Using the CANS to Support the Child or Youth in Your Care

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
The CANS is…
✓ A tool that will help your child/youth’s team…
➢ Communicate
➢ Meet his/her needs
➢ Build on his/her strengths
✓ Organized into 5-6 categories
➢ Child Behavioral/Emotional Needs
➢ Life Domain Functioning
➢ Child Strengths
➢ Caregiver Needs & Strengths
➢ Child Risk Factors
➢ Child Risk Behaviors
✓ Scored from 0-3 for each item
➢ Strengths:
  ▪ Low scores (0-1) = important strength for the child/youth
  ▪ High scores (2-3) = the item is not identified as a strength right now
➢ Needs:
  ▪ Low scores (0-1) = no evidence of need right now
  ▪ High scores (2-3) = action required to support this need
✓ Completed every 6 months, so you can see evidence of your child/youth’s growth!

The CANS is useful for…
✓ Creating a team to support your child/youth
✓ Bringing together a lot of information about your child/youth & turning it into data
✓ Making sure that your child is getting the right services
✓ Seeing all of the ways your child/youth grows and changes over time

How you can use the CANS:
✓ Build on your child’s strengths
➢ Help your child maintain access to:
  ▪ Activities of interest, friends, supportive adults, and beneficial supports & services (e.g., mental health, medical, & educational resources)
✓ Give attention where it’s due
➢ Monitor needs that do not require immediate intervention or services (scored a 0-1 on the CANS)
  ▪ For example, you could start a journal where you take notes on the child/youth’s behavior
➢ Help your child identify and manage challenges
➢ Seek help if your child’s needs increase
✓ Support your child’s needs
➢ Help your child maintain access to:
  ▪ Recommended services and supports
  ▪ Supportive peers and adults
  ▪ Activities that help teach perseverance, resilience, and optimism
  ▪ A safe, stable, and caring home

The CANS is NOT…

References & Additional Resources