


STATE OF WISCONSIN
Department of Children and Families
Division of Safety and Permanence

DSP Memo Series 2012 - 01
January 20, 2012
Re: Applying Child and Adolescent
Needs and Strengths Assessment
(CANS) to Group Homes and
Residential Care Centers

To: DCF Area Administrators
Bureau Directors
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Services Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Section Chiefs/Licensing Chiefs
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Summary

As a result of the recent Child and Family Services Review, the Division of Safety and Permanence created a Program Improvement Plan. The Program Improvement Plan includes the requirement that the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool must be completed for all children and juveniles placed in the home of an unlicensed provider, foster care, group home, or residential care center that are under the placement and care responsibility of the state. The Department, in collaboration with county representatives and other stakeholders on the Out-of-Home Care Committee, created a comprehensive version of the CANS for use in Wisconsin. As a result of those efforts, changes were made in eWisACWIS to support the use of the CANS assessment.

In February, 2011, the Division issued DCF Memo Series 2011-03 Foster Care Rate Setting Policy, which established the requirement to complete the CANS for all foster care placements. This memo compliments the Foster Care Rate Setting memo by extending the same CANS assessment process to group homes and residential care centers. This memo does not affect payments in either group homes or residential care centers.

Requirements

To administer a CANS assessment, an individual must complete training and receive their certification. The CANS assessment will be used to evaluate all children entering unlicensed providers, foster homes, group homes, and residential care centers. A policy describing all of the requirements of the CANS implementation is attached.

Document Summary

This memo outlines the requirements for a standardized assessment for all children in out-of-home care and the changes made to the Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting policy as a result of this requirement. The standardized assessment is the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. Trainings will be held statewide to support implementation of the CANS tool.

Implementation Considerations

Similar to the implementation of the CANS tool for foster care placements last year, the implementation of the CANS for children and youth placed with unlicensed individuals, group homes, or residential care centers will be a rolling implementation over the next six months.

All new placements in these settings shall follow the attached policy upon placement, however existing placements shall have a CANS completed within the next six months no later than their next Permanence Plan review hearing or administrative review panel. This timeframe will align cases in preparation for the release of the policy Confirming Safe Environments and the Ongoing Standards-Integrated Case Plan later this year which will further incorporate information gathered through the CANS tool in the case planning process.

Training

The Division of Safety and Permanence has created an on-line training resource for the certification and re-certification of workers using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. Agency staff who complete the CANS for a child placed in foster care are required to be certified in its use prior to scoring items on the tool, and re-certified annually to maintain validity and reliability. Certification and annual re-certification are required by Ch. DCF 56 Administrative Rule and the Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting policy. The process to become a certified or re-certified user of the CANS tool is a part of the online training. The on-line training may also serve as a resource for certified users. The training is located on the Wisconsin Professional Development System's website under Caseworker Trainings – special skills/topics at: <http://wcpwds.wisc.edu/Default.aspx>

Monitoring and Reporting

The Division of Safety and Permanence has released a new eWreport, "SMOD100 CANS Timeliness" which allows counties to identify children or juveniles whose CANS are due in the next 30 days or whose CANS are overdue. The report also allows counties to view the results of the CANS for children and juveniles in their care to assist in tracking and monitoring the timeliness of administering and documenting the CANS tool.

In addition, the Division is creating CANS reporting into the datamart where county agencies will be able to review the needs and strengths identified for children or juveniles, their current caregivers, and identified permanent resources.

Additional Information

Please visit the Levels of Care page in the Foster Care section of the DCF website (http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/levels_of_care/default.htm). The Web page includes links to webcasts related to the CANS, a presentation by Dr. John Lyons (CANS author) at the Public Child Welfare Conference, and other resources related to the CANS tool.

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MEMO WEB SITE: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/memos>

Attachments: [Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care Policy](#)
[CANS Manual Birth - 5](#)
[CANS Manual Ages 5-17](#)
[CANS Glossary of Items](#)
[Child/Youth Assessed Level of Need Birth - 5](#)
[Child/Youth Assessed Level of Need Ages 5-17](#)

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