



# **Comprehensive Nursing Assessment for Social Determinants of Health**



**North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition  
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# Introduction to Guide

The **North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition (NCFONAC)** serves as the driving force transforming health and health care through nursing in our state. Working with diverse partners to create innovative solutions and advance health equity with nurses leading the way in building healthier communities, the NCFONAC aims to improve the health and health outcomes of our population.

With that goal in mind, the NCFONAC identified the need to ensure nurses are prepared to assess the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) as part of their daily practice. A working group was convened to develop an assessment tool that could be utilized by nurse educators and clinicians using established nursing assessment tools.

## *Why this Guide?*

As nurse's roles continue to evolve and expand, they are asked to address an increasingly complex world of patient, client, caregiver, and community health. In 2021, the National Academy of Medicine and Science released a second major report on the *Future of Nursing*. This report, largely focused on health equity and stressed the role SDOH play in achieving health and well-being.

During this same period, the Joint Commission, a major health care accreditor, added new assessment requirements that focus on Health-Related Social Needs (HRSN). These criteria, like SDOH, speak to the interaction between personal health and the environment, the community, and other external factors that impact health and well-being. The Joint Commission now requires this broader level of assessment as part of the patient care process.

Nurses are expected to play an important role in assisting their clients achieve a healthier life, thus it is critical that nurses assess the client experiences and help them find the resources needed to be successful in achieving well-being. To that end, nurses are a major contributor to quality of life since nursing assessment at its best focuses on evaluating all SDOH.

The purpose of this open-source *Comprehensive Nursing Assessment* developed by the NCFONAC is to provide a tool that assists you, the nurse, with problem identification, referral, and client education. We hope you will incorporate the questions in each segment to guide you as you formulate a problem list and care plan and use the resource sites provided to help address the next steps for the client and their care team.

# How to Use The Comprehensive Nursing Assessment

This document has been organized following the assessment of a client. As the clinician moves through the assessment process, the clinician should include questions about the client's determinants of health. These questions can be directed based on findings from the client's physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual assessment. These questions are not inclusive; the questions are prompts to consider additional social determinant of health needs of the client to address health and wellness needs.

When developing these questions, the NCFONAC team utilized the Health Leads *Social Needs Screening Toolkit* as a guide. This toolkit, originally developed in 2016, is used as an interdisciplinary tool to identify determinants of clients' health needs. The Screening Toolkit was modified in 2018 to include questions from PRAPARE and Accountable Health Communities to help further align the sector around common terminology. Health Leads gave permission for the NCFONAC to adapt the *Toolkit* to be specific to nursing assessment.

Besides the prompting questions in each area of the nursing assessment are links to state-wide resources that can be used by the clinician or the client to address SDOH gaps. State-wide resources are used so the tool is useable by any nurse clinician in North Carolina; however, there may be local resources that are available. Many state-wide organizations have regional offices where resources can be obtained.

Local resources can be found by calling 211, an information and referral service provided by United Way of North Carolina. Families and individuals can call 2-1-1 or 1-888-892-1162 to receive free and confidential information on health and human services within their community.

Another state-wide resource is [NCCARE360](#). NCCARE360 is the first statewide coordinated care network that better connects individuals to local services and resources. NCCARE360 provides a solution to a fragmented health and human services system by connecting providers and organizations across sectors in a shared technology network. In the NCCARE360 network, providers can electronically connect individuals and families who have unmet social needs to community resources. NCCARE360 also allows for easy feedback and follow-up to help close the care loop for individuals and families seeking help.

*For more information about the use of this guide, please contact the North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition at [contact.ncfonac@gmail.com](mailto:contact.ncfonac@gmail.com)*

# Nursing Assessment

## Social History

*Before beginning the assessment, ask questions about*

- Employment - Does the individual have private insurance through employer or Marketplace; Is the individual on Medicare or Medicaid; Are children accessing healthcare coverage through Children's Health Insurance Program; If the individual is between the ages of 18-25, are they on a parental health insurance program.
- Education - What is the individual's highest level of education? This may help identify health literacy needs.
- Caregiving - Is the client is a caregiver of: Children, older adults with dementia or physical mobility disorders, or disabled adult.

