	54.86	69.12
65.00	55.25	72.35
66.00	55.63	73.53

**Exhibit A.2 (continued)**  
**Level II, Female Percent of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentile Ranks**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
69.00	57.03	75.88
70.00	57.76	77.65
71.00	58.07	80.00
73.00	59.12	82.65
74.00	59.56	83.53
76.00	60.16	85.00
78.00	61.21	86.47
79.00	61.86	87.94
84.00	64.31	90.88
87.00	65.47	93.53
89.00	66.43	94.71
91.00	67.48	95.29
93.00	68.52	95.88
96.00	69.57	97.06
98.00	70.59	98.24
100.00	71.66	99.41

<sup>a</sup> A *mastery score* is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A *T score* indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> *Percentile* indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.3**  
**Level II, Male Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
.00	29.33	.96
2.00	30.30	2.23
4.00	31.23	3.18
7.00	32.18	3.82
9.00	33.22	4.78
10.00	33.72	5.73
11.00	34.08	6.37
13.00	35.03	7.32
16.00	36.19	8.92
18.00	37.05	10.83
20.00	37.89	13.06
22.00	38.84	14.97
23.00	39.28	15.92
24.00	39.79	17.20
25.00	40.03	18.47
26.00	40.27	19.11
27.00	40.74	20.38
29.00	41.69	22.29
30.00	41.97	23.89
31.00	42.63	26.11
32.00	42.94	28.03
33.00	43.59	28.98
35.00	44.25	29.94
36.00	44.63	31.53
37.00	45.25	33.12
38.00	45.56	34.08
40.00	46.44	37.26
41.00	46.83	40.45
42.00	47.39	42.68
43.00	47.80	44.59
44.00	48.27	45.86
45.00	48.78	47.13
47.00	49.28	48.73
49.00	50.24	51.91
51.00	51.20	54.78

52.00	51.69	56.37
53.00	52.15	58.92
55.00	52.66	61.15
56.00	53.10	62.74

**Exhibit A.3 (continued)**  
**Level II, Male Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
58.00	54.05	64.65
59.00	54.61	65.61
60.00	55.00	67.52
61.00	55.58	69.43
62.00	55.95	70.70
64.00	56.81	72.93
67.00	57.93	75.48
68.00	58.40	77.71
69.00	58.80	78.98
71.00	59.75	79.62
73.00	60.66	81.85
75.00	61.41	84.08
76.00	61.65	85.03
77.00	62.27	86.31
78.00	62.60	88.22
80.00	63.55	90.13
81.00	63.83	91.08
82.00	64.50	92.68
84.00	65.38	94.59
87.00	66.41	95.54
89.00	67.33	97.13
91.00	68.31	98.73
98.00	71.16	99.36
100.00	72.11	100.00

<sup>a</sup> A *mastery score* is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A *T score* indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> *Percentile* indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.4**  
**Level III, Female Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

<b>Mastery Score <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>T Score <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentile <sup>c</sup></b>
5.00	18.73	.19
10.00	21.33	.38
11.00	22.01	.56
16.00	24.40	.75
17.00	24.95	.94
18.00	25.67	1.22
19.00	25.99	1.51
21.00	27.35	1.98
22.00	27.59	2.45
23.00	28.27	2.64
24.00	28.68	2.82
25.00	29.14	3.11
26.00	30.01	3.48
27.00	30.45	3.86
28.00	31.12	4.14
30.00	31.74	4.71
31.00	32.61	5.74
33.00	33.60	6.97
34.00	34.31	8.00
35.00	34.76	8.57
36.00	35.23	9.13
37.00	35.69	9.70
38.00	36.13	10.45
39.00	36.86	11.49
40.00	37.29	12.05
41.00	37.81	12.81
42.00	38.15	13.75
43.00	38.75	14.97
44.00	39.55	16.29
45.00	40.06	16.85
46.00	40.39	18.08
47.00	40.80	19.49
48.00	41.40	20.53
49.00	42.15	21.85
50.00	42.58	22.69

