



# Talking to The Family About The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)

## in BRIEF

*Briefs are provided as a best practice reference or topic example to support communities in developing the family partner role.*

### OVERVIEW:

- Be sure to talk about the CANS at a place and time that is comfortable for the family. This ensures they hear the information and can fully engage and participate.
- It is recommended you discuss the CANS with a family within the first three meetings with them.
- Offer families their own CANS rating sheet and manual for reference if they wish to have them. If they do not want a copy, do not push for them to take one.
- There is no “one way” to talk to families about the CANS. Meet them where they are at and gauge their readiness and desire. Some will want more technical information, and some will want more casual information. There may be some who do not want any information at all. This is ok as well.
- Let families know
  1. Where the CANS came from (i.e. \*From the Praed Foundation, created by Dr John Lyons with families, and used in all 50 states)
  2. That it is a communication tool the entire team utilizes,
  3. Why we use it in Wraparound (i.e. \*Used in children’s services as a way for all on the team to communicate family and youth needs and strengths so we can better work together on where our Wraparound Plan of Care needs to go),
  4. What the ratings mean (i.e. \*use your manual to show 3 – 0 and 0 – 3 levels of rating. Ratings may show what needs we might want to address immediately, or what strengths are especially useful to meeting a need).Discuss how it uses strengths and needs of the family to guide care planning. Let them know it is how we can visually see progress over time.
- Reassure families that CANS ratings do not dictate the plan of care. It is one tool we use to see what might need to be addressed. Family “voice and choice” still leads the Wraparound Plan of Care process.
- Foster parents may have unique concerns and feelings about using the CANS in Wraparound. It is vital we listen to and validate these when they surface. Take the time to explain the similarities and differences between how the CANS is used in Wraparound and DHS (\*Currently the manual and rating sheets are the same. Wraparound rates every 90 days, where DHS scores annually. In Wraparound, we only look at circumstances and behaviors in the last 30 days. DHS uses CANS results for level of care financial compensation for foster parents). Reassure foster parents that Wraparound does not use the CANS as a financial tool. Be honest that we do not yet know how the two will ultimately affect one another.
- Let families know how information is gathered. Reassure them this is not the old way of looking at everything you have ever done in your past, looking for a diagnosis, or going through your “files”, but more of an organic conversation that happens with all team members.
- Do not answer questions you do not know. It is better to say you need to find out more information from those who are experts in the CANS tool.
- Use your Family Partners if your community has them available. Family Partners build a unique trusting relationship with a family and can be a great asset in increasing CANS fidelity as well as increasing family engagement, empowerment, and self-efficacy around the CANS.
- In all discussions, be transparent. Let families know that the CANS is new to Wraparound in Oregon and we are all learning how to use the rating tool to its fullest potential for youth and families.