

Assessing the Strengths and Needs of Children Placed in Out-of-Home through the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Tool

Purpose

To assess the needs and strengths of a child or youth placed or to be placed in out-of-home care and the needs of the placement provider to meet the identified needs of the child or youth.

Applicability

This policy applies to children and youth whom an agency has “Placement and Care Responsibility” for and who is placed with:

- an unlicensed provider,
- a foster home,
- a group home, or
- a residential care center.

The agency refers to either a county agency or the department.

This does not apply to a child or youth placed or to be placed into:

- Shelter Care,
- Detention,
- Corrections,
- Hospitals,
- Missing from Out-of-Home Care,
- Trial Reunification,
- Foster Homes solely for the purpose of a domestic or international adoption, or
- an unlicensed placement, group home or residential care center from agencies outside of Wisconsin’s jurisdiction.

Agencies must ensure all actions of either agency or contracted provider staff comply with this policy.

Qualifications to Assess

An individual performing the assessment shall be trained and certified in the use of the department’s standardized assessment tool. The assessment requires a certified CANS user to complete a CANS assessment of the information obtained about the child. (See Appendix A for the CANS tool and glossary) Re-certification to complete the assessment process must be completed on an annual basis.

The Division of Safety and Permanence has created an on-line training resource for the certification and re-certification of workers using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. Agency staff completing the CANS for a child or youth are required to be certified in its use prior to scoring items on the tool, and re-certified annually to maintain validity and reliability. Certification and annual re-certification are required by this memo and Ch. DCF 56 Administrative Rule for Foster Homes, and the Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting policy. The

process to become a certified or re-certified user of the CANS tool is a part of the online training. The on-line training may also serve as a resource for certified users.

The training is located on the Wisconsin Professional Development System's website under Caseworker Trainings – special skills/topics at: <http://wcpds.wisc.edu/Default.aspx>

Timeframes to Complete CANS: Initial Determination and Re-Determinations

Initial

Unlicensed Provider

The initial determination of the child's Level of Need shall be made prior to or within 30 days after the child's placement with an unlicensed provider.

Foster Care

The initial determination of the child's Level of Need shall be made prior to or within 30 days after the placement with a foster parent.

Group Homes and Residential Care Centers

The initial determination of the child's Level of Need shall be made prior to placement in a group home or residential care center, unless the placement is completed on an emergency basis. If the placement is completed on an emergency basis the assessment shall be completed within 30 days of the child's placement in a group home or residential care center.

Re-determinations

The agency shall reassess each child or youth and the child's out-of-home care provider within 6 months after the child or youth's last determination or re-determination.

The agency, out-of-home care provider, or licensing agency may request a reassessment more frequently.

The initial and any re-determination shall be placed in the child or youth's case record and shared with the placement resource. Documentation in eWiSACWIS of the information shall be considered documented in the child's record.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Tool

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool shall be used as the standardized assessment tool which contains items that may have a direct impact on service planning for the child or youth, the child or youth's out-of-home care provider, or the child or youth's identified permanent resource. The Wisconsin CANS manuals, glossary, and algorithms are attached as Appendices A - E. The items included in the standardized assessment tool shall assist with evaluation of all of the following:

- The child's functioning, including all of the following:
 - The impact of trauma on the child.
 - Life functioning, including physical, mental, and dental health; relationships with family members; and social skills.
 - Functioning in a child care or school setting.
 - Behavioral and emotional needs.
 - Risk behaviors.
 - Strengths.
 - The effect of the culture of the child and the child's family on service provision.
- The out-of-home care providers (Current Caregiver in eWiSACWIS) functioning in relation to the identified child or youth, including all of the following:
 - Supervision.
 - Problem solving.
 - Involvement with care.
 - Knowledge.
 - Empathy with the child.
 - Organization.
 - Social resources.
 - Physical health.
 - Mental health.
 - Substance use.
 - Developmental.
 - Family stress.
 - Cultural congruence.
- The identified permanent resource functioning in relation to the identified child or youth, if identified as the permanent resource for the child or youth on the permanency plan (this may include the child's parents if reunification is one of the goals) including all of the following:
 - Supervision.
 - Problem solving.
 - Involvement with care.
 - Knowledge.
 - Empathy with the child.
 - Organization.
 - Social resources.
 - Physical health.
 - Mental health.
 - Substance use.
 - Developmental.
 - Family stress.
 - Cultural congruence.

