



Family Engagement
in Systems Change

FAMILY VOICES®

Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tool (FESAT)



888-835-5669

561 Virginia Rd, Bldg. 4, Suite 300, Concord, MA 01742

www.familyvoices.org

Updated April 2024

All reprints and reproductions must include the copyright at the bottom.
Modifications require written permission from the owner. Users may post or share a link to our website (www.familyvoices.org/fesat) for others to download the FESAT. ©2020 Family Voices, Inc.

Funded by the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health

Citation: Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tool. (2020). Family Voices, Inc. Available at www.familyvoices.org/fesat.

Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tool (FESAT)

The FESAT is an assessment tool that both family leaders and organization staff complete to assess how families are being engaged in a specific systems-level initiative, policy, or practice. The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to help organizations that serve children and families gain an understanding of the effectiveness of their approaches to and processes for partnering with families. Complete the following before beginning the assessment.

1. Organization name: _____

(The entity that has engaged family leaders in the systems-level initiative, for example, Title V, Medicaid, or the name of the institution)

2. Initiative name: _____

(For example, Needs Assessment, New Eligibility Criteria)

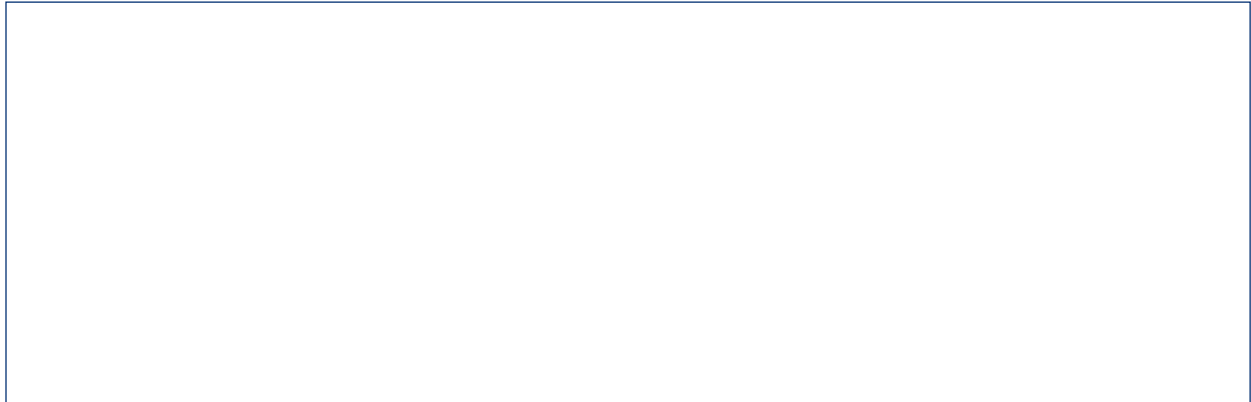
3. Check the box that best describes your primary role in this initiative:

Family leader

Organization staff person

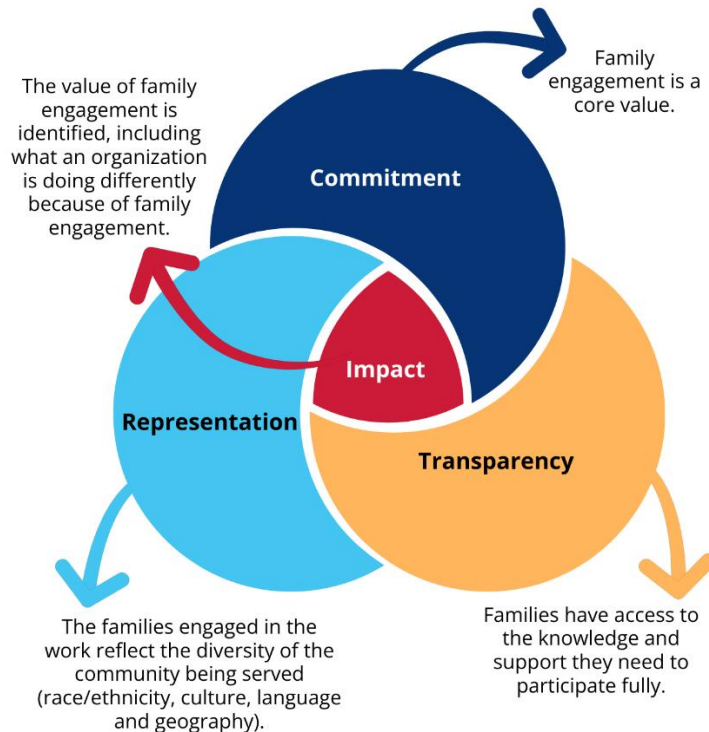
4. Describe the systems-level initiative the team (family leaders and organization staff) is assessing. Family leaders and staff participating in the initiative work together to write a short description of the ongoing or recently completed systems-level initiative. Respond to the items in the FESAT using this description.

