



Conducting the CANS-NY Via Phone or Web

Suzanne Button, Ph.D.

Director, CANS-NY Institute

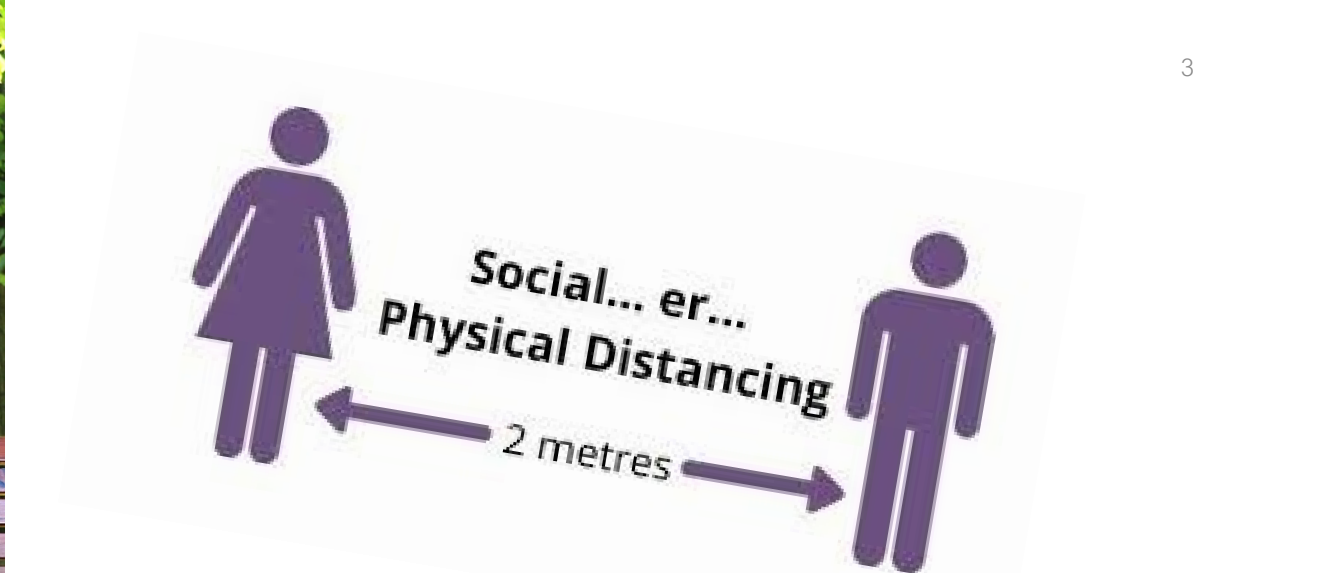
Joshua Nellist

Policy Analyst, CANS-NY Institute



Learning Objectives for Today

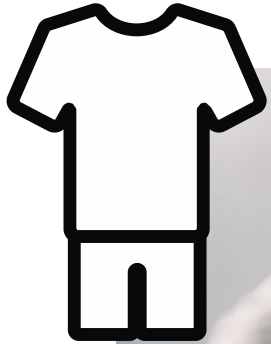
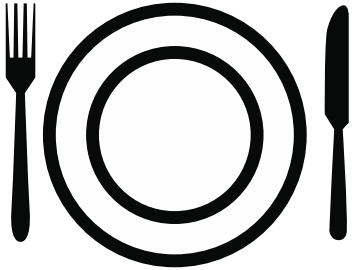
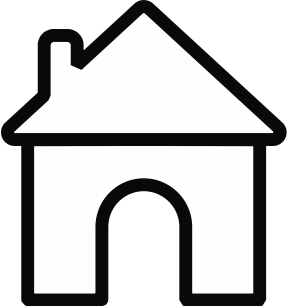
- The CANS-NY is NOT a Structured Checklist
- Working Virtually: Tips for Success
- Working by Phone: Tips for Success
- Relationship Building in Virtual Practice
- Virtual Work with Children & Youth
- Talking about Sensitive Information During Virtual Assessment
- Self-Care for the Care Manager
- CANS-NY Institute: Resources & Support



Completing a strong, collaborative assessment process: Challenging?



Engagement & Rapport Are Critical



Remember ...

The items on the CANS-NY do not prescribe how you get information but rather how you organize information once you have gotten it.

Technology Considerations

Set Your Clients & Yourself Up for Success



Collaborate on Choice and Use of Technology: Plan Ahead

- Offer secure choices that the child/family has available, is comfortable with and that will work; the phone is better than a constantly-freezing live virtual meeting. Practice child's/family's preferred tech before your contact with them.
- Give tech coaching; be sure to walk through and practice how the tech will work before launching into assessment; be sure to talk about mute/unmute.
 - Research ways to help teach child and/or family better ways to use the technology. For instance, Zoom has a series of short YouTube videos explaining exactly how to use the program. Be prepared to share links.
- Encourage child and/or family to think about all of the hardware needed. What type of device will they use (desktop/laptop/tablet/phone)? Will they need headphones? Are there wi-fi dead spots where they live?