Administration of the CANS

Before administering the CANS tool the person who administers the tool shall first do all of the following:

1. Review the child or youth's case record.
2. Interview or collect information from an individual who has interviewed the child or youth, the child or youth's family, the out-of-home care provider, tribal worker (if applicable) and the child or youth's team or treatment team.
3. Review information gathered in collaboration with the child or youth's team or treatment team, including the child or youth, the child or youth's family, the out-of-home care provider, tribal worker (if applicable).

In using the CANS tool, the assessor must:

Rate the child or youth on each item in the tool on a 4-point scale relative to what is developmentally appropriate for a child of a similar age, as follows:

Needs' The following ratings shall apply to items representing needs of a child or youth or the child or youth's family

A rating of 0 means there is no evidence of a need.

A rating of 1 means there is a history or concern that a needs to be monitored.

A rating of 2 means there is a presence of a need that requires action.

A rating of a 3 means there is a presence of need that requires immediate or intensive action.

'Strengths' The following ratings shall apply to items representing strengths of a child or youth or the child or youth's family:

A rating of 0 indicates a centerpiece strength.

A rating of 1 indicates a useful strength.

A rating of 2 indicates an identified strength.

A rating of 3 indicates no strength has been identified.

Rate the out-of-home caregiver and identified permanent resource, if named, needs on each item in the tool on a 4-point scale in relation to a specific identified child or youth, as follows:

'Needs'

A rating of 0 means there is no evidence of a need.

A rating of 1 means there is a history or concern that needs to be monitored.

A rating of 2 means there is a presence of a need that requires action.

A rating of 3 means there is a presence of a need that requires immediate or intensive action.

Note: The needs and strengths are further defined in the attached CANS manuals.

Use of the Information Gathered through the CANS

The agency shall use information from the assessment of the child or youth, the child or youth's family, the child's out-of-home care provider, for all of the following:

1. To communicate information about the needs and strengths of the child or youth and the child or youth's family.
2. To assist with determining the child or youth's service needs and developing the child or youth's plan of care.
3. To determine a level of need of 1/2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 for the child or youth.
4. To inform decisions regarding a placement at a level of care or its' equivalent that is appropriate to meet the child or youth's level of need.

The agency must consider how well the prospective or current out-of-home care provider will do all of the following: meet the child or youth's identified needs; address any concerns of the birth or adoptive parents; and accomplish the goals of the child or youth's permanency plan.

The agency may place a child in out-of-home care with a provider who is certified to provide a given level of care or its' equivalent if the child or youth's level of need is at the level of care that the foster home is certified to provide or out-of-home caregiver's equivalency as stated in the Placement Complexity Chart in Appendix A.

The agency may place a child or youth with a lower level of need than the level of care of a foster home if deemed appropriate.

The agency may place a child or youth with a level of need that is higher than the level of care that a foster home is certified to provide or an out-of-home caregivers equivalent, if the agency grants an exception and documents in the child or youth's electronic case record the services and supports that will be provided to meet the child or youth's needs as identified in the assessment tool.

A child or youth whose level of need is lower than 5 may not be placed in a Level 5 foster home or residential care center, except for continuation of an existing placement during planning for the child or youth's transition to a less restrictive setting following a re-determination or the agency has overridden the results of the CANS and documented in the child or youth's electronic case record the reasons for doing so.

See Appendix A for the placement complexity chart that shows placement options based on a child or youth's level of need and a provider's level of care.

5. To evaluate the match between the knowledge, skills, and abilities of an out-of-home care provider and the needs and strengths of the child or youth.
6. To assist in the development of services and supports needed for a specific child or youth and out-of-home caregiver to promote the stability of the placement. In order to do this, the results of the CANS shall be shared with the out-of-home care provider, any licensing agency, and tribal worker, if requested.
7. To provide a mental health screen to all children entering the out-of-home care placements with unlicensed providers, foster care, group homes, and residential care centers.
8. To determine any supplemental payments under s. DCF 56.23 (2) for children placed in foster care.
9. To determine any supplemental payments for purposes of an adoption assistance agreement under s. 48.975, Stats., and ch. DCF 50 or subsidized guardianship.

Documentation Requirements

The initial determination, re-determination(s), and exceptions allowed by this policy shall be documented in the child or youth's electronic case record.