**CANS: A Family Guide**

**What Is the CANS?**

**The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS)**

**A Brief Introduction**:

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) is a comprehensive assessment with children and their families where the provider spends time getting to know you and your child, the issues your child is facing, and your hopes for treatment, services or goals to meet. The CANS is a form that providers use to gather information during the assessment process.

The assessment focuses on strengths as well as problems. Strengths are areas of your child’s life where he or she is doing well or has an interest or ability. Perhaps your son loves art or your daughter has volunteered in an animal shelter. Or your family has many caring friends and relatives. Needs are areas where your child requires help or serious intervention. Perhaps your child seems depressed or is having behavior problems.

Providers use the assessment to get to know the children and families and to understand their strengths and needs. The CANS can help you decide which of your child’s needs are the most important to address and can also help you and your child pick out strengths, which can be the basis of progress.

**Benefits of using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Tool:**

* It is **COMPREHENSIVE!** It includes specific items in all areas (home, school and community) and also asks about the strengths a child/youth and family may have, which makes it pretty unique.
* It **INTEGRATES A LOT OF INFORMATION**. It helps service providers put all of the information they have in one place.
* It **HELPS TO INFORM GOALS AND PLANS FOR TREATMENT/SERVICES/SUPPORTS**. It guides the service provider with You and the Team in making decisions about what to focus on and where to start, or how to prioritize services.
* It can be used to **TRACK PROGRESS** over time. If the CANS is repeatedly scored while a child/youth is in services, we have a way of seeing how his/her needs and strengths change over time. A way of seeing how and if treatment/supports are working!
* The CANS keeps thing **TRANSPARENT!** The CANS is purposely direct and clear. It has simple scoring so that all important people in the child/youth’s life can review and use this measure as a way to communicate information about the child/youth/family.

**Scores-Level of Needs**

**0** = always stands for the best possible functioning in an area; Reflect no “need” or challenge in a particular area.

**1** = a score of 1 indicates an area that might require a little attention. 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.

**2 =**  An area that needs attention of some type and should be addressed in the goals for a child’s services

**3 =**  Indicates a need for intensive and/or immediate attention.

**Scores-Level of Strengths**

**0** = A zero represents a significant or centerpiece strength for a child/youth/caregiver; it is the best rating you can have in the areas of strengths.

**1** = a score of 1 implies a good strength that can be made even stronger.

**2=** A score of 2 means the child/youth/caregiver have some potential for strength in this area but this strength is not yet fully developed.

**3 =** A score of 3 indicates that a child/youth/caregiver has no identified strengths

You may also be provided an overall picture of progress in graph form, illustrated below. In these graphs our goal is to see the blue and red colors shrink over time and the green and yellow colors to expand, because that indicates your child and family’s needs are being met, and more strengths are being built or expanded upon. CANS reassessments are generally completed every six months.