Example: [Organization] has engaged families in [short description of initiative] to [intended outcome]. The state Medicaid agency engaged families in an initiative to streamline the Medicaid waiver application process to make it easier for families to apply.



How the FESAT is Organized

The FESAT is organized around four domains of family engagement: Commitment, Transparency, Representation, and Impact.



Using the FESAT

Give the best answer you can based **on your own experience**. There are no right or wrong answers.

In each statement, the term “organization” refers to the organization that has engaged with family leaders in the specific initiative described above.



Domain 1: Commitment

Commitment means that the organization routinely engages with family leaders in all systems-level initiatives that affect the policies and programs that govern services for children, youth, and families.

The statements below ask about how the organization demonstrates its overall commitment to family engagement.

The **Commitment** domain assesses an organization’s overall commitment to ensuring that family leaders are engaged in systems-level changes that affect the services and supports children, youth, and families receive. When you respond to the items in the **Commitment** domain, think about the organization as a whole.



Domain 1: Commitment

In my experience:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Not Sure/ Not Applicable
1. The organization uses written policy that requires family engagement in systems-level initiatives.	0	1	2	3	4	
2. The organization has one or more champions of family engagement.	0	1	2	3	4	
3. The organization acknowledges the contributions family leaders make to systems-level initiatives.	0	1	2	3	4	
4. The organization's budget includes funding for the family leaders' time and/or other costs they incur (for example, travel, childcare).	0	1	2	3	4	
5. The organization provides adequate time for staff to implement changes that result from family engagement in systems-level initiatives (for example, educating staff about new policies).	0	1	2	3	4	



Domain 2: Transparency

Transparency occurs when the organization clearly documents and communicates how it:

- Identifies issues faced by the children and families they serve.
- Provides the information and supports family leaders and organization staff need to partner and participate to their maximum potential in the systems-level initiative.

The statements below ask about how the organization ensures that family leaders and organization staff can easily access and understand the information they need to participate fully. Using the initiative you described on page 3, respond to the statements about **Transparency**.



Domain 2: Transparency

	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Usually	Always	Not Sure/ Not Applicable
6. The organization conducted activities to understand the issues faced by the children and families they serve (for example, used data or conducted a focus group).	0	1	2	3	4	
7. I had a clear understanding of the initiative that staff and families worked on together.	0	1	2	3	4	
8. I had the support I needed to understand my partnership role (for example, a mentor within or outside of the organization).	0	1	2	3	4	
9. I had the support I needed to participate in meetings (for example, physical access, interpreters, time away from other work responsibilities).	0	1	2	3	4	
10. I had the information I needed to participate in meetings.	0	1	2	3	4	



Domain 3: Representation

Representation occurs when family leaders reflect the diversity of the community served by the organization.

Note: If the initiative that you described on page 2 serves a specific population (for example, black women of childbearing age), this section addresses representation of the community served by the specific initiative, not the overall community served by the organization.

The statements below ask about the diversity of family leaders who participated in the initiative. Using the initiative you described on page 3, respond to the statements about **Representation**.



Domain 3: Representation

Family leaders who collaborated in the initiative were representative of:	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Usually	Always	Not Sure/ Not Applicable
11. Races and ethnicities of the populations served by the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
12. Cultures of the populations served by the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
13. Languages spoken by the populations served by the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
14. Geographic areas in which populations served by the initiative live.	0	1	2	3	4	

If the items above do not match your priorities for the populations served by the initiative you are assessing, you can replace them with criteria that do match your priorities. For example, your organization may be looking for family leaders of certain ages, disabilities, gender, etc.



Domain 4: Impact

Impact describes the areas in which the organization used family leaders' ideas to improve policies and programs.

The statements below ask about how the organization collaborated and shared decision making with family leaders. Using the initiative you described on page 3, respond to the statements about **Impact**.



Domain 4: Impact

In my experience, organization staff:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Not Sure/ Not Applicable
15. Listened to family leaders' ideas.	0	1	2	3	4	
16. Engaged family leaders in choosing goals for the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
17. Worked together with family leaders to implement the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
18. Worked together with family leaders to evaluate the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
19. Used family leaders' input to improve the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	
20. Could explain how family leaders contributed to the initiative.	0	1	2	3	4	

Scoring the FESAT

Family leaders and organization staff should discuss responses to each item. Where is there agreement and disagreement? Consult the FESAT User's Guide for instructions to complete the FESAT Score Sheet and for guidance around using the FESAT results.

Other FESAT Tools