51.00	43.02	23.63
52.00	43.80	26.08
53.00	44.19	28.15
54.00	44.75	29.94

**Exhibit A.4 (continued)**  
**Level III, Female Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

<b>Mastery Score <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>T Score <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentile <sup>c</sup></b>
55.00	45.20	31.73
56.00	45.66	32.96
57.00	46.42	34.93
58.00	46.99	36.53
59.00	47.34	38.14
60.00	47.87	39.45
61.00	48.24	41.24
62.00	49.05	43.88
63.00	49.64	45.39
64.00	49.96	46.61
65.00	50.52	47.46
66.00	50.85	48.68
67.00	51.61	51.51
68.00	52.21	53.58
69.00	52.56	55.37
70.00	53.40	57.72
71.00	53.53	58.76
72.00	54.28	60.73
73.00	54.93	62.81
74.00	55.16	64.41
75.00	56.00	67.51
76.00	56.48	69.30
77.00	56.85	71.28
78.00	57.51	73.45
79.00	57.78	75.24
80.00	58.61	77.87
81.00	59.12	79.19
82.00	59.45	80.79
83.00	60.14	82.58
84.00	60.37	84.46
85.00	61.22	87.66
87.00	62.09	90.40
88.00	62.86	91.53
89.00	62.97	92.18
90.00	63.80	93.88



92.00	64.69	95.86
93.00	65.55	97.36
95.00	66.43	98.40
97.00	67.30	98.96
98.00	68.17	99.34
100.00	69.04	99.81

<sup>a</sup> A **mastery score** is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A **T score** indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> **Percentile** indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.5**  
**Level III, Male Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

<b>Mastery Score <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>T Score <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentile <sup>c</sup></b>
.00	21.78	.22
2.00	22.65	.56
7.00	25.06	.90
10.00	26.70	1.12
11.00	27.51	1.57
12.00	27.62	2.02
13.00	28.34	2.24
16.00	29.98	2.80
18.00	30.81	3.48
20.00	31.63	4.15
21.00	32.27	5.04
23.00	33.27	5.61
25.00	34.18	6.28
26.00	34.95	6.95
27.00	35.28	7.40
28.00	35.69	8.18
29.00	36.45	8.74
30.00	36.61	9.53
31.00	37.28	11.10
32.00	37.90	12.11
33.00	38.32	12.89
34.00	38.98	14.46
35.00	39.24	15.81
36.00	39.82	17.15
37.00	40.44	18.27
38.00	40.71	19.39
39.00	41.44	21.52
40.00	41.97	22.87
41.00	42.30	23.65
42.00	42.84	24.66
43.00	43.17	26.23
44.00	43.93	28.70
45.00	44.30	30.04
46.00	44.74	31.28
47.00	45.13	32.51

48.00	45.68	33.41
49.00	46.39	34.98
50.00	46.80	36.10
51.00	47.24	37.67

**Exhibit A.5 (continued)**  
**Level III, Male Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

<b>Mastery Score <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>T Score <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentile <sup>c</sup></b>
52.00	47.95	40.81
53.00	48.22	43.05
54.00	48.82	44.73
55.00	49.30	46.30
56.00	49.67	47.98
57.00	50.49	49.89
58.00	50.78	50.56
59.00	51.31	51.46
60.00	51.81	52.24
61.00	52.13	53.25
62.00	52.88	56.50
63.00	53.32	59.75
64.00	53.80	61.66
65.00	54.31	63.23
66.00	54.61	65.36
67.00	55.42	68.16
68.00	55.84	69.62
69.00	56.34	71.19
70.00	57.01	73.88
72.00	57.83	77.24
73.00	58.48	79.37
74.00	58.70	80.16
75.00	59.46	82.06
77.00	60.28	84.53
79.00	61.20	86.88
80.00	61.98	88.79
82.00	62.77	90.81
84.00	63.62	92.71
85.00	64.40	94.17
87.00	65.26	95.29
89.00	66.08	95.74
90.00	66.73	95.96
92.00	67.72	96.64
93.00	68.54	97.76
95.00	69.36	98.54

