

Frequently Asked Questions about the CANS

What is the CANS?

The CANS stands for Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths. It is a functional assessment designed for youth ages 0-21 years old. It reviews the strengths and needs of youth of both past and current behavior, but focuses on the current needs to help the youth and family. The CANS has different sections, which ask a variety of questions about the youth and family's life. Each item is rated on a simple 4-point scale: 0, 1, 2, and 3 depending on the action needed of the item.

What do the Ratings Mean?

0 = represents best possible functioning or a significant strength

1 = functioning or strength is okay, but we should keep an eye on it

2 = a moderate degree of functioning impacted or limited strength, and action is needed

3 = a severe degree of functioning impacted or not strength, and immediate and/or intensive action is needed

Why is the CANS used?

- The CANS is used to provide the family and the youth's support team with an idea of what the needs and strengths of the youth are, so that it can help inform the planning process.
- The CANS helps to create a shared vision or a common goal of what everyone wants for a youth and family.
- The information gathered from the CANS is secured in one place and helps provide a sense of direction for the support team and family of the youth.
- This tool helps to plan how the youth can best be supported by providing data and examples of needs and strengths of the youth.
- The CANS also helps progress over time to measure our progress towards goals.

What are the Key Features of the CANS?

- The CANS gathers information and communicates it simply.
- It is flexible and can be completed in any order and over multiple interviews.
- For most items, it describes how youth and families are doing currently – it looks at **the last 30 days**.
- Each item rating translated immediately into an action.
- It focuses on **what** is happening and **not why**.
- It takes into account a youth's development and his or her culture to provide the most accurate information for planning.
- It is a helpful tool to use when working with a team to communicate information.

When is the CANS completed?

The CANS is typically completed at the start of services and every 6 months after that.

How is the CANS completed?

The CANS is typically completed in an interview style with the provider who is certified and trained to use this tool. Speak with your provider to plan the date and time to dedicate ample time for this assessment. The assessment may also be divided into two separate meetings, to accommodate the family and youth's schedules.

How will I know the results?

The CANS results will be reviewed with your youth and family by the provider who helped you complete the assessment. You will have an opportunity to review and discuss the results as well as receive a copy of the results in your preferred language.

How do I participate in the CANS?

- Ask your provider about the CANS and the plan for completing it.
- Review the items included in the CANS and share details about any past or current concerns that you have.
- Be sure to share your youth's strengths with the provider and the hopes that you have for your youth's and family's future.

Where can I get more information?

- Ask your provider
- Contact Seneca Family of Agencies at
6925 Chabot Road
Oakland, CA 94618
510-654-4004
<https://www.senecafoa.org/>