



# Kinship Quarterly

Strengthening Families

Oct 2016

**IN THIS ISSUE: THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT NEEDS AND STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT**

The Legislature passed Senate Bill 125 in May 2015, requiring DFPS to conduct a developmentally appropriate assessment no later than the 45th day after a child enters state care. This evaluation must include screening for trauma and interviews with individuals who know the child's needs. On September 1, 2016, DFPS began using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) statewide. All youth 3-17 years old who enter DFPS care will be assessed within 30 days of removal to meet our 45-day requirement to complete the Child Service Plan.

### What is the CANS?

The CANS is a tool used by substitute caregivers, case managers, clinicians, care coordinators, conservatorship workers — all the people that provide help and support to you and your family. It helps in gathering information needed to make decisions about the best course of action to address your youth's needs and achieve your family's goals.

### What is the purpose of the CANS?

The information from the CANS assessment supports decision making for children and youth in the child welfare system, helps to improve the quality of foster care agencies, and allows for

monitoring of youth progress and outcomes. The CANS captures information about the youth's wellbeing, life functioning and quality of life.

### When is the CANS completed and by whom?

Beginning September 1, 2016, all children and youth age of 3 and older placed in substitute care will have a CANS completed as part of their assessment and service planning process. In Texas, the STAR Health Clinicians, who are trained and certified in its use, will complete the CANS as a part of the ongoing service-planning process. The CANS will be completed with input from all members of your child's treatment team.

### How does the CANS affect me?

As a primary member of your child's treatment team, your input in the CANS and the assessment process is essential and invaluable. The CANS is used to communicate information about the needs and strengths of your child and family. This information should be gathered with you and shared as part of a collaborative team process to create a shared understanding of the problems, barriers, assets and supports that exist and to be able to create a more effective plan of care for your child

and family. You will be able to express your thoughts, experiences and opinions regarding the ratings of the CANS items, and will be given a copy of the final assessment and service plan.

### How can I use the CANS with my CVS worker and my treatment team?

The CANS is intended to be a communication and planning tool. It is used to communicate your child and family's needs and strengths and build consensus within the team on the issues to address and interventions needed. The CANS helps to organize information from teachers, doctors, other family members — any significant people involved in your child and your family's life — about needs and strengths and guide service decision making. The CANS information can help build agreement among treatment team members and develop more effective service plans for your child and family.

### How is the CANS scored?

The CANS assesses the needs and strengths of the youth and caregiving system. The item ratings translate directly into action and are rated as follows:

**For Needs**

- 0 = no need for action
- 1 = monitoring
- 2 = action is needed
- 3 = immediate action

**For Strengths**

- 0 = centerpiece strength
- 1 = useful strength
- 2 = potential strength
- 3 = no strength identified

**Where can I learn more?**

Please send any questions about the CANS to: [CANS@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:CANS@dfps.state.tx.us). Information about the CANS can also be found at the John Praed Foundation: [praedfoundation.org](http://praedfoundation.org).

**Good to Know**

*Effective September 1, 2016, the DARS Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program was transferred to Texas Health and Human Services (HHS). All programs with the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) have been transferred to either the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) or to HHS.*

**Handling challenging behavior by teaching better behavior**

Kayden is a 2 ½ year old boy with an abundance of energy. He has difficulty staying with any one task for more than a minute or so and he has been in trouble a lot lately for biting his siblings and parents. Redirection and time-out don't seem to be curbing Kayden's challenging behavior.

One of the key principles of behavior management is that the best way to stop challenging behavior is to teach better behavior. Children often hear "no," "stop," and "don't" but we must teach them to learn what they should do instead. Punishments not only do not teach better behavior, they often result in a child replacing one negative behavior with another. For longer-lasting, positive behavior, we must focus on teaching children how to get their needs met by using acceptable communication strategies or replacement behaviors.