97.00	70.18	98.99
98.00	71.00	99.33
100.00	71.82	99.78

<sup>a</sup> A **mastery score** is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A **T score** indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> **Percentile** indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.6**  
**Short Form, Female Summative Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

Summative Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
29.00	14.96	.19
31.00	18.26	.47
32.00	19.91	1.04
33.00	21.56	1.71
34.00	23.21	2.09
35.00	24.86	2.47
36.00	26.52	2.94
37.00	28.17	3.51
38.00	29.82	4.36
39.00	31.47	5.22
40.00	33.12	6.64
41.00	34.77	8.44
42.00	36.42	10.53
43.00	38.08	12.62
44.00	39.73	15.09
45.00	41.38	18.22
46.00	43.03	21.63
47.00	44.68	26.38
48.00	46.33	31.88
49.00	47.99	37.19
50.00	49.64	42.69
51.00	51.29	48.86
52.00	52.94	55.60
53.00	54.59	62.52
54.00	56.24	69.64
55.00	57.89	76.57
56.00	59.55	82.92
57.00	61.20	88.90
58.00	62.85	94.02
59.00	64.50	97.25
60.00	66.15	99.15

<sup>a</sup> Summative scores is the arithmetic sum of the responses on the 1--3 response scale.

<sup>b</sup> A *T score* indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> *Percentile* indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.7**  
**Short Form, Male Summative Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentiles**

<b>Summative Score <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>T Score <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentile <sup>c</sup></b>
22.00	16.14	.36
24.00	18.88	.72
26.00	21.61	.96
27.00	22.98	1.32
28.00	24.35	1.68
29.00	25.72	1.92
30.00	27.09	2.40
31.00	28.45	3.24
32.00	29.82	3.96
33.00	31.19	4.68
34.00	32.56	5.52
35.00	33.93	6.83
36.00	35.30	9.11
37.00	36.66	11.63
38.00	38.03	13.79
39.00	39.40	15.95
40.00	40.77	17.75
41.00	42.14	19.78
42.00	43.51	22.54
43.00	44.87	26.26
44.00	46.24	31.53
45.00	47.61	37.17
46.00	48.98	42.45
47.00	50.35	47.48
48.00	51.72	52.28
49.00	53.08	58.03
50.00	54.45	63.67
51.00	55.82	68.35
52.00	57.19	73.98
53.00	58.56	79.26
54.00	59.93	84.17
55.00	61.29	88.61
56.00	62.66	92.33
57.00	64.03	95.20
58.00	65.40	96.40

59.00	66.77	97.84
60.00	68.14	99.52

<sup>a</sup> A **mastery score** is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A **T score** indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> **Percentile** indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.



**Exhibit A.8**  
**Short Form, Female Percent Of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentile Ranks**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
.00	20.36	.26
10.00	25.20	.77
15.00	27.62	1.36
18.00	29.16	1.70
20.00	30.04	2.55
21.00	30.55	3.40
25.00	32.46	5.36
27.00	33.27	7.31
29.00	34.39	7.57
30.00	34.88	8.93
33.00	36.49	10.20
35.00	37.31	12.24
37.00	38.19	14.29
38.00	38.74	14.54
40.00	39.72	17.35
41.00	40.29	20.07
42.00	40.74	20.32
44.00	41.54	20.58
45.00	42.14	22.96
46.00	42.70	25.34
47.00	43.17	25.77
50.00	44.56	28.83
53.00	45.96	31.89
55.00	46.98	36.39
56.00	47.59	40.65
57.00	48.02	40.82
58.00	48.38	41.24
60.00	49.40	45.75
61.00	49.94	50.00
62.00	50.15	50.17
63.00	50.93	50.43
65.00	51.82	54.17
68.00	53.48	58.08
70.00	54.24	63.18

74.00	56.03	68.45
75.00	56.67	72.19
77.00	57.60	75.51
78.00	58.01	75.68

**Exhibit A.8 (continued)**  
**Short Form, Female Percent Of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores and Percentile Ranks**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
79.00	58.58	76.02
80.00	59.09	79.76
81.00	59.69	83.33
84.00	61.12	83.67
85.00	61.51	86.56
89.00	63.67	89.46
90.00	63.93	92.69
95.00	66.35	97.02
100.00	68.77	99.23

