

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment

AGENCY SUPERVISOR Information Sheet

How can I use the CANS to enhance my supervision?

The CANS can be used during a supervision session to assist in a case review process. The structure of the CANS allows for the youth and family's information to be organized and shared easily. The item ratings translate directly into action, so the CANS communicates where action is needed (areas of need to be addressed and areas of strength to be built up or utilized in a strength based plan).

Discussing the CANS during supervision can help the supervisor:

- **by providing a quick snapshot of the youth/family's needs and strengths**
- **further develop the assessment and information collection skills of their supervisee**
- **assist supervisees in determining appropriate interventions to address needs**
- **helping the supervisee track progress and define success with the youth/family**

Snapshot of information about the Youth /Family

Supervisors can monitor the needs and strengths of the families on their supervisee's caseloads by scanning the identified needs and strengths on the completed CANS assessment. Some agencies also use the CANS as part of a case assignment process to ensure balanced caseloads for staff.

Developing Assessment Skills

When reviewing the CANS assessment with a supervisee, one question to ask is whether the identified needs and strengths match the "story" that the supervisee tells about the youth and family. In cases where there is a disconnect between the story about the youth/family and the assessment, the CANS can be used to highlight where a supervisee's assessment skills need further development.

Some staff will have difficulty collecting information from the youth/family/team about the needs and strengths. Since the CANS assessment is intended to be completed as part of a collaborative process with youth, families and other service providers (*not a separate data entry requirement*), the CANS presents an opportunity to engage with our clients and service system partners. When the information collection approach is tailored to the youth/family, the CANS assessment can be part of an ongoing engagement strategy.

Developing Planning Skills

One of the primary purposes of the CANS is to support decision making and planning at the case level. Once needs have been identified, a review of the completed CANS assessment with supervisees can be helpful for staff trying to match appropriate interventions with identified needs. This review should include a discussion of whether multiple areas of need can be addressed by a single intervention. Finally, helping staff understand how strengths can be built or used to address areas of need is a way to operationalize "strength based" case planning.

Tracking Progress/Measuring Success

As caseworkers update their CANS assessments, supervision can assist in identifying areas where youth/families have made progress and can help to define successful outcomes. Reassessing needs and strengths can help case workers and their families evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and determine if the team is making progress in meeting treatment goals.

Where I can learn more?

More information about opportunities for training, consultation, and technical assistance related to the CANS can be found on the links below or by contacting Mark Lardner, (mlardner@ssw.umaryland.edu) or Neil Mallon, (nmallon@ssw.umaryland.edu).

Visit our CANS website:

<https://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/topics/sat/cans.cfm>



CANS Case Review Checklist

- Supervisee has shared a copy of the most recent CANS assessment
 - Was the assessment completed with the participation of youth, family, team members?
 - If not, brainstorm ideas for building youth and family engagement using the CANS.

- Make a list of all of the identified needs (2's and 3's)
 - *Refer to the CANS Summary Sheet*

- Group Strengths as follows:
 - 0's and 1's = Useful for planning
 - 2's = Can be useful with planning
 - 3's = Are we building this?

- Do the ratings reflect the information you know about the youth and family?
 - Do the identified needs (2's) require action?
 - Do the immediate/intensive needs (3's) accurately reflect the sense of urgency to act on those areas?

- Are there clusters of needs and/or strengths that appear inter-related?
 - If yes, help the supervisee organize the assessment to differentiate the treatment target, pathway, and outcome needs and strengths
 - *Refer to the CANS Organizational Chart template*

- Assist the supervisee identify interventions to address the treatment target needs/strengths.
 - Is the appropriate intervention available? If not, can an intervention be designed?
 - Can we use the assessment to advocate for increased access to interventions?

- Assist the supervisee in developing **measurable** and **attainable** treatment goals that can be tracked using CANS items.

The additional resources mentioned above can be found at the CANS website:
<https://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/topics/sat/cans.cfm>

