

The **Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems (ASUP)** is a discussion guide created to assist caregivers in identifying the skills that may be making it difficult for a kid to respond adaptively to problems and frustrations, and the expectations the kid is having difficulty reliably meeting (called unsolved problems). Skills provide caregivers with new lenses. Identifying unsolved problems helps caregivers identify the targets for intervention, prioritize, and solve those problems proactively rather than reactively.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR IDENTIFYING SKILLS:

How hard could it be to check off skills? Not that hard, but here are a few important reminders:

- Best to go in order... you don't want to miss anything.
- Don't spend time hypothesizing or theorizing about causal factors (why the student is struggling with these skills)...you can't establish cause with any level of precision, and your time will be better spent focusing on skills and unsolved problems.
- Don't spend any time talking about the child's concerning behavior either...the concerning behavior is simply the way children communicate that there are expectations they are having difficulty meeting.
- Checking off a skill is not a democratic process and shouldn't take more than 3-5 seconds each. If any caregivers in the meeting think the skill applies to the child, check it off.
- While skills provide you with more accurate, compassionate, productive lenses, they are not the primary targets of intervention. The unsolved problems you'll be identifying are the primary targets of intervention. If you solve those problems collaboratively and proactively, the child's skills will be enhanced.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR IDENTIFYING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS:

Again, an unsolved problem is an expectation a child is having difficulty reliably meeting. Even if the child can meet the expectation sometimes and not others, it's still an unsolved problem. The prompts in the unsolved problems section will help you think of the different expectations the child is having difficulty meeting. You'll want to consider the prompts in order, and record as many unsolved problems as possible for that prompt before moving on to the next one. You don't need to write the same unsolved problem more than once, even if a later prompts brings to mind the same unsolved problem.

The wording of the unsolved problem is going to translate directly into the words that you're going to use to introduce the unsolved problem to the child when it comes time to solve the problem together. Poorly worded unsolved problems often make it difficult for a child to respond. As such, there are four guidelines for writing unsolved problems:

**There should be no mention of the child's concerning behaviors.**

Since you won't be talking with children about their concerning behavior, there's no need to include the concerning behavior in the wording of the unsolved problem. Instead, almost all unsolved problems begin with the word *Difficulty*, followed by a verb (a variety of verbs are shown in the examples below). So you wouldn't write *Screams and swears when trying to complete the word problems on the math homework...* instead you'd write *Difficulty completing the word problems on the math homework.*

**There should be no mention of adult theories.**

You wouldn't write *Difficulty writing the definitions to the spelling words in English because his parents were recently divorced...* just *Difficulty writing the definitions to the spelling words in English.*

**They should be split, not clumped.**

You wouldn't write *Difficulty getting along with others*, but rather *Difficulty getting along with Trevor on the school bus in the morning.*

**They should be specific.**

To make an unsolved problem as specific as possible, there are two strategies:

- Include details related to who, what, where, and when.
- Ask What expectation is the child/student having difficulty meeting?

The above guidelines—and a variety of sample verbs—are embodied in the following examples (they're grouped based on setting, but the verbs apply across settings):

### SCHOOL/FACILITY:

- Difficulty getting started on the double-digit division problems in math.
- Difficulty completing the map of Europe in geography.
- Difficulty participating in the discussions in morning meeting.
- Difficulty moving from choice time to math.
- Difficulty ending computer time to come to circle time.
- Difficulty walking in the hallway between classes.
- Difficulty raising hand during Social Studies discussions.
- Difficulty keeping hands to self in the lunch line.
- Difficulty lining up for the bus at the end of the school day.
- Difficulty remaining quiet when a classmate is sharing his or her ideas in English.
- Difficulty waiting for his turn during the four-square game at recess.
- Difficulty retrieving Geography notebook from locker before Geography class.

### HOME/CLINIC:

- Difficulty getting out of bed at 7 am in the morning to get ready for school on weekdays.
- Difficulty going to church on Sundays.
- Difficulty taking turns when playing chess with brother.
- Difficulty sitting next to sister at dinner.
- Difficulty putting the dishes into the dishwasher after dinner.
- Difficulty taking the trash out on Tuesdays.
- Difficulty brushing teeth before going to bed at night.
- Difficulty ending Xbox at 8 pm.
- Difficulty making bed before school on weekday mornings.

There are also a variety of verbs that should be avoided, including *accepting*, *appreciating*, *staying calm*, *asking for help*, *listening*, *paying attention*, *focusing*, *considering*, *understanding*, *persisting*, *controlling*.