<sup>a</sup> A *mastery score* is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A *T score* indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> *Percentile* indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit A.9**  
**Short Form, Male Percent Of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores & Percentile Ranks**

<b>Mastery Score <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>T Score <sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Percentile <sup>c</sup></b>
.00	26.85	.60
5.00	29.15	1.41
6.00	29.41	1.81
9.00	31.04	2.02
10.00	31.45	2.72
15.00	33.76	4.94
16.00	34.12	6.85
17.00	34.53	7.36
18.00	34.98	7.76
20.00	36.06	9.38
21.00	36.55	11.19
22.00	37.08	11.69
25.00	38.36	13.10
26.00	38.97	15.02
29.00	40.39	15.83
30.00	40.67	18.65
32.00	41.39	21.57
35.00	42.97	25.20
37.00	43.82	29.23
38.00	44.56	30.04
39.00	44.76	30.24
40.00	45.27	33.67
42.00	46.22	37.80
43.00	46.59	38.71
44.00	47.32	39.01
45.00	47.57	42.54
47.00	48.66	46.27
50.00	49.88	50.20
53.00	51.12	54.13
54.00	51.65	54.64
55.00	52.17	58.06
58.00	53.55	61.90
59.00	53.94	62.60
60.00	54.48	65.83

61.00	54.99	69.25
63.00	55.94	69.86
65.00	56.78	73.08

**Exhibit A.9 (continued)**  
**Short Form, Male Percent of Mastery Scores with Corresponding T Scores & Percentile Ranks**

Mastery Score <sup>a</sup>	T Score <sup>b</sup>	Percentile <sup>c</sup>
67.00	57.55	76.21
68.00	58.36	76.61
70.00	59.09	80.65
75.00	61.39	86.09
76.00	62.07	87.90
78.00	62.67	88.10
79.00	63.21	88.31
80.00	63.69	90.83
84.00	65.63	93.35
85.00	65.99	94.86
90.00	68.30	96.67
95.00	70.60	98.08
100.00	72.90	99.60

<sup>a</sup> A *mastery score* is the percentage of mastered items. It is calculated by counting all the high ratings (i.e., items answered "Very Much Like Me,") and dividing this total by the number of items the respondent completed.

<sup>b</sup> A *T score* indicates how far from the mean a person's score is located, taking into account the degree of variability (variance) of raw scores from the benchmark sample. In standard T scores, the mean is 50 and the SD is 10. A shaded gray band represent scores within T values of 40 and 60, or within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

<sup>c</sup> *Percentile* indicates the proportion of youth in the comparison population who scored at or below a specific score.

**Exhibit B.1**  
**Level I Sample, Ethnic Group by Gender**

Ethnicity		Female	Male	Total
<b>White</b>	Count	24	18	42
	% Of Total	16.7%	12.5%	29.2%
<b>Black</b>	Count	35	25	60
	% Of Total	24.3%	17.4%	41.7%
<b>Asian</b>	Count	11	9	20
	% Of Total	7.6%	6.3%	13.9%
<b>Latino</b>	Count	4	3	7
	% Of Total	2.8%	2.1%	4.9%
<b>Other</b>	Count	11	4	15
	% Of Total	7.6%	2.8%	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	85	59	144
	% Of Total	59.0%	41.0%	100.0%

**Exhibit B.2**  
**Level II Sample, Ethnic Group by Gender**

<b>Ethnicity</b>		<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>White</b>	Count	144	125	269
	% Of Total	32.0%	27.8%	59.8%
<b>Black</b>	Count	38	30	68
	% Of Total	8.4%	6.7%	15.1%
<b>Asian</b>	Count	19	10	29
	% Of Total	4.2%	2.2%	6.4%
<b>Latino</b>	Count	10	13	23
	% Of Total	2.2%	2.9%	5.1%
<b>Other</b>	Count	33	28	61
	% Of Total	7.3%	6.2%	13.6%
<b>Total</b>	Count	244	206	450
	% Of Total	54.2%	45.8%	100.0%



