

POLICY 3.6

MANDATORY UNIFORM ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

3.6.1 Purpose

To provide consolidated guidance to local Children’s Services Act (CSA) programs regarding the requirements for the utilization of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), the mandatory uniform assessment instrument used with all children and families receiving services through the CSA.

The specifications in this policy represent the minimum state CSA requirements for use of the CANS. Individual localities may adopt, through local policy, additional requirements regarding administration of the CANS at their discretion.

3.6.2 Authority

- A. Section 2.2-2648.D.11 of the Code of Virginia (COV) requires “a mandatory uniform assessment instrument and process to be used by all localities to identify levels of risk of Children’s Services Act youth.”
- B. Section 2.2-5210 of the COV specifies “utilizing a secure electronic database, the CPMT and the family assessment and planning team shall provide the Office of Children’s Services with client specific information from the mandatory uniform assessment and information in accordance with subdivision D 11 of § 2.2-2648.”
- C. Section 2.2-5212 A of the COV states “in order to be eligible for funding for services through the state pool of funds, a youth, or family with a child, ... shall be determined through the use of a uniform assessment instrument and process by the policies of the community policy and management team to have access to these funds.”
- D. The 2018 Appropriation Act (Chapter 2, Item 282 B 8) states “The State Executive Council shall require a uniform assessment instrument.”
- E. State Executive Council Policy 3.6 (adopted in December 2007 and updated in May 2008) establishes: “The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) shall be the uniform assessment instrument for children and youth receiving services funded though the state pool. Use of the CANS shall be effective July 1, 2009.”

3.6.3 Definitions

“Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)” means the Virginia versions of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment instrument, developed by John S. Lyons, Ph.D., as modified for CSA use. The Virginia CSA versions include the Standard and DSS-Enhanced CANS, each having two age versions (Birth to Four and Ages 5+) and each having a Comprehensive Version and a Reassessment version.

“CANVaS 2.0” means the online software application for the Virginia CANS created in accordance with COV §2.2-5210 to permit local governments to submit data from the mandatory uniform assessment to OCS.

“CANS Certification” means completion of the CANS training requirements, passing a certification examination and subsequent granting of a certificate on any CSA Virginia version of the CANS as required by the Praed Foundation.

“Comprehensive CANS” means a CANS full assessment, including the four child functioning domains, caregiver domain(s) and eight modules. The modules are rated only if prompted by a rating on specific trigger items.

“Designated Super User / Report Administrator (DSU/RA)” means a local staff person designated to serve as the Local Administrator for the CANVaS 2.0 system. DSU/RAs may be trained Super Users who are designated to serve in the role or other staff as determined by the locality. DSU/RAs serve as gatekeepers to CANVaS, have access to local CANS data including reports and are the locality's primary contact with OCS regarding CANS.

“Discharge CANS” means a Comprehensive version of the CANS, denoted as a “Discharge CANS” in the CANVaS 2.0. system, completed within 90 days prior to, at the time of, or 90 days following either the child and family's exit from CSA funded services or a final review by the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT).

“DSS-Enhanced CANS” means the version of the Virginia CANS modified to include additional features for local Department of Social Services (DSS) use, including the ability to rate multiple caregivers and a Child Welfare module.

“Initial CANS” means a Comprehensive version of the Virginia CANS completed to determine eligibility for CSA-funded services in accordance with COV §2.2-5212.

“Reassessment CANS” means a Reassessment version of the Virginia CANS completed at regularly defined intervals as determined by local requirements, but no less than annually, for a child and family served by CSA. The Reassessment version does not contain the eight modules found in the Comprehensive version.

“*Standard CANS*” means the version of the Virginia CANS which does not include the additional features developed for the DSS-Enhanced CANS and is appropriate for use by public agency staff other than local DSS when administering the assessment.

“*User Agreement*” means the online document outlining the requirements for access and use of the CANVaS 2.0 site. Users shall indicate that they accept and honor these requirements.