Collaborate on Virtual Meeting Behaviors: Plan Ahead

- Think about and educate the client about newly-chosen tech nuances (e.g., Zoom family meeting = all in the same room, not on different phones or screens). “This will be different and we will work together to check in and find a way to work virtually with one another.”
- Be transparent and start by discussing how the technology chosen might impact the conversation.
- Frequently check in about quality of connection, both visual and auditory.
- Discuss how virtual meetings could be more intellectually/emotionally demanding than an in-person session. This could be especially true for someone who does not have a high level of comfort with technology in the first place. Make clear that child/family can say "I'm done for today" at any time.
- Encourage the child/family to have something simple to do while meeting. Just like in an in-person meeting, consider a coloring project or a game that can be played together.
- Talk about breaks – emphasize how important they are and ask how frequent they need to be.

Ethical Considerations

- Remember that privacy and boundaries are important.
- Develop clear signal words that the child/family can use to let you know they do not have privacy.
- Keep in mind that no method of telecommunication is 100% secure, but best practice precautions can be taken.
- Use a unique meeting code for each session and include a password you share with the child/family if not telephonic.
- Lock entrance to the meeting using the features of the meeting software (waiting rooms, locking entrance, invite-only, etc...).
- Be sure to protect access to your device, during and outside of virtual contact.

Special Considerations for Working Via Telephone

Using Verbal Connection to Support Collaboration



Making Telephone Contact Work

- All cues must now be delivered verbally.
- Take your time. Focus on engagement-supporting communications.
- If you also have virtual access, do less sensitive and more routine work via phone to save virtual time for assessment and engagement. Explain the tool, teach the action level language, ask youth and caregiver(s) to think about needs and goals in each broad domain area.
- Consider providing visual supports for the upcoming phone conversation ahead of time. Share rating sheet, action level flow chart, “cheat sheet” of action levels, or emoji-style reference for folks.
- Listen carefully: Let each person (youth, caregiver(s)) answer your question. Feed back a summary of what they said in action-oriented language.
- Take frequent breaks! Check in with family – do they need a break? Check in with youth – what are they hearing you say? Ask family to tell you how young children are doing and offer frequent breaks or fun conversation.

“Based on what you are telling me, I think we can really use your sense of faith to help you make some changes happen.”

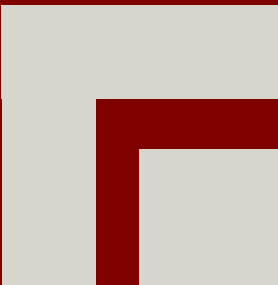
“You are telling me that finding safer housing is goal one for you.”

Reflecting youth and caregiver priorities in action-oriented language: Examples

“It sounds like school is a place where you want to focus our work.”

” You really want to focus on getting along better with your friends.”

“You want help making more friends.”



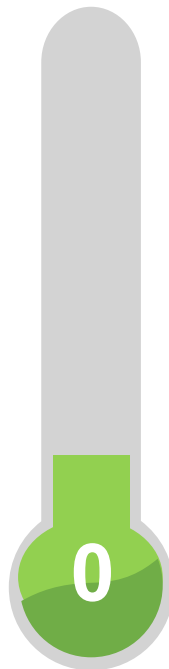
Visual Supports

Using Visual Aids for Strong Collaborative Assessment



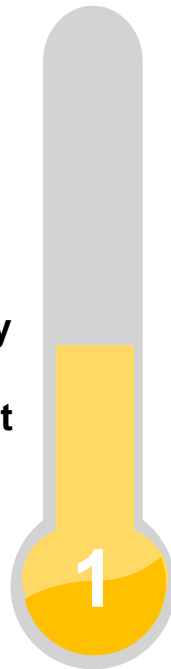
Well developed centerpiece strength. Easily accessible by individual; essential for planning.

No evidence of need. No need for action.



Useful strength. Evident and can be accessed by individual; useful for planning.

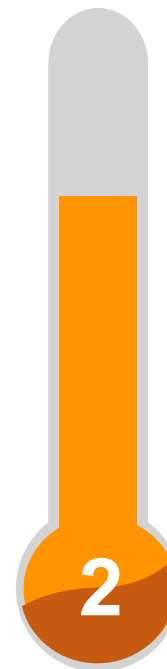
Significant history of need, or possible need that is not interfering with functioning. Watchful waiting, additional assessment.



Strength identified.

Requires building in order to be useful for individual or planning.

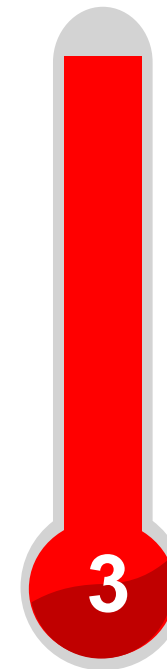
Need interferes with functioning. action/intervention required.