**Exhibit B.3**  
**Level III Sample, Ethnic Group by Gender**

Ethnicity		Female	Male	Total
<b>White</b>	Count	174	141	315
	% Of Total	18.3%	14.8%	33.1%
<b>Black</b>	Count	131	114	245
	% Of Total	13.7%	12.0%	25.7%
<b>Asian</b>	Count	83	62	145
	% Of Total	8.7%	6.5%	15.2%
<b>Latino</b>	Count	62	59	121
	% Of Total	6.5%	6.2%	12.7%
<b>Other</b>	Count	73	54	127
	% Of Total	7.7%	5.7%	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	Count	523	430	953
	% Of Total	54.9%	45.1%	100.0%

**Exhibit B.4**  
**Level I Sample, Age by Gender**

Age		Female	Male	Total
<b>8.00</b>	Count	10	2	12
	% Of Total	6.4%	1.3%	7.6%
<b>9.00</b>	Count	14	24	38
	% Of Total	8.9%	15.3%	24.2%
<b>10.00</b>	Count	67	40	107
	% Of Total	42.7%	25.5%	65.6%
<b>Total</b>	Count	91	66	157
	% Of Total	58.0%	42.0%	100.0%

**Exhibit B.5**

**Level II Sample, Age By Gender**

Age		Female	Male	Total
<b>11.00</b>	Count	23	25	48
	% Of Total	7.0%	7.6%	14.7%
<b>12.00</b>	Count	33	36	69
	% Of Total	10.1%	11.0%	21.1%
<b>13.00</b>	Count	56	40	96
	% Of Total	17.1%	12.2%	29.4%
<b>14.00</b>	Count	58	56	114
	% Of Total	17.7%	17.1%	34.9%
<b>Total</b>	Count	170	157	327
	% Of Total	52.0%	48.0%	100.0%

**Exhibit B.6**

**Level III Sample, Age by Gender**

Age		Female	Male	Total
<b>15.00</b>	Count	56	54	110
	% Of Total	5.7%	5.5%	11.2%
<b>16.00</b>	Count	159	144	303
	% Of Total	16.3%	14.7%	31.0%
<b>17.00</b>	Count	203	155	358
	% Of Total	20.8%	15.8%	36.6%
<b>18.00</b>	Count	114	93	207
	% Of Total	11.7%	9.5%	21.2%
<b>Total</b>	Count	532	446	978
	% Of Total	54.4%	45.6%	100.0%

**Exhibit B.7**  
**Youth's Current Living Situation, Percentages by ACLSA Level**

	I <sup>a</sup>	II	III
<b>One or both birth/adoptive parents</b>	68.5	67.3	59.1
<b>Non-kin foster parents</b>	14.5	9.2	9.0
<b>With relatives (not in foster care)</b>	10.5	5.8	9.3
<b>Kinship foster parents</b>	4.0	5.1	2.6
<b>Group home</b>	--	3.6	9.3
<b>Residential Treatment</b>	--	4.0	4.8
<b>Treatment foster care</b>	--	1.1	1.1
<b>Other</b>	2.4	3.4	4.8

<sup>a</sup> Several categories for level I contained no cases, indicated by "--" in the table.

**Exhibit B.8**  
**ACLSA Domain Item N and Reliability Coefficient**

	Level I		Level II		Level III	
	Item N <sup>a</sup>	Alpha	Item N	Alpha	Item N	Alpha
<b>Daily Living Tasks</b>	8	.69	8	.75	9	.82
<b>Self-care</b>	8	.72	6	.79	7	.82
<b>Social Development</b>	9	.65	16	.88	16	.87
<b>Work &amp; Study Skills</b>	8	.68	12	.84	14	.85
<b>Money Management</b>	-- <sup>b</sup>	--	3 <sup>c</sup>	.55	8	.90
<b>Housing &amp; Community Resources</b>	--	--	--	--	7	.87
<b>Overall Score</b>	33	.80	46	.92	61	.94

<sup>a</sup> N = Number

<sup>b</sup> Several categories for level I contained no cases, indicated by "--" in the table.

