

**Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale © (KIPS)**  
**A Practical Parenting Assessment Tool**  
<http://ComfortConsults.com>

**KIPS addresses the need of family service programs for a brief practical observational tool to assess the quality of parenting behavior.** With KIPS, family service providers from a variety of education, health and social service settings can directly observe caregivers, identify specific parenting strengths and needs, tailor services to individual families, track family progress, and evaluate parenting outcomes.

**KIPS helps you help families.** KIPS, a structured observation tool of parent-child interaction, reliably assesses the quality of parenting behaviors during free play with a child two months through five years of age. With valid information specific to the family, you can open a strength-based conversation with caregivers about parenting, and intervene more effectively to promote healthy child and family development. By building responsive parenting behaviors, you can prevent negative downward spirals, and instead promote ongoing cycles of healthy parent-child relations.

**KIPS field tests and validity studies were supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.** KIPS was developed through a series of steps, including factor analysis, expert and literature reviews, and provider focus groups. KIPS has been tested with both risk and non-risk, educationally, economically, and ethnically diverse populations, in rural, urban and suburban communities. The KIPS field test showed satisfactory inter-rater agreement, and internal consistency in scoring. Both professionals and paraprofessionals scored KIPS reliably when assessing families they served. KIPS validity studies



showed significant correlations with validated observational tools, such as the NCAST Teaching Scale, the HOME Inventory, the Parent/Caregiver Involvement Scale, and the Scales of Child Behavior (adapted from the EHS National Study Three Bag Test), as well as parents' reports of Knowledge of Child Development and Staff Ratings of Engagement in services.

Nurturing Insights • Proving Outcomes  
KEYS TO INTERACTIVE PARENTING SCALE

**KIPS provides essential information for working with families to enhance parent-child interaction and for program evaluation.** Effective parent-child assessment can guide family intervention, offer opportunities for reflective supervision, and strengthen program outcomes. Longitudinal research and family service program evaluations have shown that parenting outcomes assessed by KIPS increase significantly with intervention. Furthermore, early KIPS scores predict later quality of parenting and toddler social behavior during play.

**For More Information**

Gordon, P.R. & Comfort, M. (2013). How Parenting Assessment Strengthens Family Services. *Journal of Health Visiting*, 1(11), 626-32.

Comfort, M., Gordon, P.R. & Naples, D. (2011). KIPS: An Evidence-Based Tool for Assessing Parenting Strengths and Needs in Diverse Families. *Infants & Young Children*, 24(1), 56-74.

Comfort, M., Gordon, P.R., English, B., Hacker, K., Hembree, R., Knight, R., & Miller, C. (2010). Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale: KIPS Shows How Parents Grow. *Zero to Three Journal*, 30(4), 33-39.

Comfort, M., Gordon, P.R. & Unger, D.G. (2006). Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale: A Window Into Many Facets of Parenting. *Zero to Three Journal*, 26(5), 37-44.

Comfort, M. & Gordon, P.R. (2006). The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS): A Practical Observational Assessment of Parenting Behavior. *NHSA Dialog: A Research-To-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field*, 9(1), 22-48.

## KIPS eLearning & Online Support

**KIPS eLearning** offers staff convenient access to KIPS training on the Internet through 30-day subscriptions. Learners participate in this 10-hour interactive training program on their own schedule and learn at their own pace. KIPS eLearning requires a PC computer with a broadband Internet connection.



An expert guides the learner to observe and assess parenting behaviors by using examples presented in streaming video of parent-child play sessions.

Procedures for scoring each of the KIPS items are discussed with slides and videos of diverse caregivers and children to guide understanding of item definitions and ratings on a 1 to 5 scale with behavior descriptions.

Practice rating KIPS items while training encourages learners to evaluate their progress in using KIPS ratings reliably. Immediate feedback promotes scoring

competency. KIPS eLearning engages learners in polls that tally responses immediately online, frequently asked questions (FAQs) with video responses and e-mail access to expert parenting and technical supports.

**Research shows traditional onsite and online training are comparable.** Our study results showed comparable scoring reliability, self-confidence in rating, and satisfaction with training logistics. Yet, high satisfaction with self-paced and self-directed learning, unlimited video review, and continual ratings practice verified added value of the online training program for family service providers.

The **KIPS Annual Check-Up** provides recertification exams online, and is required to ensure continued scoring competence.



The **KIPS Library** offers ongoing support for scoring practice in the **Video Collection** via a searchable collection of family play videos with accompanying scoring discussions. The **Resources** section offers printed Handouts regarding KIPS implementation and videos of KIPS Advisors sharing their authentic experiences in training, service planning, supervision and using KIPS with families. This section also offers Tools for service planning and supervision via the KIPS Qs reflective questions and the KIPS-Curriculum Crosswalks for the following curricula: Partners in Parenting Education (PIPE), and Growing Great Kids™.

**Supervisors find KIPS eLearning** time effective, technically sound, flexible, and cost effective. To address challenges, Supervisors check computer software capability in advance, train in advance to support their staff during training, set start/end dates for training, encourage peer support, and refer to the KIPS training workbook and Library to refresh on KIPS.

"KIPS has been a great success in guiding the family goals. The parents watch the video and discuss with their home visitor their strengths, and then identify one or two areas to work toward improving. With specific goals from the KIPS assessment tool, they work out a plan."

**Erin Cowan-Hegg, PAT Home Visiting Program Director, Child Crisis Arizona**