

Caregiver Assessment Profile: Pennsylvania

About This Series: The National Caregiver Support Collaborative (NCSC) examined caregiver assessments nationwide to identify common characteristics and elements, including assessment types, modalities, and domains. The NCSC's Caregiver Assessment Profiles feature current evidence-based, evidence-informed, and innovative assessments designed to support family, kin, and tribal caregivers. The purpose of this series is to inform states, aging networks, and tribal networks about promising practices for developing and conducting caregiver assessments. Each profile provides an overview of an assessment, highlighting key components; follow-up, evaluation, and training processes; cultural considerations; and funding sources.

Assessment Overview

The [Pennsylvania Caregiver Assessment Tool](#) (CAT) serves as a resource to guide conversational interviews with caregivers about their specific needs. Created in 2018, the CAT includes questions that gather demographic details about the caregiver; information on the care recipient; the caregiver's current supports, roles, and responsibilities; types of assistance the caregiver provides; the caregiver's well-being; challenges reported; and caregiver-related expenditures (e.g., services to provide care and supplies).

Care managers (CMs) at area agencies on aging (AAAs) can begin completing a CAT with caregivers over the phone but they must follow up with a face-to-face home visit to complete the assessment. The CM observes the caregiving environment and gathers information needed to complete the CAT. The tool is designed to serve as a baseline for CMs to evaluate if caregivers are being helped and if they may need additional supports over time. The CAT is used to create a person-centered plan for the caregiver that addresses caregiver stress and formal and informal supports gaps.

The Pennsylvania's National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) actively uses the CAT. Medicaid home and community-based programs in Pennsylvania do not currently administer the assessment or use an assessment specifically for caregivers.

Assessment Modalities	Modality Option for PA Assessment?
In-Person	Yes
Phone	Yes
Virtual with Video	No

Assessment Type	Properties	PA Assessment Type?
Evidence-Informed	- Found effective through evaluation or adapted from evidence-based model - Includes guidance to carry out activities - Translated at least once in one or more sites	Yes
Evidence-Based	- Proven effective through rigorous evaluation - Published results and inclusive of resources for public use - Used in other settings with fidelity to the original model	No
Innovative	- May be effective, with some outcome data, but not yet evaluated - Limited guidance to carry out activities - Not yet translated in a different site or population	No

Key Assessment Components

1. **Conversational interview:** Designed as a conversational guide, the CAT enables CMs to capture relevant information without overwhelming the caregiver.
2. **Hybrid approach to assessment administration:** CMs complete the CAT using a hybrid approach that includes a required in-person home visit with both the caregiver and care recipient. The in-person component allows CMs to assess caregiver well-being, rapport, and observe the caregiving environment to better understand what supports may be needed. The virtual component allows for more streamlined collection of data.
3. **Robust state-funded caregiver support services:** Pennsylvania was one of the first states to offer robust caregiver support services through state funding, which began 10 years prior to the NFCSP. State funds provide the flexibility to offer services to caregivers beyond those funded by the Older Americans Act (OAA). The program allows more services to be offered to caregivers through the monthly reimbursement of approved caregiving-related expenses. Pennsylvania passed [Act 20](#) in 2021, which defines eligibility criteria for state-funded services. Pennsylvania issues [directives to AAAs](#) with guidance on using state funds to pay for services. Caregivers may be reimbursed for respite, supplies, supportive services, supplemental services, and other needs related to grandparents and older relative caregivers up to \$600 per month on a sliding scale based on income. Caregivers may also receive up to \$5,000 for the purchase of home modifications and assistive devices for their care recipients.
4. **Priority algorithm and wait list management:** The CAT calculates a Caregiver Assessment Score (CAS) based on priority categories, the caregiver's well-being, and the care recipient's need for supervision. CMs use the CAS to determine service priority when funding limits require wait lists.
5. **Bi-annual care plan review:** CMs review the care plan and CAT at least every six months to observe changes over time and determine if caregivers benefit from services or require additional support.

Assessment Domains	Domain Included in PA Assessment?
Background on the caregiver and the caregiving situation ¹	Yes
Caregiver's perception of care recipient's health and functional status	Yes
Health and well-being of the caregiver	Yes
Consequences of caregiving on the caregiver	Yes
Resources to support the caregiver and care recipient	Yes
Care-provision requirements (skills, abilities, knowledge, confidence, competencies)	Yes
Caregiver's values and preferences with respect to everyday living and care provision	Yes

Follow-Up and Evaluation

The CAT is completed at least every six months or when significant changes occur in the caregiving relationship or household. CMs enter data into Pennsylvania's case management system or use a mobile assessment module for direct data entry. Information from the CAT is required for federal reporting purposes (e.g., the State Program Report) and helps identify caregiving trends, best practices, and additional opportunities for caregiver support.

¹ According to the [Family Caregiver Alliance](#), experts in serving caregivers and researchers who focus on assessment point to the seven categories of information (i.e., domains) listed in the table to include in a caregiver assessment.

Staff Training

Pennsylvania's state unit on aging staff provide quarterly technical assistance to CMs at the AAAs and maintain a [Policy and Procedure Manual](#) with guidance on the Caregiver Support Program, including assessments. The manual provides CMs with information on how to conduct the assessment, such as who should be involved, goals, outcomes, and timeframes. The state also has a learning management system with archived training materials for onboarding and refresher courses.

Cultural Considerations

Pennsylvania provides interpreters for caregivers with limited English proficiency.

Funding Sources

The assessment tool leverages OAA and state funds, including revenue from the state lottery.

Learn More

Contact:

For more information on state caregiver assessments, please contact the NCSC by e-mail (caregivercollaborative@acl.hhs.gov).

You may access other Caregiver Assessment Profiles in this series on the [NCSC website](#).