



Pediatric Symptom Checklist

What is the PSC-35?

- The Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC) is a **35-item** parent/caregiver-report psychosocial screen designed to facilitate the recognition of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems so that appropriate interventions can be initiated as early as possible.
- It provides a ‘snapshot’ of difficulties or impairment and is NOT a diagnostic tool.

Where do I get the PSC-35 form?

- The PSC-35 forms are available at CBHS site <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/comupg/oservices/mentalHlth/CBHS/default.asp>
- It’s available in our **6 threshold languages**: English Spanish, Cantonese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Russian; and a link to other languages



Who and how to administer?

- The PSC-35 is completed by a parent, guardian, or caregiver
- It is completed in about **5 to 10 minutes**
- It is most effective if completed prior to sessions and independently
- It can also be completed in session using principles of **Therapeutic Assessment (TA)**; Finn, 2007):
 - (a) Administer screen in the standard way, as a paper-and-pencil self-report tool
 - (b) Conduct **extended inquiry** by asking about the parent or caregiver’s experience of the PSC and/or certain responses (e.g. items rated as often). This approach is helpful especially in working with clients from diverse backgrounds.

How do I score and interpret?

- The PSC items that are rated as **Never**, **Sometimes**, or **Often** present and scored 0, 1, and 2, respectively
- If 4 or more items are left blank, the questionnaire is considered **invalid**.
- The points are summed for a total score, with possible scores ranging from **0 to 70**.
- An overall score above the cutoff point indicates need for further assessment:
 - (a) For children/youth aged **6 through 17**, the cut-off score is **28** (i.e., 28 or above = psychological impairment; 27 or below = not impaired).
 - (b) For children ages **3 to 5**, the scores on school related items 5, 6, 17, and 18 are ignored and a total score based on the 31 remaining items is computed. The cut-off score for younger children is **24** or greater.
- To determine what type of mental health problems might exist, consider using the subscales. You can use the scoring worksheet in the next page.
 - **Attention**
 - items 4, 7, 8, 9, and 14 (cutoff = **7**)
 - **Internalizing** (depression, anxiety)
 - items 11, 13, 19, 22, and 27 (cutoff = **5**)
 - **Externalizing** (conduct, oppositional)
 - items 16, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35 (cutoff = **7**)
- You can also cross-walk the PSC-35 items to the CANS items using a tool sent as a separate handout.
- Discuss results and interpretation with parent/caregiver and/or family. Using TA, introduce and collaboratively explore hypotheses around results with clients, and integrate these into treatment planning.

Where to get more information on the PSC-35?

- (1) Overview: https://www.massgeneral.org/psychiatry/services/psc_home.aspx
- (2) PSC-35 forms: https://www.massgeneral.org/psychiatry/services/psc_home.aspx
- (3) Scoring Guidelines: https://www.massgeneral.org/psychiatry/services/psc_scoring.aspx
- (4) Reliability and Validity: https://www.massgeneral.org/psychiatry/services/psc_research.aspx