3.6.4 CANS as the Mandatory Uniform Assessment Instrument

- A. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment (CANS) shall be the uniform assessment instrument for children and youth receiving services funded through the state pool.
- B. All children receiving CSA state pool funded services shall have CANS assessments completed in accordance with the parameters specified in this policy.

3.6.5 Frequency of CANS Administration

- A. Any child and family receiving CSA funded services shall be administered the CANS assessment.
- B. The Initial CANS is required to determine and/or support the child's eligibility for CSA consistent with the statutory requirement in COV §2.2-5212.
- C. The Initial CANS must be completed prior to the initiation of CSA-funded services described on a service plan (e.g., Individual Family Service Plan, Individualized Education Program, or Foster Care Plan), with an exception (14 days) for emergency services and placements as provided for in §2.2-5209.
- D. The CANS assessment is required annually. “Annually” is defined as within 60 calendar days of the anniversary date of the Initial CANS or subsequent Annual CANS, meaning the reassessment may fall 60 days prior to, on the date of, or 60 calendar days subsequent to the anniversary of the previous annual assessment date.
- E. The Reassessment version of the CANS may be used for the Annual assessment. Local governments shall have the discretion to use either the Comprehensive version or the Reassessment version of the CANS for the Annual assessment.
- F. The CANS completed within the time frame noted in D. above shall be referred to as the “Annual CANS.”
- G. Local policy adopted by the Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) shall direct the frequency of reassessment of the CANS between the one year intervals of required Annual CANS unless otherwise required by another funding source (e.g. Medicaid).

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H. The Discharge CANS shall be the Comprehensive version of the CANS.

- (1) Discharge CANS are required only when a child's CSA case is closed. A CPMT may opt to complete a Discharge CANS when transferring a case to another locality according to local written policy.
- (2) The Discharge CANS may be done 90 days prior to, at the time of, or within 90 days following either the completion of all CSA-funded services, or final FAPT review.
- (3) A Discharge CANS is not required in any of the following situations:
 - i. when a child and family receive CSA-funded services for less than 30 calendar days. An Initial CANS is required in such instances.
 - ii. at the time of transfer of services from one locality to another. The receiving locality will complete CANS as required per their local schedule.
 - iii. when one service ends, but the child and/or family continue to receive other CSA-funded services.

3.6.6 Use of the CANVaS 2.0 On-line Data System

- A. Only employees of local government agencies (local department of social services, court services units, school divisions, community services boards/behavioral health authorities, and CSA offices) may create accounts in CANVaS 2.0 to carry out their job responsibilities in working with children and families.
- B. Prior to account creation, all users requesting access shall agree to the terms of the User Agreement required to access the CANVaS 2.0 site. The agreement addresses access, security and confidentiality, and closure (completion) of assessments within a specified time frame.

3.6.7 Required Certification by All CANS Assessors

- A. Any individual who administers the CANS shall be appropriately certified on the use of the assessment. "Appropriately certified" means the individual has:
 - (1) completed one or more of the Virginia CSA training courses offered on the Praed Foundation CANS training and certification site;
 - (2) attained a score of 70 percent or higher on the certification exam;
 - (3) received a certificate granted by the Praed Foundation for the approved time frame of one year from date of certification; and
 - (4) administers the CANS only during the approved time frame of his or her certification.
- B. CANS completed by individuals who are not appropriately certified are not valid and shall not be used for any purpose, including service planning.

- C. Paper CANS score sheets may only be used if the individual administering the CANS is
- (1) appropriately certified, and
 - (2) the information from the score sheet is entered into CANVaS within 60 days by the assessor or an authorized data entry person.
- D. Sharing of specific information such as ratings of items on a certification vignette to enable another individual to pass the certification exam is prohibited. Individuals who share or receive such information may lose access to CANVaS 2.0 at the discretion of the Office of Children's Services.

3.6.8 Policy Review

This policy will be subject to periodic review by the State Executive Council for Children's Services.