<sup>c</sup> Level II Money Management domain contains three new items for which complete data are not available.

**Exhibit B.9**  
**Intercorrelations of ACLSA Domain Scales and Overall Mastery**

	<b>Daily Living Tasks</b>	<b>Self-care</b>	<b>Social Development</b>	<b>Work/ Study Skills</b>	<b>Money Management</b>	<b>Housing/ Community Resources</b>
<b>Level I</b>						
<b>Daily Living Tasks</b>	1.00					
<b>Self-Care</b>	.47	1.00				
<b>Social Development</b>	.18*	.18*	1.00			
<b>Work &amp; Study Skills</b>	.37	.34	.51	1.00		
<b>Overall Score</b>	.70	.65	.68	.80		
<b>Level II</b>						
<b>Daily Living Tasks</b>	1.00					
<b>Self-Care</b>	.40	1.00				
<b>Social Development</b>	.45	.35	1.00			
<b>Work &amp; Study Skills</b>	.49	.53	.63	1.00		
<b>Money Management</b>	.51	.41	.31	.43	1.00	
<b>Overall Score</b>	.72	.66	.83	.87	.58	
<b>Level III</b>						
<b>Daily Living Tasks</b>	1.00					
<b>Self-care</b>	.39	1.00				
<b>Social Development</b>	.47	.37	1.00			
<b>Work and Study Skills</b>	.52	.44	.67	1.00		
<b>Money Management</b>	.32	.45	.23	.42	1.00	
<b>Housing and Community Resources</b>	.36	.40	.22	.40	.75	1.00
<b>Overall Score</b>	.71	.63	.76	.84	.68	.68

\* Correlations significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed), all other correlations significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

**Exhibit B.10**  
**Percent of Agreement between ACLSA Mastery**  
**and Correct Answers on the Daniel Memorial**

<b>ACLSA Domain</b>	<b>ACLSA Wording</b>	<b>% Agree<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Daniel Memorial Domain</b>	<b>DM Item #</b>	<b>Daniel Memorial Wording</b>
Social Development	I ask for help when I need it	88.0	Job Maintenance	53	“You just started a new job and want to ask a question. Who should you ask?”
		89.4	Interpersonal Social Skills	73	“If you have an embarrassing personal problem and everything you have tried to do to solve it hasn't worked, you should:”
Social Development	I deal with anger and resolve conflicts without using violence	92.8	Interpersonal Social Skills	74	“You are arguing with someone you know and the person starts to shout at you and look like he/she may want to fight. You will most likely:”
		100	Interpersonal Social Skills	77	“You are at work and get angry at your supervisor. You should:”
		100	Interpersonal Social Skills	78	“When a person is being assertive it means:”
Work & Study Skills	I can describe the steps to reach one of my goals	100	Interpersonal Social Skills	76	“Which step should be the first in setting a goal?”
Work & Study Skills	I can explain the education or training needed for my career options	96.4	Educational Planning	39	“John wants to join the Army, what should he do first?”
Work & Study Skills	I can name three ways to find out about job openings	96.2	Job Seeking Skills	44	“Want ads can be found in what section of the newspaper?”
Work & Study Skills	I use the library, newspaper, phone book, or other resources to get information	100	Job Seeking Skills	46	“When calling a large company for a job you should ask for:”
		91.3	Educational Planning	41	“Which would most likely give you the local telephone number for truck driving schools?”
		92.3	Job Maintenance	56	“You get angry at your supervisor for a comment she made. You should:”



