



# eCornerstone

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## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Assessments

### **Is the YASI valid?**

Validity usually refers to the ability of an instrument to predict outcomes. The content of the YASI reflects many years of accumulated research on the predictors of outcome of high-risk youth. ORBIS Partners, a research firm, was hired to validate the Washington model for the Illinois Department of Human Services. Validation was completed in 2002.

### **Is the YASI strictly a juvenile justice tool?**

The YASI tool works very well in juvenile justice settings where the objective is to prevent delinquency recidivism. However, the YASI is sufficiently comprehensive to work in other youth service settings that serve high-risk youth who tend to present with multiple problems. The YASI can provide strong social history information and assess dynamic targets that are likely to become the focus of service in an array of youth service contexts - delinquency prevention, substance abuse services, foster placements, child welfare, family services, truancy programs, attendance centers, homeless services, etc.

### **Why are protective factors included in a risk assessment?**

Protective factors are strengths or assets that help reduce negative outcomes. These include family strengths, attachments to school, academic performance, positive peer influences, community involvement, healthy leisure pursuits, problem-solving skills, positive attitudinal dispositions, and many other strengths. Youth who exhibit high adjustment and fewer negative outcomes (i.e. violence, substance abuse, school failure, etc.) display more protective factors than youth who are experiencing difficulties. As such, protective factors provide highly relevant information when conducting assessments with high-risk youth.

### **Are protective factors just the “flip-side” of risk factors?**

In many respects, protective factors or strengths are the “flip-side” of risk. Often the two are highly correlated. For example, being high risk in an area like school often implies having

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less strength in that area as well. However, many times youth display elements of both risk and strengths in areas such as school, family, peer relations, etc. In such cases, knowing about strengths in addition to risks provides a more accurate picture. Promising new research now points to the potential for strengths to “buffer” the negative effects of risk by helping to reduce negative outcomes even when risk factors are present.

## **How long should it take to complete a YASI assessment?**

Obviously, the amount of time to complete the assessment varies from one client to the next. With respect to the youth interview, pre-screens can be completed in 15 to 30 minutes for the majority of cases. Full assessments may take from 30 to 60 minutes. All of the pre-screen items are contained in the full assessment. Once the pre-screen is completed, the remaining full assessment items can usually be completed more quickly.

## **Why do the YASI items have multiple choice response categories?**

Multiple response categories are used for many of the dynamic items in the assessment battery. This method is especially sensitive to detecting changes over time. Rather than using a forced choice format (“Yes/No”), the dynamic items assume that problems and strengths are best measured in gradations. Change over time usually reflects modest increments on the YASI items. A problem may not go away entirely, but may improve somewhat over the course of treatment. The use of multiple-choice responses helps identify those changes, however modest.

## **Why does the YASI look so long?**

The YASI is very comprehensive. Generally, the full assessment is longer than most other available tools for youth. However, the pre-screen, which is used to establish overall risk levels and predict a return to the presenting problem, is generally shorter. Since the Full Assessment is more thorough, it is generally used to provide greater detail in profiles of youth who will receive more intensive service interventions (i.e. high risk).



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## **What sources of information are used to complete a YASI assessment?**

The YASI is based on multiple sources of information about the youth. An interview with the youth, and often with parents, forms the foundation of the assessment. However, the information from the interview is supplemented by official records, social histories, school reports, police reports, and any other relevant information source.

## **Who owns the YASI?**

The model on which the YASI is based was developed by the Washington State Institute of Public Policy (<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov>) in collaboration with the Washington State Association of Juvenile Court Administrators. The model is considered a “public domain” tool. Other jurisdictions have customized the tool to fit their youth service programs and reflect differences in juvenile justice processing.

## **What are the potential applications of the YASI?**

The YASI has a variety of potential applications in youth service settings. The YASI results can assist in decisions regarding time allocated for cases, identify needs and strengths to target in service plans, select appropriate candidates for specific programs, monitor progress over the course of service, and gather information about the characteristics of a service population.