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Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) International

Guidance Document - STAR Framework: International Implementation | September 2019

The Strengths and Risks Assessment (STAR) Framework has evolved to become the approach by which ongoing nurse assessments in the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program are used to enable consistent and robust clinical decisions by nurses and supervisors. Therefore it is important that every society implement a version of the STAR Framework (adapted for local context) or an equivalent strengths and risks assessment that supports fidelity to the NFP model and is in alignment with societal nursing practice.

This guidance briefly outlines the STAR Framework and sets out the expectations for its introduction into NFP practice within each society. It is designed to support you to successfully introduce this important program refinement within your NFP nursing context or to ensure that an equivalent strengths and risks assessment is in use.

How does STAR enhance NFP?

- STAR provides a systematic framework for bringing together the outcomes of regular assessments completed across the domains of the NFP program, with nurse professional judgement regarding client and family risks, strengths and readiness to change.
- The strengths and risks identified through STAR directly influence clients' abilities to achieve the three NFP programs goals (e.g. substance use during pregnancy, parental care of the child or maternal education). In some cases, these risks create challenges for clients because of their indirect influence, such as homelessness or economic adversity.
- The STAR Framework is designed to help NFP nurses to synthesize these risks and corresponding strengths, and set priorities for intervention. Completion of STAR facilitates a holistic review of client and child progress in relation to program goals and enables NFP nurses to make appropriate judgements regarding the alignment of program inputs with client and child needs and desires. This includes both visit dosage and specific content, thereby increasing program efficiency and effectiveness.
- Use of STAR enables nurses to focus on the client's stage of behavioral change and view this as a strength that can be enhanced through their interaction with the nurse and the program.
- Deep reflection, high quality analysis and decision-making is enhanced by reviewing STAR within reflective supervision and during case conferences.
- STAR also facilitates continuity of care for clients as it enables high quality 'handover' between nurses at times of nurse sickness or absence.

What STAR is NOT:

As an assessment *framework*, STAR can be confused with other, pre-existing assessment methodologies within a society. It is therefore important to understand that STAR is **not**:

An assessment tool:

- STAR enables NFP nurses to bring together, consolidate, and review what is known about a client and child's circumstances, including information from assessment tools such as the GAD-7 and PHQ-9.

A multi-agency assessment tool:

- STAR is not designed to be shared with other agencies as it is primarily a review/consolidation of assessments made by the NFP nurse. However, STAR will provide useful information and analysis to present as part of any shared documentation or case conferences with community partners.

Child-centric:

- STAR focuses both on maternal and child risks / strengths and progress, which are aligned with the three NFP program goals

An assessment with cut-offs/an acuity scale:

- STAR is not designed to add or summarise risks in ways that provide cut-offs, indications of further action required, or a total risk level. However, it may well be that completion of STAR does allow NFP nurses to identify risks more clearly, therefore enabling them to decide on further action required to protect client or child safety. This will be enhanced by its use in reflective supervision.

A check list or tick box exercise:

- STAR requires nurses to be reflective and analytical as they use the framework to assess client progress and impact on the child. Their expert clinical judgement is required to contextualise the assessments and observations made and they will need to make considered and achievable plans for future visits based on the STAR review. This is supported by discussion in Reflective Supervision.

Recommendations for the Introduction of STAR into Each Country:

- The STAR Framework will be reviewed in detail by the Clinical Lead of the country, who will then involve others as appropriate. Where the Clinical Lead believes that an equivalent assessment framework in use in their country can stand in place of STAR, this should be discussed and agreed with their NFP International Consultant.
- As you consider any adaptations to STAR, or alternatives to it, you will want to ensure the same principles that guided the team that developed STAR are achieved in your society, namely that STAR:
 - Demonstrates clinical utility and feasibility
 - Aligns with the NFP model
 - Reflects current standards of nursing practice
 - Fits seamlessly within NFP practice
 - Avoids creating a burden in nursing documentation
 - Complements/utilizes existing standard assessment tools

- Where STAR is to be introduced, an assessment should be made to:
 - Determine which adaptations will need to be made to the Framework guidance document and coding sheet to ensure a good ‘fit’ within their society.
 - Develop an implementation plan that identifies potential enabling factors and barriers to using STAR
- This review should include an examination of the standardised assessment tools embedded within STAR such as the GAD-7 and PHQ-9. Societies should ensure that high quality alternatives are used where necessary (e.g. where there are no standardised translated versions available or another validated equivalent assessment is commonly used in the country).
- Some societies may already use an assessment tool that collects some of the same/similar information, in which case you will need to determine how the holistic analyses and subsequent planning of inputs to families differ between these, to avoid duplication of documentation.
- If you have a large number of NFP teams in your country, you may wish to consider undertaking a pilot to introduce and evaluate use of STAR within your context, using the learning from this to make any further adaptations that may be required, prior to a larger scale implementation.
- The timing for your implementation of STAR will need to align with your other program priorities
- A summary of your review, detailing the changes required, your proposed implementation/ education plan, and any outstanding areas of challenge, should be shared with your International NFP consultant. Your proposals and challenges will be discussed with you and assistance offered and/or linkage with other societies making similar revisions will be made.

It Is Recommended That Consideration Be Given to the Following Areas:

- The record keeping burden for NFP nurses should be kept to a minimum, therefore STAR should replace any similar assessment approaches that have been internally developed for use within supervision or as aids to assessment reviews
- Linkage with any local assessment requirements that are expected of nurses should be taken into account as adjustments are made to the Framework. This will enable NFP nurses to extract and share findings as appropriate between STAR and other assessments as easily as possible.
- Linkage between STAR and clinical records for the client or child should be addressed. Depending on local expectations, it may be that the outcomes of a STAR review and plans for future program delivery within Reflective Supervision need to be recorded within client or child records and consideration should be given to the ways in which this will be managed.
- Standard supervisor and nurse educational materials have been provided for you to adapt and use. You will need to determine how and when to incorporate them into your society’s curriculum. Consideration should be given to methods for introducing STAR to both experienced NFP nurses and within the society’s future educational curricula for the program. Education should be as efficient and effective as possible and therefore it will be important to evaluate your initial introduction/education of STAR so you can make any necessary changes.
- You will want to determine ways in which your country’s NFP information system (IS) can support the introduction of STAR and its likelihood of effective use within teams. This might include use of IS prompts and reminders for times when STAR consolidation and reflection is recommended, or

production of collated summaries at the individual client level that will enable nurses to complete the data derived elements of STAR easily. Over time it may be possible for the IS to populate some elements of the STAR framework automatically as data is inputted via each data collection assessment form.