<b>ACLSA Domain</b>	<b>ACLSA Wording</b>	<b>% Agree<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Daniel Memorial Domain</b>	<b>DM Item #</b>	<b>Daniel Memorial Wording</b>
Self-care	I can make appointments with my doctor, dentist, or clinic when needed	96.5	Emergency Safety Skills	21	“If you have a toothache you should:”
		95.2	Emergency Safety Skills	24	“(1)True or (2)False – I have a doctor and dentist that I will continue to see on a regular basis when I move out on my own.”
Self-care	I can explain two ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV/AIDS and syphilis	96.0	Emergency Safety Skills	23	“What are the two ways to keep VD (venereal disease) from spreading?”
Self-care	I can take care of minor injuries and illnesses	100	Health	20	“You have an upset stomach and do not know what medicine to use. What should you do?”
		100		21	If you have a toothache you should:
		95.8		26	“Which is a reason to go to the emergency room?”
Self-care	I can explain what happens to your body if you smoke or chew tobacco, drink alcohol, or use illegal drugs	77.7	Health	18	“Drugs and alcohol can do all BUT one of the following?”
Money Management	I can explain how to write checks, make deposits and ATM transactions, and balance a checking/savings account	100	Money Management	6	“What should you do if the bank statement balance is not the same as the balance you have in your check register?”
Money Management	I can interpret pay stub information	95.3	Money Management	3	“What is 'take-home pay'?”
Housing & Community Resources	I can develop a monthly budget for living on my own (see also #119)	87.5	Money Management	2	Money Management Story Problem 2 <sup>b</sup>
		88.9	Money Management	4	Money Management Story Problem 4 <sup>b</sup>
Housing &	I can complete a	85.8	Housing	87	“Which is true about a rental

<b>ACLSA Domain</b>	<b>ACLSA Wording</b>	<b>% Agree<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Daniel Memorial Domain</b>	<b>DM Item #</b>	<b>Daniel Memorial Wording</b>
Community Resources	rental agreement or lease				agreement?"

**Exhibit B.10 (continued)**  
**Percent of Agreement between ACLSA Mastery**  
**and Correct Answers on the Daniel Memorial**

Housing & Community Resources	I can explain how to get and renew a driver's license	100	Transportation	33	"Which is required to obtain a driver's license?"
Daily Living Tasks	I follow the basic fire prevention and safety rules for where I live	100	Emergency Safety Skills	61	"Which is a fire hazard?"
		100	Emergency Safety Skills	62	"Which is the best way to check the battery of a smoke alarm?"
		100	Emergency Safety Skills	64	"Which is the correct method for putting out the grease fire in a frying pan?"

<sup>a</sup> Percent of subjects who correctly answer the items on the *Daniel Memorial Objective Short Form* and rate the highest "mastery" response on the *ACLSA-III* format.

<sup>b</sup> Story problem text is too long to present within this table. Refer to *Daniel Memorial Objective Short Form* money management items #2 and #4 for text.

**Exhibit B.11**  
**Correlations Between ACLSA Domains and Student Self-concept Scales (SSCS)\***

ACLSA Domain	ACLSA Level II & SSCS Scales Correlations <sup>a</sup>		ACLSA Level III & SSCS Scales Correlations <sup>b</sup>	
	Academic	Social	Academic	Social
<b>Daily Living Tasks</b>	.40	.40	.40	.38
<b>Self-care</b>	.34	.37	.41	.39
<b>Social Development</b>	.56	.59	.45	.47
<b>Work &amp; Study Skills</b>	.54	.59	.61	.61
<b>Money Management<sup>c</sup></b>	.42	.39	.31	.30
<b>Housing &amp; Community Resources</b>	--	--	.32	.27
<b>Overall Score</b>	.59	.62	.61	.59

\* All correlations significant at  $p < .00$ , 1-tailed.

<sup>a</sup> For level II,  $N$  ranged 133-135 for pairwise analyses.

<sup>b</sup> For level III,  $N$  ranged 171-170 for pairwise analyses.

<sup>c</sup> Level II Money Management domain contains three new items for which complete data are not available. See Manual for further explanation.