Another key principle of behavior management is that behavior has a purpose and to know which behavior

management strategy to use, we must first try to understand what purpose the challenging behavior serves. Look for patterns in misbehavior. When does the behavior usually occur? Under what circumstances? Is the child trying to get something? Get out of something? Using Kayden's example, you might discover that Kayden tends to bite when he does not want to pick up his toys or do another unpreferred activity. Biting results in time-out, so Kayden successfully gets out of the activity. He finds his biting to be very effective to get his desires met, so he continues to bite. Children might misbehave more when tired, hungry,



bored, challenged, or over-stimulated. It is helpful to keep records of what happens before and after the challenging behavior to try to find its purpose.

An effective behavior

management strategy is to try to prevent challenging behavior before it happens. Some strategies to prevent challenging behavior are:

- Maintaining predictable routines
- Using transition warnings
- Balancing active and calm activities as well as easy and challenging activities
- Watching for cues that a child needs help or is getting frustrated
- Using clear language to direct children
- Positively reinforcing good behavior
- Offering choices

Once challenging behavior is already occurring or has already occurred, additional strategies can be useful. Effective, research-based strategies for teaching better behavior include using logical consequences and teaching replacement behaviors.

**Logical consequences**

Logical consequences help guide more appropriate behavior by letting children face the consequences of their behavior (Fox & Langhans, 2005). For logical consequences to work, the consequence must be clearly tied to the behavior and

happen immediately or soon after the behavior.

Logical consequences are most effective when they are framed as guidance, not punishment. Fox and Langhans (2005) state, "the tone of voice used can mean the difference between logical consequences and punishment." One way to frame a logical consequence as guidance is to offer the consequence as a choice. For instance, "if you would like to draw with your brother, you need to help pick up your toys first" or "to go outside you have to put your shoes on." For young children or children with cognitive delays, it is effective to use first/then statements such as, "first pick up toys, then draw" or "first shoes, then outside."

A note of caution with logical consequences is that children must have the cognitive ability to understand consequences for this strategy to work. Certain conditions, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, can affect a child's ability to link consequences with their actions, so more repetition or different strategies would be required for the child to learn and the child may not generalize what is learned to other, similar situations.

**Replacement behavior**

One of the most effective behavioral strategies to manage challenging behavior is to teach better behavior, or replacement behavior. The replacement behavior serves the same purpose as the challenging behavior, but it is a more positive, less harmful way for children to get their needs met.

Since finding a behavior that serves the same purpose is the mission of this strategy, it is important to watch for patterns in the child's behavior and determine what purpose the challenging behavior serves before choosing a replacement behavior.

For this strategy to be effective, replacement behavior must be easily taught, something the child is able to do, easily noticed and reinforced when the child uses it, and something that works quickly for the child (Dunlap & Duda, 2004).

Common mistakes are coaching the child to use words that are beyond the child's vocabulary, misinterpreting the purpose of the behavior (for example thinking the child is head-banging to get something he wants when he's really head-banging due to sensory overload), and not making sure the replacement behavior works as well as the challenging behavior. If the new behavior is too difficult or doesn't work for the child, she will continue to use the challenging behavior.

A useful tip for teaching replacement behaviors is to try to catch the child before the challenging behavior occurs so you can coach a new behavior, help the child use this new behavior, then positively reinforce the child for using it.

Positive reinforcement might include praise and making sure the child gets what she asks for (within reason). Olivia is a child who hits her sister when they play together. After looking for patterns in Olivia's challenging behavior you find that she tends to smile while hitting, she doesn't seem upset, and nothing seems to occur before she hits to provoke aggression. Because it seems like Olivia is hitting to get her sister's attention and to interact with others, you can help her request to play before she hits someone by coaching using the word "play" or handing her sister a toy while she has another toy. If she wants the same toy, you could coach saying "my turn" and making sure she gets a turn or find a similar toy.

Using logical consequences and teaching replacement behavior requires time and individual attention. Repetition of each strategy is needed for the child to learn from it and start making better choices,

but with continued teaching and positive reinforcement of better choices and behavior, most children will show a great improvement in behavior.

#### **Red flags may indicate a need for referral**

Sometimes you need more help figuring out the cause of challenging behavior or strategies to use to help increase more positive behavior. If your child is younger than three and has any of the concerning behaviors below, call your child's caseworker so that a referral can be made to ECI.

