



ATTENDANCE USA INSTRUMENTS | RESEARCH SUMMARY

The Gentle-Genitty Family Stability Index™ and Family Stability Reserve™



Measuring the home conditions that make showing up possible.

Before a child can show up for school, a family has to be able to show up for the day: food on the table, a safe place to sleep, a ride that arrives, a caregiver who is well, and people to call when plans fall apart. The **Gentle-Genitty Family Stability Index™ (GG-FSI™)** gives practitioners a structured, strengths-first conversation for seeing those conditions clearly. Its companion score, the **Family Stability Reserve™ (FSR)**, asks a second question that most screening tools skip: when something goes wrong, how much backup does this family have?

Developed by Dr. Carolyn S. Gentle-Genitty, creator of the Perception of School Social Bonding (PSSB) instrument and pioneer of Attendance Science™, the GG-FSI™ extends her work from the school side of attendance to the home side. The PSSB asks whether a school gives a student a reason to attend. The GG-FSI™ asks whether a family's daily conditions make attending possible.

AT A GLANCE

36

Scored items: 30 across six stability domains
plus 6 Reserve items

6 + 1

Six stability domains and one resilience scale,
the Family Stability Reserve™

0–4

Five-point response scale, anchored to the
past 30 days; higher means steadier ground

2 scores

Family Stability Score (FSS) and Family
Stability Reserve (FSR), each on a 0–100
scale

5

Critical Safety Check questions, kept
separate from the score and tied to required
procedures

v1.0

Research-development field instrument,
October 2026; field testing under way

WHAT IT MEASURES



1 • Economic Stability

Meeting basic expenses, predictable income, absorbing an unexpected cost, and covering a child's ordinary school needs.
E1—E5



2 • Housing, Environment & Mobility

A safe, dependable home, freedom from involuntary moves, space for sleep and study, safe surroundings, and reliable transportation.
H1—H5



3 • Health Stability

Access to physical and behavioral health care, conditions managed well enough to keep routines, and caregiver health.
HE1—HE5



4 • Caregiving & Routine Stability

A dependable adult each day, predictable daily routines, reliable supervision, shared caregiving, and the ability to reorganize after surprises.
C1—C5



5 • Education & Developmental Stability

Consistent attendance, learning materials and support, schedules that fit together, access to school services, and safe out-of-class activities.
ED1—ED5



6 • Relational, Social & Community

A trusted adult for every child, safe family communication, people to call, protection from violence, and connection to a supportive network.
R1—R5



Family Stability Reserve™ FSR1—FSR6

Six "what if" items ask how well the household could absorb a sudden expense, a caregiver who becomes unavailable, a failed ride, a housing change, or a child's new need, and how quickly routines recover. The Index describes today's conditions. The Reserve describes tomorrow's shock absorber.

WHY FAMILY STABILITY

Absence often begins at home, long before it reaches the attendance record

Attendance research has long recognized that absenteeism has many sources, spanning the child, the family, the school, and the community (Kearney, 2008). Most attendance data, however, arrive after the fact, as a count of days missed. The GG-FSI™ looks upstream, at the household conditions that research links to child wellbeing, school readiness, and participation.

- 1

Chronic absence remains a national challenge. National chronic absenteeism peaked near 28.5 percent in 2022 and stood near 23.5 percent in 2024, still well above the 2017 level of roughly 13 percent. (Geduld, 2025)
- 2

Health and attendance travel together. The American Academy of Pediatrics describes school attendance and child health as closely linked and calls on pediatricians and schools to work together on both. (Allison et al., 2019)
- 3

Economic pressure reaches children through family life. The family stress model shows how economic hardship raises caregiver strain, which in turn affects parenting and child development. (Conger & Donnellan, 2007)
- 4

Housing instability shows up in school readiness. Early childhood housing instability, including frequent moves, is associated with weaker school readiness. (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014)
- 5

Change itself carries weight. Repeated transitions in family structure are associated with more behavior problems for children, beyond the effect of family structure alone. (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007)
- 6

Predictable routines protect. Five decades of research connect regular family routines and rituals with healthier child and family functioning. (Fiese et al., 2002)
- 7

Many families run without a cushion. In 2024, 63 percent of U.S. adults said they would cover a \$400 emergency expense with cash or its equivalent, leaving more than a third without that cushion. (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2025)

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Social bond theory. Hirschi (1969) proposed that attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief tie young people to conventional life. Dr. Gentle-Genitty applied this lens to schools in her dissertation on chronic truancy (2009) and in the PSSB. The GG-FSI™ turns the same lens toward the home, where a child's first bonds are formed and sustained.

Ecological systems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) placed the child inside nested systems of family, school, neighborhood, and policy. The six domains follow that map, from the household budget to the community network.

Strain and stress. General strain theory (Agnew, 1992) and the family stress model (Conger & Donnellan, 2007) explain how pressures on a household can spill into behavior, routines, and participation.

Resilience. Resilience research describes positive adaptation as the product of everyday protective systems (Masten, 2014) and family processes that help households regroup after adversity (Walsh, 2016). The Family Stability Reserve™ gives that capacity its own measurable scale.