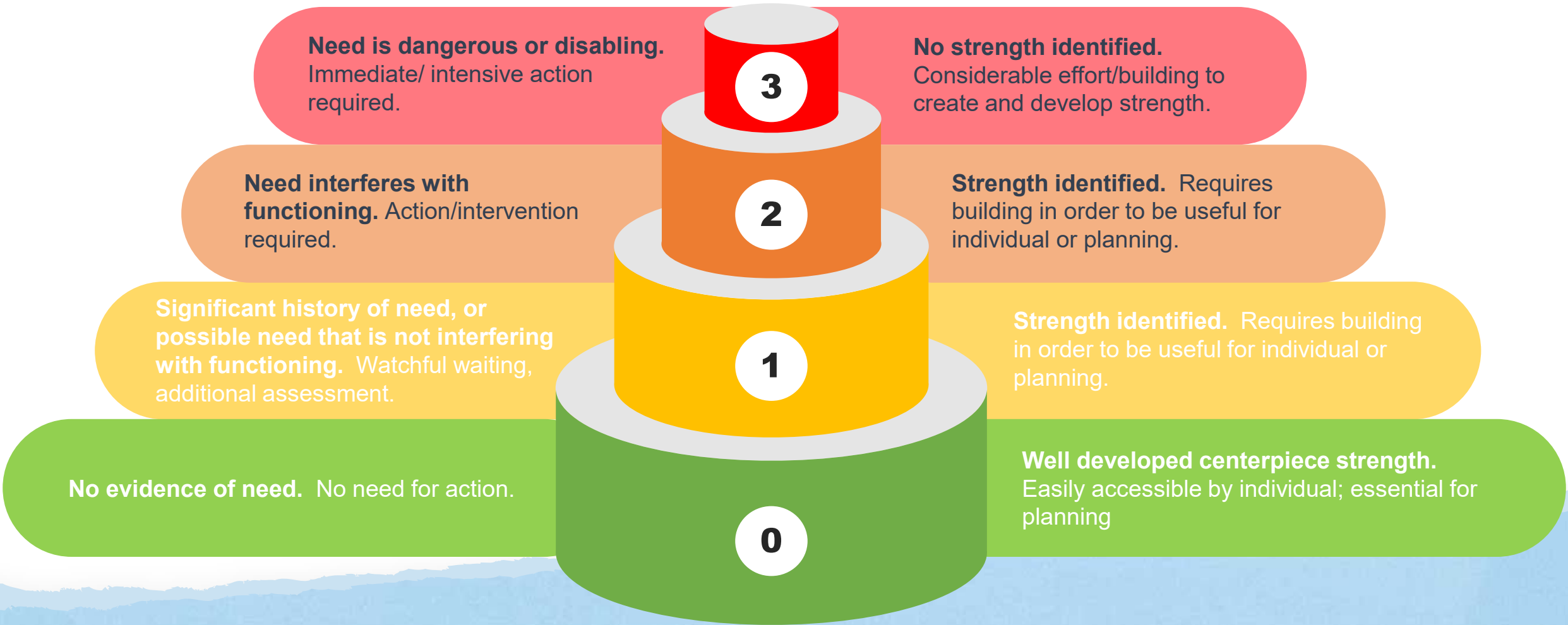
No strength identified.

Considerable effort/building to create and develop strength.

Need is dangerous or disabling. immediate/intensive action required.



