



CANS Tips

The Detailed Version

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool is used in the state of Idaho to help you capture your family's story so you can identify the strengths of your child and family, articulate your needs in a way that helps you prioritize the things to work on, and inform treatment planning between multiple providers.

All of this is exciting, but it is new.

To help you be successful with this new tool, the Parent Network has collected some tips to help you get started. We have broken our tips into two categories, highlights and details. We have included the highlights both here and on the web page.

If you have done a CANS with your child and you have tips you would like to add to our lists, please let us know!

Highlights:

- **Relax!**
 - The clinician is prepared to make the experience a good and useful one.
- **Give yourself enough time.**
 - Doing a CANS the first time is an involved process that will take a morning or afternoon.
- **Tell stories that help the clinician understand what is important to your family.**
 - While you can't tell every story of your child, and it is completely fine to not tell any stories at all, make sure you highlight the details that are important to you.
- **Remember that this is your CANS and there are no wrong answers.**
 - The goal is to create a picture of your child and family so you know how to create an effective treatment plan.
 - Some parents find it helpful to tell the clinician what they do for their children that they would not do for their other children or children that age. It is easy to forget to mention the things that are just part of our regular day.



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- **You can get others involved.**
 - You can have your therapists, teachers, support people, and whoever is involved in your child's care participate in the CANS.
 - People who know your child can help you tell the story and help the clinician better understand the things that are important to you.
- **The CANS is a living document.**
 - You will work with your clinician to update the CANS every 90 days. This does not mean starting over, but updating any information that has changed.
- **The CANS output has a score of 0, 1, 2, or 3.**
 - It can feel odd to see your life distilled down to a number, but that number (actually a collection of numbers) can help you understand where your most urgent needs are and the best way to start getting your child and family help.
- **Your clinician will discuss the results with you.**
 - Your CANS is not final until you have had a chance to talk to the clinician about the results and you agree on the output. This is not a majority rule situation. This is your story and you have the right to have a score that you are comfortable with.

Who is doing the CANS?

- Right now a limited number of providers are doing the CANS. By the summer of 2019 that number is expected to increase. Children with Medicaid have access to the Optum provider network, which is the largest group of providers who will be trained to use the CANS.
- Liberty Healthcare uses the CANS to help them determine eligibility for the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) program.
- Local Children's Mental Health (CMH) clinicians are also using the CANS when evaluating a child in their office.
- Other Idaho government agencies are working toward adopting the CANS, although their versions of the tool may be slightly different than the one used for mental health.



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What is my role in the CANS?

- The CANS is not a list of questions, but a conversation to help you tell your family's story and share the things that are most important to you.
- As parents and caregivers, we are largely responsible for telling our story to the clinician who administers the CANS. The younger the child, the more of the story comes from us. As children age, they are able to give more of the story themselves.
- If your regular mental health provider is helping you complete a CANS, then many of the details captured by the CANS will already be known, and do not need to be discussed again unless further detail is needed.
- If you are doing the CANS for the first time with a new provider, then more of your story will need to be shared.
- The CANS results are input into a system called ICANS, which allows the information gather to be shared (with your permission) with other providers, limiting the times you need to retell your full story.

What If I don't want to tell my story?

- Sometimes our stories are hard and it is okay to not tell things you are not comfortable with. It is important that you know that the more you include in the CANS process, the more meaningful the results will be. Because the CANS is a living document, if you aren't ready to share part of your story now, you can always choose to share it later.

What If I don't want my child to hear me tell our entire story?

- Our children have heard their story many times because it feels like every new provider wants to hear all the details. As parents, we get it, retelling the story can be traumatic. You have the right to share information without your child present. Just let your clinician know before your meeting that you have a few things to share without your child. They may have you tell them over the phone or when your child is not in the room.

What if I don't agree with my CANS score?

- The CANS records your story in a format that can be used to create meaningful treatment plans with multiple providers. If you do not agree with how the clinician



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scored your CANS, then talk it through. This is your story and that means the results need to be accurate for you.

- Our lives are constantly changing, and so is our CANS. Don't worry about something changing in your child's life that impacts the results of your CANS. You can schedule an appointment to have it updated any time you feel there has been a big change, although it will be updated at least every 90 days.

Where can I learn more about the CANS?

- For general information about the CANS, the [Praed Foundation](#) website is a great tool. If you have questions about the CANS in Idaho, visit the YES.idaho.gov website for current information.
- If you have questions about how the ICANS system calculates scores, check the website for the resource "[Understanding Algorithms.](#)"