

Juvenile Inventory for Functioning® (JIFF®) Overview of Reliability and Validity

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The Juvenile Inventory for Functioning (JIFF) is an interactive computer program that is self-administered by the youth and parent or caregiver. The JIFF is derived from the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale® (CAFAS®), which has been the gold standard for assessing the functioning of youth for more than 20 years. There are over 80 peer-reviewed publications about CAFAS, which attest to the measure's validity, reliability, and sensitivity to measuring outcomes (to learn more, see the CAFAS® Reliability and Validity document at <http://www.fasoutcomes.com> under "Downloads" → "Reference Materials").

The JIFF application is widely used to assess youth in a variety of service settings. Research data is currently being collected from juvenile justice, child welfare (including foster care), schools, preventive community-based services, and residential programs. In particular, numerous research studies on the JIFF have been completed in the area of juvenile justice.

The studies conducted in juvenile justice generated evidence of validity, reliability, generalizability, and sensitivity to change over time for the JIFF. These results, summarized below, have been presented at numerous conferences and are either in press or currently being submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Feasibility

- Over the course of a two-year evaluation of a post-arrest juvenile justice diversion program, we found that 96% of youth report preferring the computer interview over a face to face interview. This is consistent with the high use of electronic forms of communication in the current youth culture. It is also consistent with the literature on computerized assessments, which indicates that youth are equally or more willing to reveal information about sensitive topics via computer assisted interviews.
- 91% of caregivers indicate that they are comfortable with the computer assisted self-interview. This is notable because many of these caregivers reside in economically depressed areas and are less experienced with computers.

Validity

Face Validity:

- Youth and Caregivers are willing to identify concerns, needs, and strengths about the youth.
- Goals identified (indicating need for improving psychosocial functioning) are consistent with the literature in juvenile justice.
- The JIFF Interviewer® allows youth and caregivers to indicate when they do not understand a question. The program records these events, which are extremely rare occurrences, indicating that the questions are easily understood.

Concurrent Validity:

- Good youth-caregiver correspondence on goal nomination, entry JIFF total score, and subscale scores.
- Similarity between JIFF and CAFAS items. The JIFF was derived from the CAFAS, which is a gold standard for assessing functioning in youth. For the 8 domains that are assessed by the JIFF and the CAFAS, approximately 90% of the items on the JIFF Interview have corresponding CAFAS Items.

Predictive Validity:

- JIFF predicts re-offending - Youth with higher impairment in psychosocial functioning at entry were more likely to reoffend (i.e. adjudication for another offense within 455 days). More specifically, the JIFF total score was a significant predictor in a logistic regression model in which the following variables were controlled for (and were found to be non-significant): race, age, caregiver marital status, type of offense, and urine drug test results. Being male also predicted recidivism in the logistic regression. In addition, five of the JIFF subscale scores at entry also predicted recidivism.
- JIFF predicts non-completion of diversion program - A higher JIFF total score at entry and specific subscales predicted non-completion of a diversion program. In the caregiver version of the JIFF, higher scores on the Burden of Care scale (i.e., the burden of caring for the youth and the negative impact on the family) at entry also predicted non-completion of a diversion program.
- JIFF predicts improvement in psychosocial functioning - Recidivists and youth with greater impairment (higher JIFF score) at entry were less likely to improve in psychosocial functioning from entry to exit (as measured by change scores on JIFF total score and subscale scores). This was observed for both the youth and caregiver versions.

Generalizability

- No Race effects - In a study with a diverse sample, no race effects were observed for JIFF scores at entry or in change in JIFF scores (i.e., growth in psychosocial functioning). Note: This lends strong support to using the JIFF, given the critical need to reduce Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC).
- The sensitivity of the JIFF to document growth in psychosocial functioning has been observed for samples which were mostly African American, mostly Hispanic, and mostly White.
 - Anecdotal information: One site reported that Native American youth liked the computerized interview and it functioned very well in getting them to express their needs.

Reliability

- Test-Retest - The JIFF has excellent test-retest reliability for both the JIFF total and subscale scores.
- Internal Consistency - The JIFF total score has excellent internal consistency, as measured by Conbach's alpha (greater than 0.90 in multiple studies).
- Advanced modeling using Item Response Theory (IRT) supports high internal consistency for the JIFF subscales.

Sensitivity to Change Over Time - Program Evaluation

- JIFF total score and subscale scores are sensitive to change over time (i.e., change in JIFF at entry [intake] to exit). Paired t -tests between entry and exit scores indicated significant growth in psychosocial functioning for youth who completed the diversion programs (and thus, had an exit JIFF). This was observed for both the youth and caregiver versions. Further analysis of the significant findings evaluated the magnitude of change (d-statistic). Large to moderate effect sizes were consistently observed for JIFF total score, School subscale, and Home subscales.
- Caregiver ratings of "need for help" in various life domains (for the youth and the family) were significantly reduced from entry to exit.