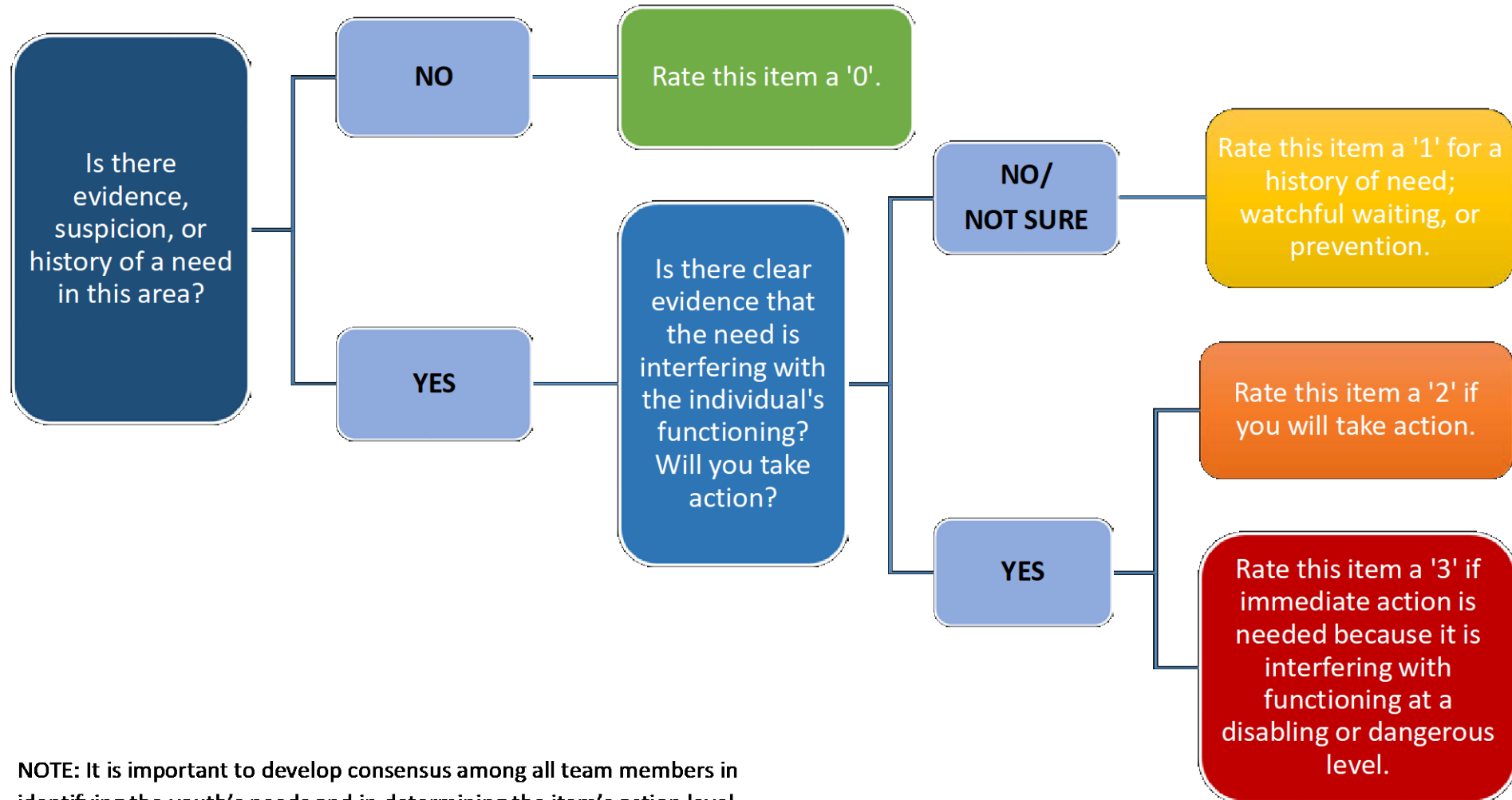
CANS Action Levels: Strengths & Needs



Action Levels

ASSESSING FOR NEEDS

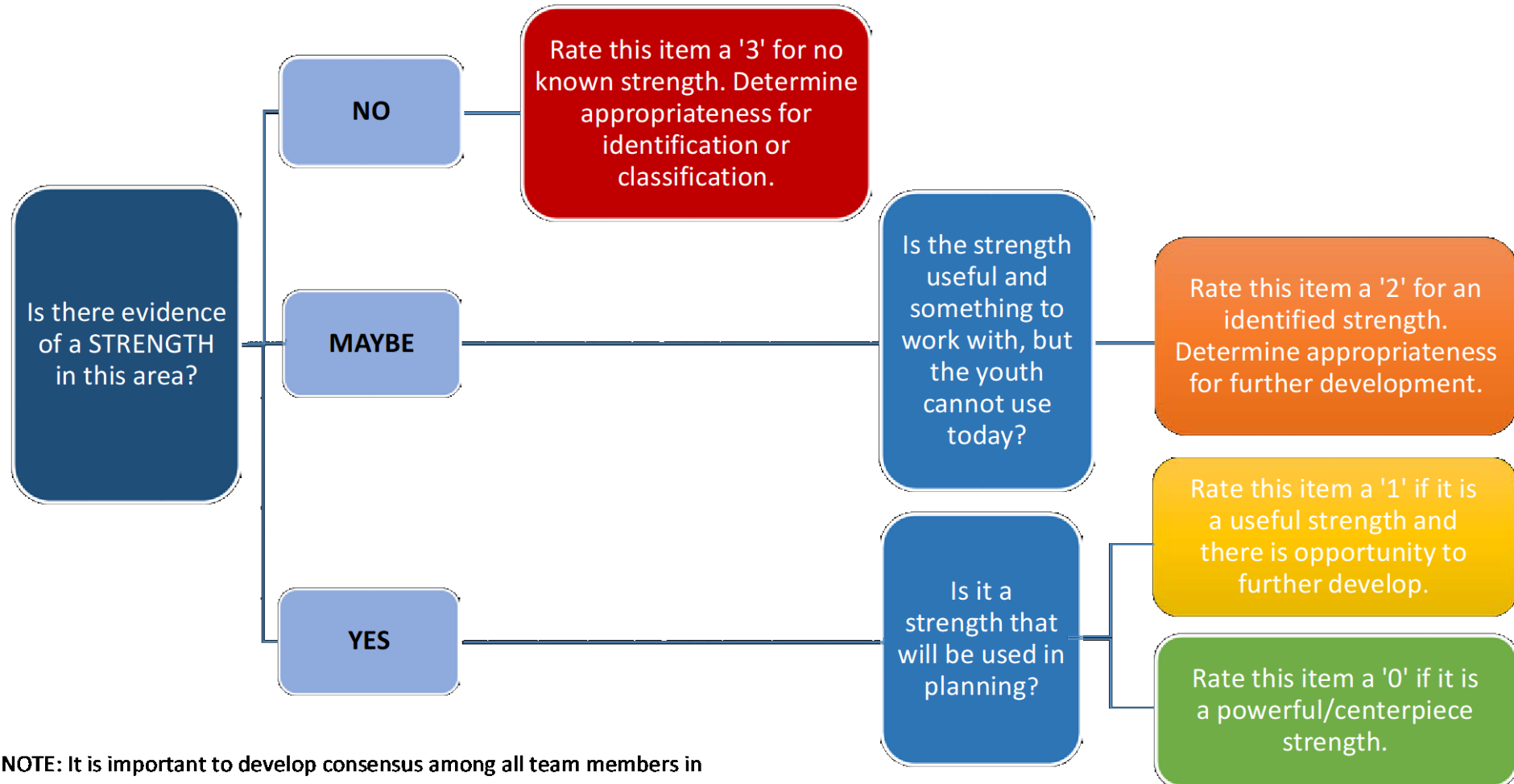
Decision of whether or not information represents a NEED



