

Child Welfare

Description of Child Welfare

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) works with communities to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It also works to protect the health and safety of children in daycare, as well as foster care and other types of 24-hour care. It does this through investigations, services and referrals, regulation, and prevention programs.¹ Many groups and agencies work alongside with the Department of Family and Protective Services to ensure that children can achieve safe and positive permanency. Included in this category are the following types of service providers:

- Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Child Placing Agencies
- Foster Families
- Residential Treatment Centers
- Attorneys
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Therapists/Mental Health Providers
- STAR Health
- Courts/Judges

Screeener vs. Assessment

Screeener

- Widely administered
- Brief
- Easy to complete
- Gives yes or no information
- Focused on a specific topic

Assessment

- Targeted administration
- In-depth
- Requires training to administer
- Gives unique client picture
- Informs treatment
- Completed over 1-3 visits

Recommendation

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. Because all children who enter foster care are assessed using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS), it is not necessary to provide these children with an additional trauma screener.

Trauma Assessment Tools for Children in Foster Care

A subject matter workgroup created by DFPS determined that the CANS is the tool that would best serve Texas children and families.² On September 1, 2016, DFPS began using the CANS statewide

¹ https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/default.asp

² <http://praedfoundation.org/tools/the-child-and-adolescent-needs-and-strengths-cans/texas/>

which requires all youth 3-17 years old who enter DFPS care will be assessed within 30 days of removal to meet the State's 45-day requirement to complete the Child Service Plan.³

Trauma Screening and Assessment Tools for Families Receiving FBSS

Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) are designed to maintain children safely in their homes—or make it possible for children to return home—by strengthening the ability of families to protect their children and reducing threats to their safety. In order to refer children and families for FBSS, caseworkers utilize information that they gather from a structured decision-making tool, called the 24-Hour Safety Assessment.⁴ While this tool is not meant to be a trauma screener, the information gathered provides significant information about the child and families current circumstances and the types of things that children are exposed to in the home.

Resources

- <http://praedfoundation.org/tools/the-child-and-adolescent-needs-and-strengths-cans/texas/>
- <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/41340/CANS-JIR.pdf>
- <http://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=49>

Questions to Consider Before Implementation

- Who needs to be trained on understanding the results of the CANS?
- Who will provide the necessary training?
- Who is alerted if there is a positive screening/assessment?
- What are you doing to address secondary traumatic stress in your workplace?

³ https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Medical_Services/cans.asp

⁴ https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/SDM_Safety_Assessment_Manual.pdf