How TOP works

TOP is a simple, web-based assessment tool that provides credible and scientifically validated information about the social and emotional well-being of children in care.

- TOP tracks a comprehensive set of emotional and behavioral indicators, from a child's experience with depression, nightmares, and eating disorders to emotional strengths and assets.

- TOP involves multiple reporters and easy-to-use assessment questionnaires. Information is gathered from the child, family and guardians, caseworkers and providers to generate holistic and accurate assessments.

- TOP measures each indicator over time. Using highly sensitive-to-change scales, it allows caseworkers to see how children improve (or worsen), so treatment plans or providers can be changed as necessary.

- TOP indicators can be used to assess provider effectiveness and help public agencies match children's needs to provider strengths. This data also helps ensure that taxpayer dollars fund the most effective care for vulnerable children.

- TOP data about children's progress over time can be beneficial for child welfare agencies and providers when identifying areas of excellence to help maintain and improve services.

TOP was developed by **David Kraus, PhD.,** a child psychologist who has worked extensively with children and families with histories of abuse and neglect. TOP was designed to help community mental health clinics match patients with effective services and has been developed over 20 years in clinical settings. TOP has been adapted for use in child welfare and, through Outcome Referrals, it is being implemented in multiple child welfare jurisdictions across the nation.

outcome referrals

A revolutionary tool helps child welfare teams and providers focus on what works.

How do you assess the impact placements have on kids' well-being? How can you evaluate the value of the services purchased with public dollars?

Today it's possible to gain powerful new insights by measuring, tracking and improving kids' well-being using a scientifically validated, multi-dimensional well-being assessment called the Treatment Outcome Package (TOP).

TOP helps you know what works so that you can hold your organization and your providers accountable for improving well-being outcomes.

- Track kids' progress over time
- Ensure provider accountability
- Get kids the right level of care
- Understand and treat trauma
- Identify and treat substance abuse
- Effectively evaluate IV-E waivers
- Improve day-to-day practice

Over time, TOP can help improve well-being and support funding for child welfare services by showing improvement in outcomes and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars.
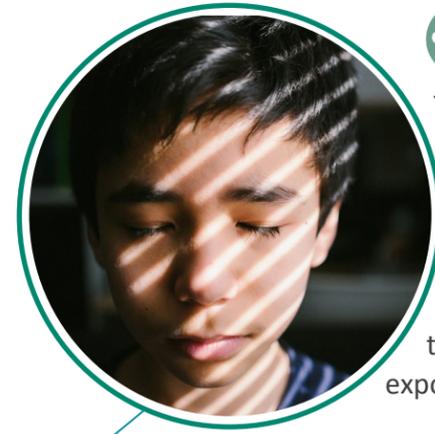
outcome referrals

Improving well-being and child welfare practice.

The better child welfare systems get at measuring and tracking children's well-being over time, the smarter they will be at identifying children's needs, matching those needs with providers' strengths and understanding whether child welfare interventions are actually helping. It's how you improve outcomes and hold yourselves and your partners accountable to the kids you serve.

LEVEL OF CARE

TOP uses 12 scientifically validated behavioral dimensions to understand the number, nature and severity of a child's different social and emotional issues. This allows caseworkers and providers to move beyond " finding the next available bed" to being able to recommend a truly appropriate level of care.

TRAUMA SCREEN

TOP successfully identifies the symptoms of trauma, including hyperarousal, re-experiencing and avoidance. Using a stress scale, we can determine the occurrence and severity of major stressful or traumatic events—and alert the child welfare team when a child is exposed to traumatic experiences.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SCREEN

Using multiple reporters' perspectives, TOP identifies signs of substance abuse that might otherwise be missed to determine if more formal evaluation or treatment is needed. TOP also has no ceiling effects; it can assess very severe substance abuse and track progress or worsening in treatment.

MEASURING WELL-BEING

PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING

TOP data tells us which kids are getting better and which are getting worse. By aggregating outcomes of all the kids in care, it's possible to see which providers are delivering services that work and which are not—to match children's needs with providers' strengths, identify gaps in services and ensure that jurisdictions are paying for services that work.

DAY-TO-DAY PRACTICE SUPPORT

Good practice depends on good information shared, in a timely manner, among everyone who is involved with kids in care. TOP data helps improve practice by capturing input from multiple reporters, informing service planning and measuring progress over time—all of which help team members interact better and focus on critical issues.

IV-E WAIVER EVALUATIONS

Any state operating a IV-E waiver demonstration can benefit from the data generated through the use of the TOP tool, gaining valuable inputs into the measurement of child well-being progress, trauma mitigation and other practice targets/objectives that are being achieved by the demonstration.