NOTE: It is important to develop consensus among all team members in identifying the youth's needs and in determining the item's action level.

ASSESSING FOR STRENGTHS

Decision of whether or not information represents a STRENGTH



NOTE: It is important to develop consensus among all team members in identifying the youth's strengths and in determining the item's action level.







Dyables

Relational Considerations

Developing and Strengthening Your Relationship with Youth & Family



Making Virtual Contact Work

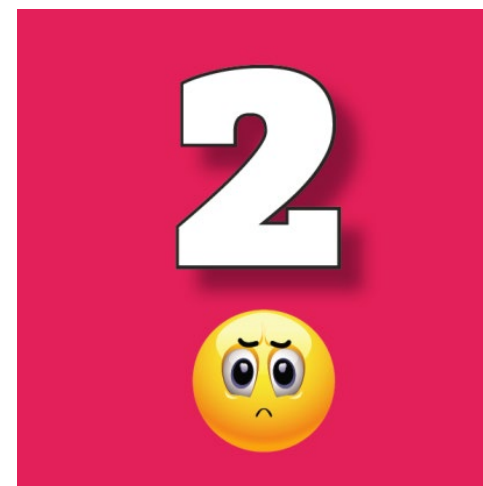
- Virtual meetings and conversations are professional.
- Visual, verbal and physical signals are important: Use strong visual signals like nodding, alert posture. Use looking at your camera to simulate eye contact. Use strong reflective language.
- Consider moving your camera to your eye level.
- Slowing down is critical with virtual meetings. Multiple short contacts are better than one long contact.
- Take breaks. Virtual meetings are mentally tiring in a way that in-person contact is not.

Transparency Builds the Foundation

- Introduce the tool; be clear about what it is for (a structure to help focus the information). Consider providing a visual of the tool, the action levels, and/or the rating form **ahead of time**. Consider poll technology when it is an option.
- For Reassessment: Remind youth and family that this process has not changed; we are talking about the same information with a different kind of contact. We are just going to review and make changes as needed.
- Educate the youth and family about what the action levels are in language that is meaningful to them (e.g., 0 = not a need, 1 = keep an eye on it, 2 = make a plan, 3 = do something ASAP).
- Remember to explain the “why” of each area of discussion. Why do you need to know about supports that might be needed by the caregiver(s)? Why are you asking about substances, or trauma? Focus on forward action as the reason.
- Consider telling the client(s), in brief, what the areas of assessment are. Ask them to tell you what they think is the most important area to talk about first.
- Check in about the fact that you will be talking about sensitive information. Let people know that they can take a break at any time. Also let them know that they can reach out to you independently at any time.

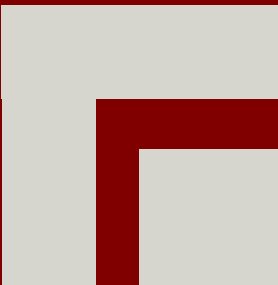
Use and Explain Action Levels

- Work with the family to identify how CANS-NY ratings translate into decision making and connection to care planning for services.
- When appropriate, use prior CANS-NY assessments to drive the initial conversation. For Re-assessments, reassure folks that this is the same process in review.
- Remember that you can develop action level shorthand with young children. You can do this verbally on the phone and with gestures or puppets online.

