

WHAT THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE **CHILD AND ADOLESCENT NEEDS AND STRENGTHS (CANS)**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CANS?

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool is an assessment strategy that is designed to be used for decision support and outcomes management. Its primary purpose is to allow a system to remain focused on the shared vision of serving children and families, by representing children at all levels of the system.

HOW DO I USE THE CANS TO BUILD CONSENSUS ON MY TREATMENT TEAM?

The CANS is intended to be a communication tool. You can use the CANS to facilitate communication and consensus within the child's treatment team by discussing the ratings with the team and ensuring that all members are in agreement with the assessment. Discussions about agreement on how the child's needs and strengths are described provides the foundation for agreement about what approaches to take to address those needs and identify and build strengths. The CANS items will become the language by which these issues are discussed.



HOW CAN THE CANS HELP ME IN MY DAILY WORK?

You can use the CANS as an active component of treatment planning with the members of a child's team. As you begin the planning process, you can use a recently completed CANS as a guide. Any needs items on the CANS which have been rated a '2' or '3' should be addressed in the child's plan. Strength items rated '0' or '1' can be used for strength-based planning, while those rated '2' or '3' should be addressed through strength identification and building activities.

When you are monitoring whether a plan was successful or needs to be adjusted, a recently completed CANS will tell you whether needs have been met and strengths created. A CANS can also be used to celebrate successes with the child.

HOW CAN I USE THE CANS TO IMPROVE HOW MY AGENCY WORKS WITH CHILDREN?

The CANS is designed to be used for decision support (such as treatment planning and level of care), quality improvement, and outcomes monitoring.

WHO WILL COMPLETE THE CANS?

The CANS can only be completed by an individual who has been trained and certified in its use. Re-certification is required on an annual basis.

The CANS will be completed within 30 days of placement and will be updated every six months.

HOW IS THE CANS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER MEASURES??

The CANS is unique in several ways:

- The CANS is about the child, not about the service. If a child is receiving services that are masking a need, this is factored in to the ratings. For example, a hyperactive child on stimulants is still rated a '2' as long as you have to work to control symptoms with medications.
- The CANS is focused on the current behavior, not the reason behind it. Another way to think about this is that the CANS is about the 'what,' not the 'why' of a behavior.
- In rating items, the CANS uses a 30-day window, unless otherwise specified.

The CANS assesses domains of needs and strengths, and the two are scored on a scale of zero to three.

For needs:

- A rating of 0 indicates no evidence, or no need for action on this item.
- A rating of 1 indicates that this item will require some prevention or monitoring.
- A rating of 2 indicates that this item requires action by the child's team.
- A rating of 3 indicates that this item requires immediate or intensive action.

For strengths:

- A rating of 0 indicates a centerpiece strength, something so powerful it can be the focus of a strength-based plan.
- A rating of 1 indicates that this item is a useful strength for that child or caregiver.
- A rating of 2 indicates that this item is a potential strength that has been identified but must be developed further.
- A rating of 3 indicates no strength has been identified for this item.



IS THE CANS USED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE COUNTRY?

Different versions of the CANS are used in more than 30 states. The Wisconsin Comprehensive version was created specifically for use in Wisconsin. Other versions of the CANS, such as the Mental Health version, are used in different programs in Wisconsin, as well.

IS THE CANS RELIABLE AND VALID?

Yes. There is a large body of research demonstrating that the CANS is reliable both in training and field applications. Unlike most assessments, CANS completed in the field can be audited for accuracy. The audit reliability of the CANS has been reported to be 0.85. In order to be certified in the CANS, an individual must demonstrate reliability on a case vignette of 0.70 or greater. The validity of the CANS has been demonstrated with its correlation with other measures and with its demonstrated ability to identify children who will benefit through placement in different programs and levels of care.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Visit the CANS page on the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families website:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cans>

You can also visit the Praed Foundation website at <https://praedfoundation.org/> for the most comprehensive description of the history and development of the CANS approach.



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