**Exhibit B.12**  
**ACLSA Domains, Descriptive Statistics**

	Level I				Level II				Level III			
	M	N	SE	SD	M	N	SE	SD	M	N	SE	SD
Daily Living Tasks	68.56	157	1.98	24.93	61.93	336	1.49	27.47	61.24	1058	.92	30.01
Self-care	67.31	160	1.80	22.85	54.91	332	1.97	36.00	88.17	1077	.64	21.26
Social Development	65.74	160	1.86	23.64	59.04	334	1.80	32.92	43.56	1080	.75	24.69
Work & Study Skills	59.34	159	2.06	25.98	43.06	339	1.38	25.48	59.12	1077	.75	24.69
Money Management					50.00	338	1.54	28.44	69.50	1064	.98	32.25
Housing & Community									62.82	1066	1.07	35.08

M = Mean

N = Sample size

SE = Standard Error of the Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

**Exhibit B.13**

**Overall Mastery Scores, Ethnic Group Means**

	Level I			Level II			Level III			Short Form		
	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD
<b>White</b>	70.01	42	15.08	52.32	277	22.55	64.55	319	17.69	61.06	319	20.55
<b>Black</b>	64.43	61	17.73	49.78	68	19.77	60.87	257	19.61	56.17	257	20.80
<b>Asian</b>	56.07	20	19.63	50.04	33	17.78	54.64	150	21.71	51.08	150	23.95
<b>Latino</b>	64.33	7	14.69	55.64	24	22.44	55.74	124	19.19	52.53	124	20.87
<b>Other</b>	61.77	17	15.91	51.28	61	23.81	59.51	143	21.86	56.36	143	23.93
<b>Total</b>	64.57	147	17.30	51.82	463	21.97	60.27	993	19.95	56.55	993	21.96

M = Mean

N = Sample size

SD = Standard Deviation

**Exhibit B.14**  
**Youth Level I, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age**

Gender	Age	Mean	N	SD
Female	8	63.47	10	23.10
	9	62.64	14	21.55
	10	64.96	67	16.97
	Total	64.44	91	18.23
Male	8	74.13	2	2.43
	9	62.55	24	15.08
	10	67.26	40	17.87
	Total	65.76	66	16.72
Total	8	65.25	12	21.31
	9	62.58	38	17.45
	10	65.82	107	17.26
	Total	64.99	157	17.57

M = Mean

N = Sample size

SD = Standard Deviation

**Exhibit B.15**

**Youth Level II, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Female</b>	11	44.32	27	20.44
	12	50.77	37	17.91
	13	58.59	57	22.51
	14	57.18	64	20.35
	Total	54.45	185	21.06
<b>Male</b>	11	50.73	26	24.15
	12	46.95	38	25.46
	13	47.63	41	22.19
	14	47.19	66	22.05
	Total	47.78	171	23.03
<b>Total</b>	11	47.46	53	22.36
	12	48.83	75	21.99
	13	54.01	98	22.92
	14	52.11	130	21.73
	Total	51.25	356	22.25

M = Mean

N = Sample size

SD = Standard Deviation



**Exhibit B.16**

**Youth Level III, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Female</b>	15	58.94	56	21.39
	16	62.23	158	17.32
	17	65.16	203	19.08
	18	66.96	114	18.90
	Total	64.02	531	18.90
<b>Male</b>	15	49.29	54	21.76
	16	55.13	144	20.21
	17	58.36	155	20.65
	18	59.19	93	16.24
	Total	56.39	446	19.98
<b>Total</b>	15	54.20	110	22.01
	16	58.85	302	19.06
	17	62.21	358	20.03
	18	63.47	207	18.13
	Total	60.54	977	19.76

M = Mean

N = Sample size

SD = Standard Deviation

**Exhibit B.17**  
**Short Form, Overall Mastery Means, Gender by Age**

Gender	Age	Mean	N	SD
<b>Female</b>	14	58.18	18	18.84
	15	54.56	95	22.86
	16	59.81	158	19.09
	17	63.48	203	20.68
	18	65.20	114	19.74
	Total		61.23	588
<b>Male</b>	14	43.16	22	20.53
	15	45.76	82	22.76
	16	49.91	144	21.79
	17	51.90	155	22.57
	18	53.74	93	18.59
	Total		50.26	496
<b>Total</b>	14	49.92	40	20.95
	15	50.48	177	23.17
	16	55.09	302	20.98
	17	58.47	358	22.25
	18	60.05	207	20.02
	Total		56.21	1084

M = Mean

N = Sample size

SD = Standard Deviation