

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

INFORMATION SHEET

FAMILY & CAREGIVER

What is the CANS?

The CANS, or the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths, is a tool used by substitute caregivers, case managers, clinicians, care coordinators, conservatorship workers — all the people that provide help and support to you and your family. It helps in gathering information needed to make decisions about the best course of action to take to address your youth's needs and achieve your family's goals.

What is the purpose of the CANS?

The information from the CANS assessment supports decision making for children and youth in the child welfare system, helps to improve the quality of foster care agencies, and allows for monitoring of youth progress and outcomes. The CANS captures information about the youth's well-being, life functioning and quality of life.

When is the CANS completed and by whom?

All children, ages 3-17, who enter substitute care must have a CANS within 30 days of coming into care as part of their assessment and service planning process. STAR Health clinicians, who are trained and certified in its use, will complete the CANS as a part of the ongoing service planning process. The CANS is completed with input from all the members of your child's treatment team.

How does the CANS affect me?

As a primary member of your child's treatment team, your input in the CANS and the assessment process is both essential and invaluable. The CANS is used to communicate information about the needs and strengths of your child and family. This information should be gathered with you and shared as part of a collaborative team process in order to create a shared understanding of the problems, barriers, assets and supports that exist and to be able to

create a more effective plan of care for your child and family. You will be able to express your thoughts, experiences and opinions regarding the ratings of the CANS items, and will be given a copy of the final assessment and service plan.

How can I use the CANS with my CVS worker and my treatment team?

The CANS is intended to be a communication and planning tool. It is used to communicate your child and family's needs and strengths and build consensus within the team on the issues to address and interventions needed. The CANS helps to organize information from teachers, doctors, other family members — any significant people involved in your child and your family's life — about needs and strengths and guide service decision making. The CANS information can help build agreement amongst treatment team members and develop more effective service plans for your child and family.

How is the CANS scored?

The CANS assesses the needs and strengths of the youth and caregiving system. The item ratings translate directly into action and are rated as follows:

For Needs

- 0 = no need for action
- 1 = monitoring
- 2 = action is needed
- 3 = immediate action

For Strengths

- 0 = centerpiece strength
- 1 = useful strength
- 2 = potential strength
- 3 = no strength identified

Where can I learn more?

Please send any questions about the CANS for the state of Texas to: CANS@dfps.state.tx.us.

Information about the CANS can also be found at the John Praed Foundation: praedfoundation.org