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you need help reading or understanding instructions from your healthcare provider or pharmacy?</li><li>• How easy is it for you to read written information?</li><li>• Are you providing care for anyone at home (this could include a child, someone with dementia, an older adult, someone with cancer).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance from local Literacy Council</li><li>• Speak to pharmacist</li><li>• Local Area Agency on Aging</li><li>• AARP Family Caregiving <a href="https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/">https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/</a></li><li>• Family Caregiver Support Program <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging/family-caregiver-support-program">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging/family-caregiver-support-program</a></li><li>• VA Caregiver Support Program <a href="https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/Caregiving_Children_Adolescents.asp">https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/Caregiving_Children_Adolescents.asp</a></li><li>• Special needs resources <a href="https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Parent/Special-Needs/Special-Needs-Resources">https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Parent/Special-Needs/Special-Needs-Resources</a></li><li>• <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dementia/capablenc">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dementia/capablenc</a></li><li>• <a href="https://www.nclive.org/welcome">https://www.nclive.org/welcome</a></li></ul>

# Nutrition

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell me what you normally eat (be sure to ask about others in the house)?</li><li>• Do you cook? If not, who makes the meals?</li><li>• Do you make meals for the individual(s) you care for and skip your own meals?</li><li>• Have you not eaten because of other expenses, or it was not available in your home?</li><li>• What is the usual store you shop for food? Is it easy to get to the store to shop for food?</li><li>• Who does the grocery shopping?</li><li>• Do you need information on food choices for yourself or the person you are caring for?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local Department of Social Services</li><li>• Women, Infant and Children Program at Local Health Department</li><li>• Dietician or Nutritionist at Local Health Department</li><li>• U.S. Federal Government Find Shelter – Food Sources <a href="https://www.hud.gov/findshelter">https://www.hud.gov/findshelter</a></li><li>• Feeding the Carolinas <a href="https://feedingthecarolinas.org/">https://feedingthecarolinas.org/</a></li></ul>



# Elimination

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you had recent UTIs?</li> <li>• What liquids do you drink during the day?</li> <li>• How many liquids do you drink during the day?</li> <li>• Do you have problems with “leakage”? (bowel or bladder)</li> <li>• Do you take any medicines to remain regular?</li> <li>• Do you limit your social interactions because you are worried about having an accident?</li> </ul>	<p><u>Fecal (bowel) incontinence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders <a href="http://www.aboutincontinence.org/">www.aboutincontinence.org/</a></li> <li>• National Association for Continence – <a href="http://www.nafc.org/bowel-health/">www.nafc.org/bowel-health/</a></li> <li>• National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases <a href="http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/bowel-control-problems-fecal-incontinence">www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/bowel-control-problems-fecal-incontinence</a></li> <li>• Simon Foundation for Continence <a href="http://www.simonfoundation.org/fecal-bowel-incontinence/">www.simonfoundation.org/fecal-bowel-incontinence/</a></li> <li>• US National Library of Medicine, MedlinePlus <a href="http://www.medlineplus.gov/bowelincontinence.html">www.medlineplus.gov/bowelincontinence.html</a></li> </ul> <p><u>Urinary incontinence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Association for Continence <a href="http://www.nafc.org/urinary-incontinence">www.nafc.org/urinary-incontinence</a></li> <li>• National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases <a href="http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/urologic-diseases/bladder-control-problems">www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/urologic-diseases/bladder-control-problems</a></li> </ul>

## Elimination (continued)

Questions	Resource Links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simon Foundation for Continence <a href="http://www.simonfoundation.org/category/types-of-incontinence/">www.simonfoundation.org/category/types-of-incontinence/</a></li><li>• Urology Care Foundation <a href="http://www.urologyhealth.org/urology-a-z/u/urinary-incontinence">www.urologyhealth.org/urology-a-z/u/urinary-incontinence</a></li><li>• US National Library of Medicine, MedlinePlus <a href="http://www.medlineplus.gov/urinaryincontinence.html">www.medlineplus.gov/urinaryincontinence.html</a></li></ul>

# Sensory

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When was the last time you had your vision/hearing checked by a healthcare professional?</li><li>• Do you find yourself having to turn up the TV or radio to hear the sound?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regional Centers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/services-deaf-and-hard-hearing/regional-centers-deaf-and-hard-hearing">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/services-deaf-and-hard-hearing/regional-centers-deaf-and-hard-hearing</a></li><li>• Telehealth Guidance and Resources: Communication Access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind Patients and their Providers <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/telehealth-resources">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/telehealth-resources</a></li><li>• North Carolina Lions Foundation vision and hearing screening <a href="https://nclf.org/vision-loss-prevention/">https://nclf.org/vision-loss-prevention/</a></li><li>• Medicaid Vision Programs and Services <a href="https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/providers/programs-and-services/hearing-and-vision/vision">https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/providers/programs-and-services/hearing-and-vision/vision</a></li><li>• VA Hearing and Vision Services <a href="https://www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/vision-care/">https://www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/vision-care/</a></li></ul>