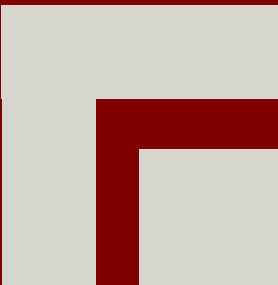


“We are going to use a tool called the CANS to help focus our work. I want to teach you the words that go with the tool now.”

“The CANS tool is a guide for helping me to finding out what you need and want to work on most. It also helps us talk about your child’s strengths and your strengths. Those are equally important to our work.”



Chat box question: What are some ways that you have found to describe the CANS-NY and the assessment to a caregiver?



Part of my job is helping to figure out some parts of life where you might want help. I use a tool to help me keep track of the help you want. On this tool you might say:

- I don't need any help. (0)
- I can usually manage this myself. (1)
- I could use some help. (2)
- I need a lot of help right now! (3)

The great thing about strengths is that you can use them to overcome the challenges in your life. I want to bring up a few parts of your life and talk about how they might help you overcome your challenges.

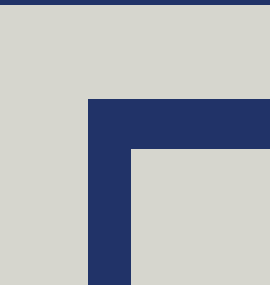
- Not Really (3)
- Sort of, but not all the time (2)
- Yeah, most of the time (1)
- Yes. All of the time! (0)



Chat in with examples of how you explain the action levels to the youth you serve.



A Sample Poll will appear on screen now...





Virtual Work with Children



Virtual Work with Children

- Preparation: Child should have something to do (puzzle, draw, puppet); have a comfortable seat; be prepared for any diversions at your house (your cat?) and be positioned to the camera in a way that feels comfortable to them.
- Creativity and Interaction: Use shared games or activities, crafts, aimed at developmental age. You cannot be too animated!
- Use Visuals (remember those emoji cards?): Consider puppets, pictures, emoji puppets.
- Prepare short, developmentally appropriate questions ahead of time. Know the expected attention span.
- Get ready for diversions. Use them yourself to keep the child occupied. Use them to conversational advantage.
- Check in frequently about video/audio quality. Check in about ambient noise.

Let's chat: What tools have helped you engage with children virtually?

Virtual Work with Tweens and Teens

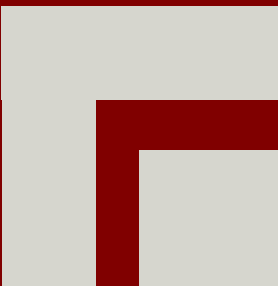
- Use a virtual environment that the youth is comfortable with. Many teens and tweens prefer to connect via their Smartphone.
 - Use high interest activities... play games together.... View videos together, etc...
 - Digital domains are very comfortable for many teens/tweens
- Connect relationally. An over-focus on symptoms or problems can make them feel awkward. Alternate conversation with sensitive questions. Ask them to tell you what their most important goals are.
- The adolescent brain is in flux. Use strategies to keep them engaged. Take frequent topic breaks.
- Acknowledge what you see/hear.
 - “That sounds like it’s frustrating for you.”
 - “You had a big smile when you said that.”

Sensitive Information

Approaching Challenging Topics During Virtual Contact



What topics are tough for you to talk about with youth and/or caregivers?



Sensitive Topics in Assessment

- Trauma
- Money
- Religion
- Substance Use
- Sexual Identity
- Gender Expression
- And more....