- Has tantrums that last 20 minutes or longer.
- Breaks things on purpose.
- Hurts or bites other people or himself.
- Does not look at you when you call his name.
- Does not play with toys
- Does not engage in any pretend play by 24 months.
- Does not enjoy being around and watching other toddlers.
- Flaps hands, rocks, or sways over and over.
- Does not point at objects she wants.
- Has no words by 12 months.
- Does not notice people or engage in classroom activities.
- Is unhappy most of the time.
- Is anxious most of the time.
- Shows any loss of speech, babbling, or social skills.



#### **Events:**

**October 31:** More Delightful Than Frightful at Morgan's Wonderland  
5223 David Edwards  
San Antonio, TX 78233

**November 1, 2016:** Empowered Parent Conference San Marcos Activity Center  
501 East Hopkins St  
San Marcos, Texas 78666. Register online:  
<http://www.empoweredparentconference.com/overview.html>

**November 10, 2016:** Pathways to Adulthood: Rahe Bulverde Elementary School Library  
1715 E. Ammann Road  
Bulverde, TX 78613.  
To register, go to [www.txp2p.org](http://www.txp2p.org), or to learn more about the Texas Parent to Parent Pathways to Adulthood program contact, Cynda Green at 512-458-8600 or [cynda.green@txp2p.org](mailto:cynda.green@txp2p.org). Hosted by Comal ISD, contact Dixie Boyd, [dixie.boyd@gmail.com](mailto:dixie.boyd@gmail.com) or 830-885-1600.

**November 18 - December 21-** A Charlie Brown Christmas or The Nutcracker- Dallas Children's Theater  
Contact Box Office: 214-740-0051



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don't forget to like us!

## Holiday Safety

- Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and, if possible, choose light colors.
- Since masks can sometimes obstruct a child's vision, try non-toxic face paint and makeup whenever possible.
- Have kids use glow sticks or flashlights to help them see and be seen by drivers.
- Children under the age of 12 should not be alone at night without adult supervision. If kids are mature enough to be out without supervision, remind them to stick to familiar areas that are well lit and trick-or-treat in groups
- At Thanksgiving, things are guaranteed to get a little busy. To help keep hot food out of the reach of little hands, be sure that pot handles and other dishes aren't close to the edge of the counter or table where they could be pulled down by curious kids.
- Colder weather means lots of layers of clothing. But remember, bulky winter clothes and coats can keep a car seat from doing its job. Instead, cover your child with a thick blanket to stay warm after you've securely strapped him or her into the car seat.
- Avoid buying toys that have small parts and may pose a choking danger. Look for quality in design and construction, and follow age and safety recommendations on labels.
- If you buy a bicycle for a child, buy a helmet too and make sure the child wears it.
- Toys with strings, straps, or cords longer than seven inches may pose a risk of strangulation.
- Mistletoe, holly, poinsettias, Jerusalem cherry plants, and other plants are commonly used as decorations during the holidays. Like many plants, these are considered potentially poisonous and should be kept out of the reach of kids.

## Resources

### Help with Bills and other expenses

[usa.gov/help-with-bills](https://www.usa.gov/help-with-bills)

### Help for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

[yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/docs/grandparents-raising-grandchildren.pdf](https://yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/docs/grandparents-raising-grandchildren.pdf)

### Food, Housing, Health and much more

[211texas.org](https://211texas.org)

### CarePortal - Connects churches to local children and families in crisis

[careportal.org/](https://careportal.org/)

### Texas Food Pantries

[foodpantries.org/st/texas](https://foodpantries.org/st/texas)

### Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

[womeninfantschildrenoffice.com/texas-wic-clinics-wcs42](https://womeninfantschildrenoffice.com/texas-wic-clinics-wcs42)

### Free, reliable legal information for low-income Texans

[TexasLawHelp.org](https://TexasLawHelp.org)

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TEXAS

Department of Family  
and Protective Services

Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or  
people with disabilities at  
(800) 252-5400 or [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).