

FAMILY and CAREGIVER Information Sheet:

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment

What is the purpose of the CANS?

The CANS assessment is intended to support decision making for youth in the child welfare system, facilitate quality improvement initiatives for foster care agencies, and allow for monitoring of youth outcomes. The assessment captures information about well-being, level of functioning and quality of life of the youth in your care.

When is the CANS completed and by whom?

All children placed in out-of-home care in Maryland are required to have a CANS assessment completed as part of the service/case planning process. The CANS can only be completed by an individual who has been trained and certified in its use. In Maryland, the local county DSS worker, treatment foster care and group home workers are required to complete the CANS at intake and as part of the ongoing service planning process. Whenever possible the CANS should be completed with input from all the members of the child's team.

How does the CANS affect me*?

As a primary member of a child's treatment team, your input into the CANS assessment 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 shared as part of a collaborative team process in order to create more effective plans of care for your child and family. You will be able to express your opinion on the items rated in the CANS, and will have access to a copy of the final assessment.

How can I use the CANS with my foster care caseworker and my treatment team?

The CANS is intended to be a communication tool. You can use the CANS to communicate and build consensus within your treatment team. The assessment can help to organize information about needs and strengths and guide service decision making. The CANS assessment can help build agreement amongst treatment team members and develop more effective service/case 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 scored as follows:

For needs:

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

For strengths:

- "0" indicates a centerpiece strength
- "1" indicates a useful strength
- "2" indicates a potential strength
- "3" indicates no strength identified

Where I can learn more?

More information about the CANS Assessment 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>



*Adapted from the Wisconsin Department of Families and Children