# Musculoskeletal

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you exercise? What type of exercise?</li><li>• When was the last time you fell?</li><li>• Are there things you did to help prevent you from tripping or falling?</li><li>• Do you have, use, or need equipment to help you get around in your house?</li><li>• If you were to fall or feel bad, how would you get help?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local YMCA</li><li>• County Parks and Recreation</li><li>• North Carolina Assistive Technology Program <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/eipd/north-carolina-assistive-technology-program">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/eipd/north-carolina-assistive-technology-program</a></li><li>• <a href="https://www.standingstrongnc.org/exercise">https://www.standingstrongnc.org/exercise</a></li><li>• VA Prosthetics <a href="https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/hearing_aids.asp">https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/hearing_aids.asp</a></li></ul>

# Skin

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell me about your bathing routine?</li><li>• Are you worried about the safety of the person you are caring for when you/they are bathing?</li><li>• Do you have, use, or need equipment to help you bathe?</li></ul>	<p>American Academy of Dermatology Association <a href="https://www.aad.org/public">https://www.aad.org/public</a></p>

## Neurology

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many hours of sleep do you get at night?</li> <li>• Do you have to get up frequently at night to meet the needs of the person(s) you are caring for?</li> <li>• Do you have chronic pain that is limiting you to do activities that you enjoy?</li> <li>• Do you find it difficult to get information you need to care for yourself or a loved one?</li> <li>• How do you make decisions about life events and has that changed?</li> <li>• Have you noticed any changes in your ability to remember?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Memory Care Program <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/state-operated-healthcare-facilities/facilities/neuro-medical-treatment-centers">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/state-operated-healthcare-facilities/facilities/neuro-medical-treatment-centers</a></li> <li>• National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (including pain management) <a href="https://nafcclinics.org/find-clinic/">https://nafcclinics.org/find-clinic/</a></li> <li>• VA Health Care <a href="https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/">https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/</a></li> <li>• North Carolina List of Hospice and Palliative Care Providers <a href="https://www.carenorthcarolina.org/list04_north_carolina_hospice_care.htm">https://www.carenorthcarolina.org/list04_north_carolina_hospice_care.htm</a></li> </ul>

## Circulation

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at MSK questions</li> <li>• Have you been prescribed medications for your heart or circulation and are you taking them as ordered?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Heart Association North Carolina <a href="https://www.heart.org/en/affiliates/north-carolina">https://www.heart.org/en/affiliates/north-carolina</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.nchealthinfo.org/health-topics/heart-disease/">https://www.nchealthinfo.org/health-topics/heart-disease/</a></li> </ul>

## Respiration

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have frequent respiratory infections?</li> <li>• Do you smoke? (? ppd) Do you vape? (? Vials per day)</li> <li>• Do you use smokeless tobacco products? (? Cans per day)</li> <li>• Do you snore and wake up gasping for air?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quitline NC 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669); Español: 1-855-Déjelo-Ya (1-855-335-3569) <a href="https://quitlinenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/">https://quitlinenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/</a></li> <li>• American Lung Association NC <a href="https://www.lung.org/about-us/contact-us/north-carolina">https://www.lung.org/about-us/contact-us/north-carolina</a></li> </ul>

## Dental

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When was your last visit to a dentist?</li> <li>• Have you put off having dental work done because you cannot afford the procedures?</li> <li>• If you have dentures, do you wear them daily?</li> <li>• Do you find it difficult to chew certain types of food?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Net Dental Clinic Locations <a href="https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/oral-health/services-individuals-and-families/safety-net-dental-clinics/safety-net-dental-clinic-locations">https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/oral-health/services-individuals-and-families/safety-net-dental-clinics/safety-net-dental-clinic-locations</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.ncdental.org/for-the-public/free-low-cost-dental">https://www.ncdental.org/for-the-public/free-low-cost-dental</a></li> </ul>

# Psychosocial

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is your quality of life?</li> <li>• What do you do to handle difficult situations?</li> <li>• Tell me about who supports you when you have difficult situations?</li> <li>• What spiritual/religious practices do you have?</li> <li>• During the past week, how much trouble have you had with feeling depressed or sad?</li> <li>• Are you or have you ever used prescribed or unprescribed drugs to make you “feel better” from stress or difficult situations?</li> <li>• In the past month, how often did you drink any alcohol including beer and wine?</li> <li>• Did any of your parents have a problem with alcohol or drug use?</li> <li>• Do your friends/partner have a problem with alcohol or drug use?</li> <li>• Have you ever felt that life is becoming too much for you to continue?</li> <li>• Have you ever considered self-harm?</li> <li>• Do you feel safe in your home?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 988 Suicide &amp; Crisis Lifeline</li> <li>• North Carolina DHHS Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/mental-health-and-substance-use-disorders">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/mental-health-and-substance-use-disorders</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/crisis-services">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/crisis-services</a></li> <li>• Local Domestic Violence Shelters</li> <li>• Adult Day Care Provider Directory <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/adult-day-care-provider-directory/">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/adult-day-care-provider-directory/</a></li> <li>• North Carolina Pace (program for all inclusive care for the older adult – complex medical needs who are dual eligible [Medicare &amp; Medicaid]) <a href="https://www.ncpace.org/">https://www.ncpace.org/</a></li> <li>• Local School Boards and Community Colleges for children’s summer programming.</li> <li>• U.S. Federal Government Find Shelter – Providers list <a href="https://www.hud.gov/findshelter">https://www.hud.gov/findshelter</a></li> <li>• AARP Livable Communities <a href="https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide-download.html">https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide-download.html</a></li> </ul>