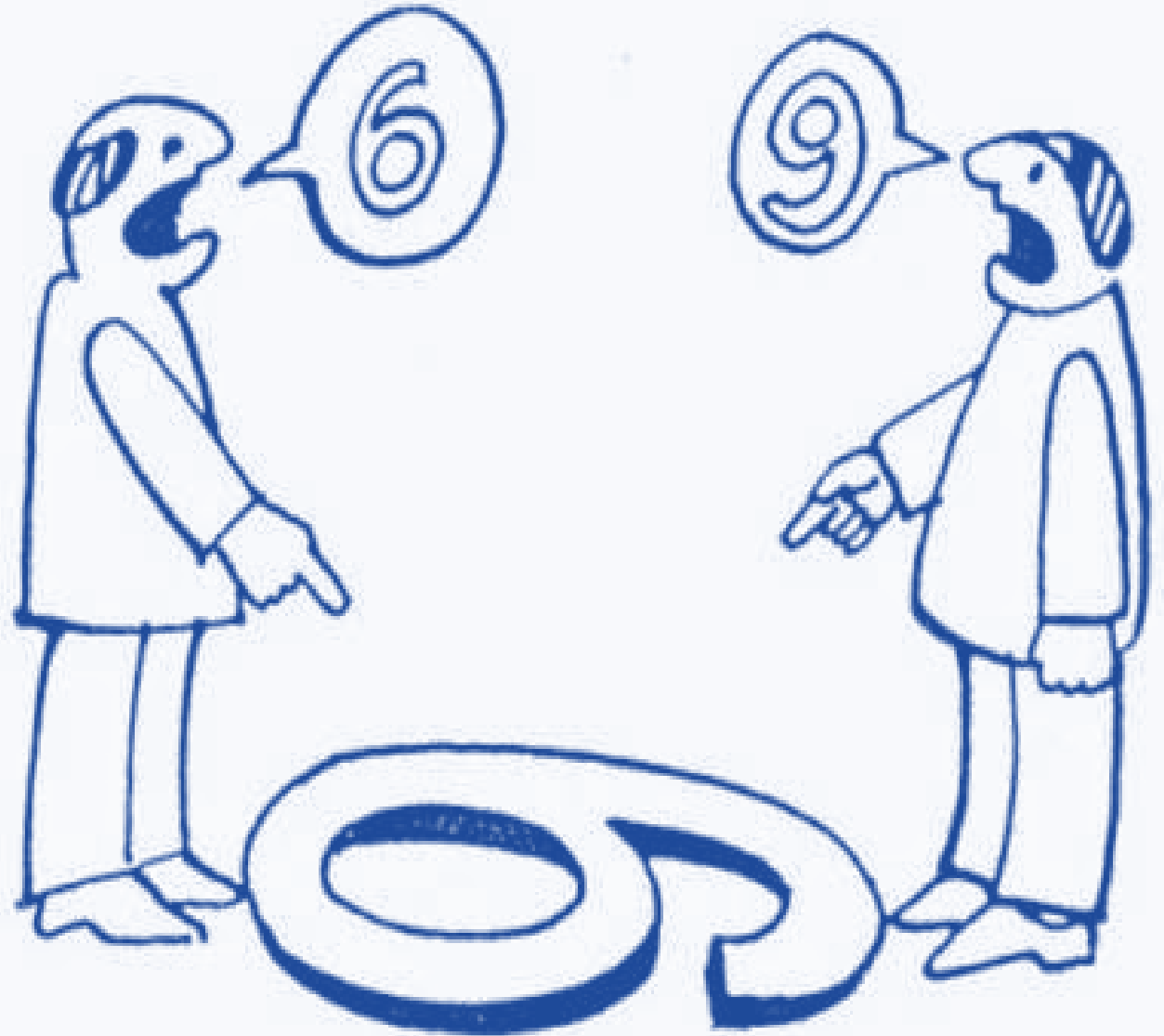


Strategies for Assessing Around Sensitive Topics

- Delay CM initiated conversation until rapport is built.
- Mention that you ask everyone. "Many of the kids I talk to tell me...." "Most parents say that..."
- Move from less personal to more personal.
- Don't shut it down with the way you ask. Use inclusive conversation. Be affirming.
- Ask kids about safety when they disclose information about sexual identity and gender expression. Normalize.
- Be mindful of all aspects of communication of safety: nonverbal, verbal, materials around the space.
- Weave questions into other questions about the child/youth.
- Tell the caregiver why you are asking about this subject.
- Acknowledge openness and courage. Validate hesitation. *Take frequent breaks.*

Handling Disagreement and Conflicting Perspectives:

- Collaborative rating of the action levels builds consensus.
- Frame the disagreement (define what each party sees/perceives).
- Description can help build consensus. “You see x and I see y.”
- Frame disagreement in terms of the client’s priorities.
- Translate disagreement into goal description.



Handling Disagreement Without Non-Verbal Cues

Example: Shawna and Her Mom

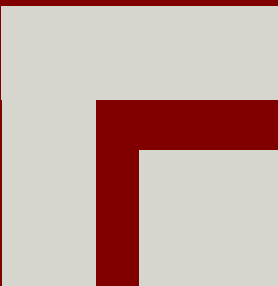


CM: “Shawna, we talked last week about missing a few days of school this year. Would you say that getting to school on time is something that you need to work on?”

Shawna: “Yeah, I guess so.”

CM: “Mom, what do you think about that?”

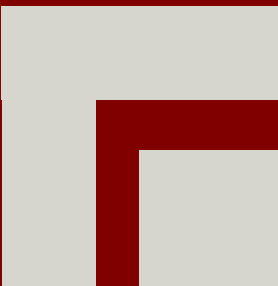
Mom: “I keep getting calls from the school about it, so yes.”



CM: “So you both agree we should make an action plan about this. Shawna, would you say we should get going pretty soon on this one, or do you think it can be something we work on over the next few months?”

Shawna: “I don’t know. I only missed 15 days this whole year. I don’t think it’s so bad.”

CM: “So that sounds like we would take action, but we don’t have to do it right away. Mom, would you agree?”



