

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

POLICY & PROCEDURE

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| POLICY NUMBER: CWS 24-12 | POLICY TITLE: CANS COMPLETION AND DOCUMENTATION | EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/28/2026 |
| PROGRAM: ER, FM/FR, ICWA, EFC, PP | REVISION DATES: | REFERENCES: ACL 18-09, ACL 18-23, ACL 18-81, ACL 21-27, ACL 22-35, ACL 25-10 |

OVERVIEW

This policy outlines the procedures and requirements for completion and documentation of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment.

POLICY

It is the policy of Child Welfare Services (CWS) that all children/youth with an open CWS case will have a CANS assessment completed in accordance with California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued directives. The CANS assessment will be administered only by CANS-certified staff and the CANS assessment will be used to inform case-planning.

PROCEDURE

1. CANS Assessment Completion

- 1.1. The case carrying social worker is responsible for ensuring completion of the CANS assessment for all children/youth on their caseload.
- 1.2. The case carrying social worker will communicate with agencies/entities/Tribes that are members of the child/youth’s Child and Family Team (CFT) to determine whether a CANS has already been completed for the child/youth and if so, will utilize that CANS for case planning and enter that CANS into CARES. If a current CANS has already been completed by a CANS-certified member of the child/youth’s CFT, that CANS must be used. (See section 2.)
- 1.3. The CANS assessment will only be administered by CANS-certified staff.
- 1.4. If the child/youth is eligible or a member of a Tribe and that Tribe has staff certified to administer the CANS, the case carrying social worker will inquire with the Tribe as to whether the Tribe would prefer the Tribe to complete the CANS and if so, will use that CANS for case planning and enter that CANS into CARES.

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- 1.5. CANS ratings are to be determined collaboratively by all CFT members and must clearly reflect the input of the child/youth, family, and, in the case of an Indian child/youth, the child/youth’s Tribe.
- 1.6. The initial CANS assessment and ongoing CANS re-assessments should be completed within the timeframes outlined in the following table:

| Event | CFT Meeting Timeline Requirement | CANS Timeline Requirement |
|--|--|---|
| Initial CFT Meeting & CANS (child welfare - family maintenance cases ¹) | *Prior to completion of the case plan and within 60 days from opening of a case (ACL 25-08), or no later than the date of the dispositional hearing, if applicable, whichever is earliest (ACL 18-23). | Prior to completion of the case plan and within 60 days from opening of a case, or no later than the date of the dispositional hearing, if applicable, whichever is earliest (ACL 18-81). |
| Initial CFT Meeting & CANS (child welfare - foster care cases) | Prior to completion of the case plan and within 60 days from entering foster care or no later than the date of the dispositional hearing, whichever is earliest (ACL 18-23). | Prior to completion of the case plan and within 60 days from entering foster care or no later than the date of the dispositional hearing, whichever is earliest (ACL 18-81). |
| Indian Children <i>Inquiries into whether a child is an Indian child should begin with the initial contact (WIC Section 224.2)</i> | *Prior to completion of the case plan and within 30 days of case opening or within 30 days of the child entering foster care, and before the dispositional hearing, if applicable. (ACL 22-35). | *Prior to completion of the case and within 30 days of case opening or within 30 days of the child entering foster care, or before the dispositional hearing, if applicable. |
| Foster youth receiving ICC, IHBS, or TFC SMHS | At least every 90 days {WIC Section 16001.9(a)(39)(B)}. | *Consult with CFT on most recent CANS every 90 days during the CFT meeting and update if new information indicates it is necessary. |
| Foster youth placed in an STRTP | At least every 90 days {WIC Section 16001.9(a)(39)(B)}. | *Consult with CFT on most recent CANS every 90 days during the CFT meeting and update if new information indicates it is necessary. |
| Case Plan Update (typically, every six months) | *Within 30 days prior to completion of case plan update due to the court throughout the duration of the case. {WIC Section 16501.1(b)(1)} | *Within 30 days prior to completion of case plan update due to the court throughout the duration of the case. {WIC Section 16501.1(b)(1)}. |
| Triggering Conditions CANS ² (see list under 1.7) | *Within 30 days of determining that a condition identified in the Triggering Conditions list below exists. | *Within 30 days of determining that a condition identified in the Triggering Conditions list below exists. |
| Case Closure | *Meet or consult with CFT no more than 60 days prior to case closure. | *No more than 60 days prior to case closure. |

¹ This includes youth receiving FM services following family reunification services.

² See list of Triggering Conditions on the following page under 1.7.

* New or updated requirements that were effective in 2025

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1.7. CANS Completion Triggering Conditions:

- 1.7.1. Child/youth open case
- 1.7.2. Child/youth entry into foster care
- 1.7.3. Child/youth’s case closure.
- 1.7.4. Child/youth referred for placement in an STRTP, and an assessment by a Qualified Individual
- 1.7.5. Child/youth placed in an STRTP or receiving certain SMHS – update every 90 days
- 1.7.6. Placement Stabilization CFT meeting or 14-day Notice received for child/youth
- 1.7.7. Child/youth placement change
- 1.7.8. Child/youth hospitalization (psychiatric or medical)
- 1.7.9. Child/youth incarceration
- 1.7.10. Child/youth deemed eligible for Regional Center services
- 1.7.11. Child/youth newly eligible for special education services or significant change in the child/youth’s existing Individualized Education Plan
- 1.7.12. Child/youth deemed eligible for [California Children’s Services](#) due to an acute or chronic health condition.
- 1.7.13. Significant or sudden changes in a child/youth’s behavior, demeanor, or functioning, may be an indication of unmet needs. Since the CFT process is critical to supporting child/youth throughout the life of their case, the CFT should be seen as a first step toward identifying a child/youth’s needs and strengths.

1.8. For cases involving a child/youth who has been identified as eligible or enrolled in a Tribe, the CANS assessment will be completed jointly with the Tribe.

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2. CANS Assessment Documentation

- 2.1.1. The case carrying social worker is responsible for ensuring that the completed CANS assessment is entered into CARES. This includes CANS that are completed by another agency/entity/Tribe.
 - 2.1.1.1. If a Tribe completed a CANS for a child/youth who is eligible or enrolled in a Tribe, the case carrying social worker will ensure that CANS is entered into CARES.
- 2.1.2. All CANS must be completed AND entered into CARES within the completion requirement timeframes listed above. There is no data entry lag time allowed.
- 2.1.3. The case carrying social worker has the following two (2) options for ensuring data entry of the CANS into CARES:
 - 2.1.3.1. Option 1: The social worker can enter the CANS directly into CARES.
 - 2.1.3.1.1. If CWS/CMS is the statewide case management system, and the case carrying social worker enters the CANS directly into CARES, they will export a copy of the completed assessment as a PDF from CARES and upload a copy under the green tab of CWS/CMS.
 - 2.1.3.2. Option 2: The social worker can email a completed copy of the CANS assessment to CWS-CQI@co.humboldt.ca.us and support staff will enter it into CARES.
 - 2.1.3.2.1. If CWS/CMS is the statewide case management system, support staff will export a PDF version of the completed assessment, upload it under the green tab of CWS/CMS and email a copy to the case carrying social worker.
- 2.1.4. The case carrying social worker will ensure a copy of the completed CANS will be shared with the child and family team.
 - 2.1.4.1. For cases involving a child/youth who has been identified as Tribal, a copy of the completed CANS assessment will be shared with the Tribe.

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