## Psychosocial (continued)

Questions	Resource Links
<p><u>If the client is a caregiver, also explore:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever been injured by someone you care for?</li> <li>• How do you deal with repetition of questions or inappropriate behavior?</li> <li>• Do you feel you have the supports in place, so you have time to provide self-care activities?</li> <li>• What are the cultural practices that you use when caring for others?</li> <li>• Are you concerned about your child's learning, performance, or behavior in school?</li> <li>• Are there programs that provide programs for those you care for (adult care centers, after school programs, summer programs)?</li> <li>• Do you feel isolated due to your caregiving role?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Carolina Wise Woman (CV health, Breast &amp; Cervical Cancer) <a href="https://bcccp.dph.ncdhhs.gov/wisewoman.htm">https://bcccp.dph.ncdhhs.gov/wisewoman.htm</a></li> <li>• Alzheimer's Association – Eastern NC 800.272. 3900 <a href="https://www.alz.org/nc">https://www.alz.org/nc</a></li> <li>• Alzheimer's Association – Western NC <a href="https://www.alz.org/northcarolina">https://www.alz.org/northcarolina</a></li> <li>• Alzheimer's Association North Carolina <a href="https://www.alz.org/northcarolina/about_us">https://www.alz.org/northcarolina/about_us</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/division-aging">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/division-aging</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dementia/capablenc">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dementia/capablenc</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/nc-start">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/nc-start</a></li> </ul>

# Medications and Treatments

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell me what medications you are taking?</li><li>• Are you able to afford your medications?</li><li>• Do you have problems picking up your medications?</li><li>• Have you ever “stretched out” your medications to increase the time between refills? Tell me how you do it.</li><li>• Have you ever put off refilling your medication so money could go to other needs?</li><li>• Do you have insurance that helps pay for medications?</li><li>• Do you feel confident that you understand the purpose of the medications prescribed and how to take medications?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 340B programs for individuals without insurance.</li><li>• Good Rx <a href="https://www.goodrx.com/">https://www.goodrx.com/</a></li><li>• North Carolina Medication Assistance <a href="https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/office-rural-health/office-rural-health-programs/medication-assistance-program">https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/office-rural-health/office-rural-health-programs/medication-assistance-program</a></li></ul>

# Safety Needs

Questions	Resource Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past two months, have you been living in stable housing that you own, rent, or stay in as part of a household?</li> <li>• Are you worried or concerned that in the next 2 months you may not have stable housing that you own, rent, or stay in as part of a household?</li> <li>• Within the past 12 months, have you ever stayed in a car? In a tent? In an overnight shelter or temporarily in someone else's home?</li> <li>• Do you live in an area where you feel safe to walk?</li> <li>• Do you have reliable transportation to get to appointments?</li> <li>• Do you have reliable phone service in case of emergency?</li> <li>• Do you have any safety concerns for those you care for?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Government HUD housing and clothing <a href="https://www.hud.gov/findshelter">https://www.hud.gov/findshelter</a></li> <li>• HUD Public Housing and housing choice vouchers <a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pia/contacts/states/nc.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pia/contacts/states/nc.cfm</a></li> <li>• NC Housing Search <a href="http://www.nchousingsearch.org/">http://www.nchousingsearch.org/</a></li> <li>• HUD subsidized privately owned housing <a href="http://www.hud.gov/">http://www.hud.gov/</a></li> <li>• USDA subsidizes elderly or family apartment complexes <a href="http://www.nchfa.com/">http://www.nchfa.com/</a></li> <li>• AARP Home Fit Guide <a href="https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide-download.html">https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide-download.html</a></li> <li>• North Carolina Health Info <a href="https://www.nchealthinfo.org/affordable-housing-safety-and-food-transportation-assistance/">https://www.nchealthinfo.org/affordable-housing-safety-and-food-transportation-assistance/</a></li> </ul>





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**<https://campaignforaction.org/state/north-carolina/>**

