

## A Guide for Using the CANS with Child, Caregivers and Their Families: A Tip Sheet

This tip sheet provides the Case Worker and/or family members with the following:

1. A short summary of the CANS and simple explanation of CANS scores (0, 1, 2, 3)
2. Ideas about introducing and using the CANS at the beginning of the case, introducing the CANS, and using it to engage youth and their families to keep them involved over time.
3. A consumer-friendly description of why it's important to collect CANS information and some ideas on how the CANS can be used in a meaningful way.
4. A one-page summary of the CANS that can be given to families (please see the final page)

### Introducing and Sharing CANS Information with Child, Caregivers and Families- A Key Area for Engagement

Case Workers are sometimes unsure about when and how to introduce the CANS tool measure to the family and how to engage family members in the process of completing the tool. Likewise they are unsure how the CANS may be used to discuss service planning with the family. The pointers below are meant to give the Case Worker ideas about how to engage the youth and family in planning with the use of the CANS.

- **Introduce and explain the CANS and its purpose** early in the assessment process.
- **Determine the best way to complete the CANS as a collaborative process**, The CANS can be completed with the family together in an effort to establish a common understanding of the Family's needs and strengths, develop mutual goals, and facilitate engagement with the family. In addition to observations and interviews with and the family, the Case Worker should explore gathering information through records checks, collateral reports, evaluations, pictorial tools, and other DCS assessment tools
  - Sharing CANS scores can be an opportunity to get the family's feedback and to begin a discussion (e.g., Are any of these scores surprising? What are their ideas, and your ideas, about how the needs on the CANS might fit together?). Discussion regarding areas of need and areas of strength to see if they match with the caregiver(s) and youth's understanding of the issues.
- The CANS is **a flexible assessment strategy** and **an information integration tool**. The information that all family members provide as part of the initial intake and assessment process (including information from other measures or contacts) should be reflected in the

CANS scores, shared with family members and used to help determine goals for service services.

- The CANS also offers an opportunity to identify **traumatic experiences with the child and/or caregiver**. This may help with understanding difficulties the child and/or caregiver may be experiencing in relation to those experiences.

## Benefits of the CANS and Using the CANS for Effective Service Planning

Listed below are some of the greatest benefits of the CANS. These ideas can be shared with families to help them understand the usefulness of the CANS.

- 1) DECISION MAKING:** The CANS is a useful tool to support and inform decisions that are made by Child and Family Team Members. The CANS offers a structure to identify the child and /or family's needs, guides service planning, and helps the team track progress over time.
- 2) COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY:** The CANS is a way of summarizing how the child and/or family is doing overall, so that we don't overlook something important or spend time focusing on areas where there are no identified needs. It also helps with the discussion about the areas where the child and/or family is doing particularly well and has strengths.
- 3) INTEGRATING INFORMATION:** The CANS is a place where all of the different information a Case Worker receives (from the child, the family, other professionals in the child and family's life and their own professional opinion) can be integrated into one place.
  - ❖ By combining all of the information about a child and family in one place, the team is able to get the most accurate picture, and this gives them the ability to see the family in a holistic way. .
  - ❖ By completing the CANS at the beginning of the case, and again overtime, the Case Worker, along with team, will likely learn things about the child and family that he/ she might not have known or even have asked..

In summary, make sure families understand that the CANS can actually enhance the services being offered in the following ways:

- ❖ To ensure the **importance of being open and transparent** with about what is going on.
- ❖ To communicate between with the child, family, and team, in order to see the big picture, including the needs and strengths of the case.
- ❖ Deciding together as a team which areas the caregiver might be able to focus on at home.

The following page is a summary of the CANS scoring and other important information.  
This next page can be copied and shared with families.  
Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS)

### A Brief Introduction for Families:

Some of benefits of using the CANS include:

- It is **COMPREHENSIVE!** It asks about many different areas of needs and strengths a child and family may have, which are important for planning the most helpful services. It also asks about many different areas that may be affected by trauma.
- It **INTEGRATES A LOT OF INFORMATION.** It helps team put all of the information they have in one place, allowing information to be considered and shared with others quickly.
- It **HELPS TO INFORM SERVICE PLANNING.** It guides the team in making decisions about what to focus on in service planning and how to prioritize goals.
- It **KEEPS TRACK OF PROGRESS** over time. It can be updated periodically to track change over time. It is a way to assess how services are working!
- It is **TRANSPARENT!** It is purposefully direct and clear. It has simple scoring so that all can review and use this information as a way to communicate needs and strengths.

### CANS Scores – Level of Needs and Strengths

**0** = A score of 0 always stands for the best possible functioning in an area; either it means there is no “need” or problem in a particular area or it is a significant strength.

**1** = A score of 1 indicates an area that might require a little attention. It represents an area of need that we want to keep our eye on or we may want to take some preventive measure based on anticipated need. A score of 1 could imply a good strength that can be made even stronger

**2**= Scores of 2 need attention of some type, as it indicates a need or challenge in a particular area. Items scored as 2 should be addressed in the service plan.

**3** = Scores of 3 indicate a need for intensive and/or immediate attention. Items scored as 3 should be addressed in the service plan.