ALIGNMENT Built to speak the language of health and community partners

GG-FSI™ DOMAIN	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH DOMAIN (U.S. HHS)
1 · Economic Stability	Economic Stability
2 · Housing, Environment & Mobility	Neighborhood and Built Environment
3 · Health Stability	Health Care Access and Quality
5 · Education & Developmental Stability	Education Access and Quality
6 · Relational, Social & Community	Social and Community Context
4 · Caregiving & Routine Stability	Added by the GG-FSI™: a family-process domain capturing daily caregiving and routines, the mechanism through which the other conditions reach a child's school day.

HOW IT WORKS One conversation, two scores, and a family-led plan

A trained practitioner reads each statement aloud, and the respondent chooses the answer that best fits the family's experience over the past 30 days. Every item is written as a strength, so a higher number always means steadier ground. The instrument closes with a Family Stability Action Map, which records the family's strongest protective factor, its most important concern, and its own picture of "more stable."

Family Stability Score (FSS)

Each domain's raw score (0—20) converts to 0—100. The FSS is the average of the six domain scores. Provisional interpretation bands:

85—100	Stable	Conditions generally support consistent functioning
70—84	Watch	Emerging vulnerability; prevention may help
50—69	Strained	Meaningful barriers in one or more areas
30—49	Unstable	Significant disruption across important areas
0—29	Critical	Coordinated assessment is warranted

Family Stability Reserve (FSR)

The six Reserve items total 0—24 and convert to 0—100. The FSR is a planning signal about capacity to absorb disruption, separate from any clinical or financial solvency score.

Cross-Domain Interaction

Practitioners count domains scoring below 70 (Low, Moderate, High, Severe) and record the connections the family itself names, such as housing and transportation or health and caregiving, rather than assuming cause.

Critical Safety Check

Five yes/no questions screen for immediate danger, violence, loss of shelter, unsafe supervision, and acute health crises. They stay outside the score. Any "yes" triggers the practitioner's required safety, reporting, or referral procedures.

WHERE IT FITS

K-12 attendance teams can use the GG-FSI™ alongside attendance records and the PSSB to see both sides of a student's attendance story: the school bond and the home conditions. Domain profiles help teams match support to the absence classifications Attendance Science™ uses (truancy, school withdrawal, school avoidance, and school refusal) and to multi-tiered systems of support.

Community practitioners in social work, family services, health, and youth development can use it to open a strengths-first conversation, set shared priorities, and coordinate referrals. Repeating the instrument over time can show whether supports are strengthening the family's Reserve, a question for the field-testing phase.

TWO SIDES OF ATTENDANCE How the three measures work together

	GG-FSI™ FAMILY STABILITY SCORE	FAMILY STABILITY RESERVE™	PSSB
Core question	Do daily home conditions make showing up possible?	If something goes wrong, can the family absorb it?	Does the school give the student a reason to attend?
Focus	Current conditions across six domains	Capacity to recover from disruption	Attachment, involvement, and belief in school
Respondent	Caregiver or family member, with a practitioner	Caregiver or family member, with a practitioner	Student self-report
Items and scale	30 items, 0—4	6 items, 0—4	10 items, 5-point scale
Evidence status	Version 1.0, field testing	Version 1.0, field testing	Peer-reviewed validation, 3,507 students

RESPONSIBLE USE

- **A conversation, never a verdict.** The GG-FSI™ is a research-development instrument. It is separate from any diagnosis, eligibility test, or professional safety assessment.
- **No high-stakes decisions from the score alone.** The numerical score should never by itself determine child-protection action, service eligibility, school exclusion, healthcare access, or housing eligibility.
- **The family's voice leads.** Practitioners record the respondent's own answers and the family's own priorities, and avoid assuming cause across domains.
- **Bands are provisional.** Interpretation cut points will be reviewed against field-test evidence before any version is described as validated.

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION ROADMAP

The GG-FSI™ follows the same evidence-building path as the PSSB, which moved from a 2008 doctoral item pool to a peer-reviewed validation study with 3,507 students (Gentle-Genitty et al., 2025).

August 2026 DONE	Family Stability Index framework drafted from Dr. Gentle-Genitty's book manuscript <i>Schools Spared, Children Punished</i> , her dissertation research, and the Attendance USA Manifesto.
October 2026 DONE	GG-FSI™ Version 1.0 Community Practitioner Field Instrument released for field testing, with six domains, the Family Stability Reserve™, a Critical Safety Check, and a large-print edition.
Phase 1 PLANNED	Content validity review by an expert panel of practitioners and researchers; cognitive interviews with families to test clarity and cultural fit; practitioner feedback captured on the built-in field-testing notes.
Phase 2 PLANNED	Pilot administration across school and community settings to examine feasibility, item performance, internal consistency, and the six-domain structure through factor analysis.
Phase 3 PLANNED	Concurrent and predictive validity, including relationships with attendance records and PSSB scores; review of interpretation bands; fairness testing across language and community groups.
Phase 4 PLANNED	Peer-reviewed publication, registry listing, translations, and adaptations for workforce, higher education, and population-level use.

Copyright and access

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A review copy of the Version 1.0 instrument is available from the Attendance USA Instruments page. Researchers, districts, and organizations request written permission before administering, adapting, or translating it.

Permissions: info@attendanceusa.org
attendanceusa.org/instruments

How to cite

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Join the field test

Schools, districts, and community organizations interested in piloting the GG-FSI™ and sharing practitioner feedback can write to info@attendanceusa.org.

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