



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE MEMO

June 25, 2018

No. 18-01

DHCS Functional Assessment Tools (PSC & CANS) Requirement for Children and Youth

Background: In accordance with DHCS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 17-052, Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services (CCBHS) will oversee the administration of the Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC-35) and the Child and Adolescents Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tools to measure child and youth functioning. These assessments provide a standardized way to examine service needs and changes at the individual (e.g., treatment planning) and program (e.g., service capacity) levels. Data reporting will inform quality improvement efforts and will be helpful in communicating with Children & Family Services (CFS) and other counties in coordinating care.

Implementation: Beginning October 1, 2018 the PSC-35 and CANS assessments will be completed 1) at the start of treatment, 2) every six months thereafter, and 3) at the end of treatment.

Pediatric Symptom Checklist -35

1. **What is the PSC-35?** The PSC-35 is a 35-item assessment of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems that reveals caregiver reflections of their child's psychosocial functioning.
2. **Who completes the PSC-35?** It is completed by caregivers who rate how well each item describes their child/youth using a 3-point scale (never, sometimes, often).
3. **Who does the PSC-35 assess?** Children/youth ages 3 to 18 years old.
4. **What areas are assessed?** Overall functioning, attention, externalizing, and internalizing functioning.
5. **How is a PSC-35 score interpreted?** Higher scores indicate lower functioning in the above areas.

Children Adolescents Needs and Strengths

1. **What is the CANS?** The CANS is an information integration tool used to accurately represent the needs and strengths of children, youth, and their families. CCBHS has elected to implement a comprehensive version of the CANS to ensure that needed information is obtained to inform treatment planning.
2. **Who completes the CANS?** The CANS is completed by clinicians, in collaboration with the family and child/ youth's treatment team, as part of the assessment process.
3. **Who does the CANS assess?** Children and youth from birth up to age 20 and, at a minimum, their caregivers.
4. **What areas are assessed?**
 - For ages 0-5: Challenges, Functioning, Risk Behaviors & Factors, Cultural Factors-Family, Strengths, Dyadic Considerations, Caregiver Resources & Needs, and Potentially Traumatic/Adverse Childhood Experiences.
 - For ages 6+: Behavioral/Emotional Needs, Life Functioning, Risk Behaviors, Cultural Factors, Strengths, Caregiver Resources & Needs, and Potentially Traumatic/Adverse Childhood Experiences; in addition there are modules on Substance Use, Trauma, Developmental Disabilities, School, Violence, Sexually Aggressive Behaviors, Juvenile Justice, Runaway, and Fire Setting, which are completed if relevant.

5. **How is a CANS score generally interpreted?** As a strength based tool, CANS identifies areas of strength for a child with either a 0 or 1 score. Scores of 2 or 3 indicate that there is a need or lack of strength in a particular area. A 3 score indicates a need for intensive and/or immediate attention that should be prioritized in goals for treatment planning.

Training and Certification: The CANS is an open domain tool that requires certification and annual recertification in the CANS tool itself. Each agency/program is to monitor that providers are trained, certified, and maintain certification on the Contra Costa CANS or similar versions. *Note that upon certification of CANS, CCBHS will waive the requirement for completion of the Child and Adolescent Level of Care Utilization System (CALOCUS).*

It is recommended that providers

- ✓ Receive training prior to attempting online certification
 - ✓ Attend an all-day training session with CCBHS that includes an introductory training and certification support beginning July 2018
 - ✓ Sign up for upcoming CCBHS trainingsⁱ via: <https://www.schoox.com/academy/CANSAcademy/register> (See Cans Training Registration Instructions on how to register - attached)
- AND/OR**
- ✓ Visit the County Website: <https://cchealth.org/mentalhealth/outcome-measures.php>
On right hand side of website, click the plus sign **+** under Training to expand the drop down menu.
 - ✓ Receive training by Praed certified trainers, CCBHS staff or contractor’s own Praed certified trainers

A Contra Costa County CANS Manual detailing how to score individual CANS items and other educational materials are in development. The manual as well as training information and other resources will be posted on the County website at: <https://cchealth.org/mentalhealth/outcome-measures.php>.

As the County’s Implementation Team continues to plan for different areas of functional assessment implementation (e.g., data collection, etc.) additional communications will be released. In the meantime, if you should have any questions, contact the relevant staff listed below.

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ⁱ Please note that CCBHS trainings DO NOT supplant any existing trainings offered by our contractors for their providers.