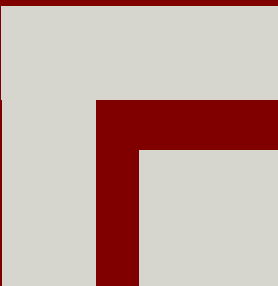
Mom: “I am worried that she is going to get expelled.”

CM: “Shawna, I hear Mom saying that the school might get stricter about this. What do you think?”

Shawna: “Yeah. I don’t think they’re expelling me. But I could get in-school suspension pretty soon.”

CM: “So you and your Mom both say that something is going to happen soon if you keep missing days. That tells me this should be a focus for action right away. Are you okay with that?”

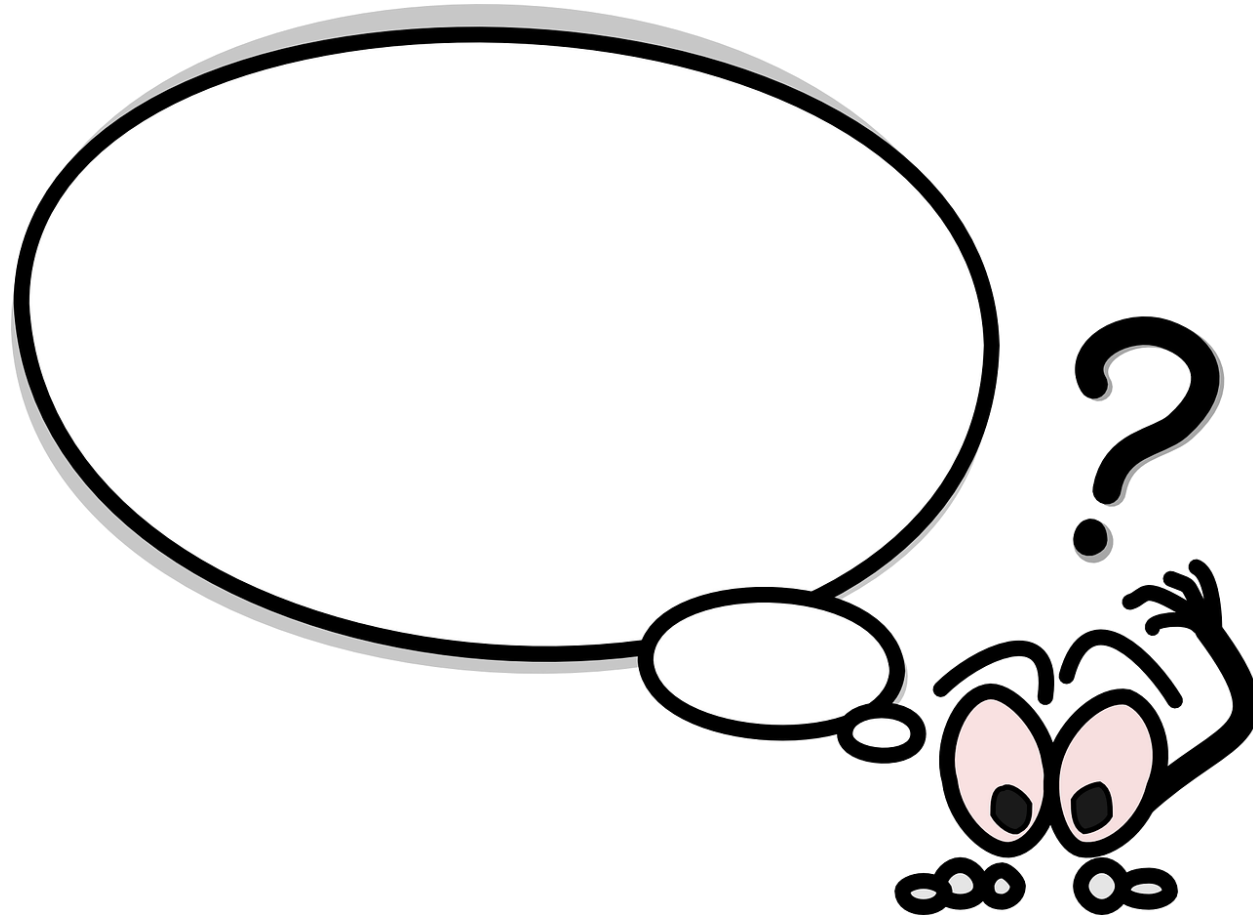
Shawna: “Okay.”



Community & Communication

- Remember that the CANS-NY is a communimetric tool.
- Continue to reach out and communicate with those who know the child/family best:
 - Extended family
 - Teachers
 - Therapists
 - Pediatricians and other medical professionals
- Even during current isolation conditions many helping professionals can provide key insights into the needs and strengths of a young person.

Questions? Let's chat about them now....



Don't Forget: Your Self-Care is Critical

Resources



A Few Resources for You (You Can Share with Clients Too)

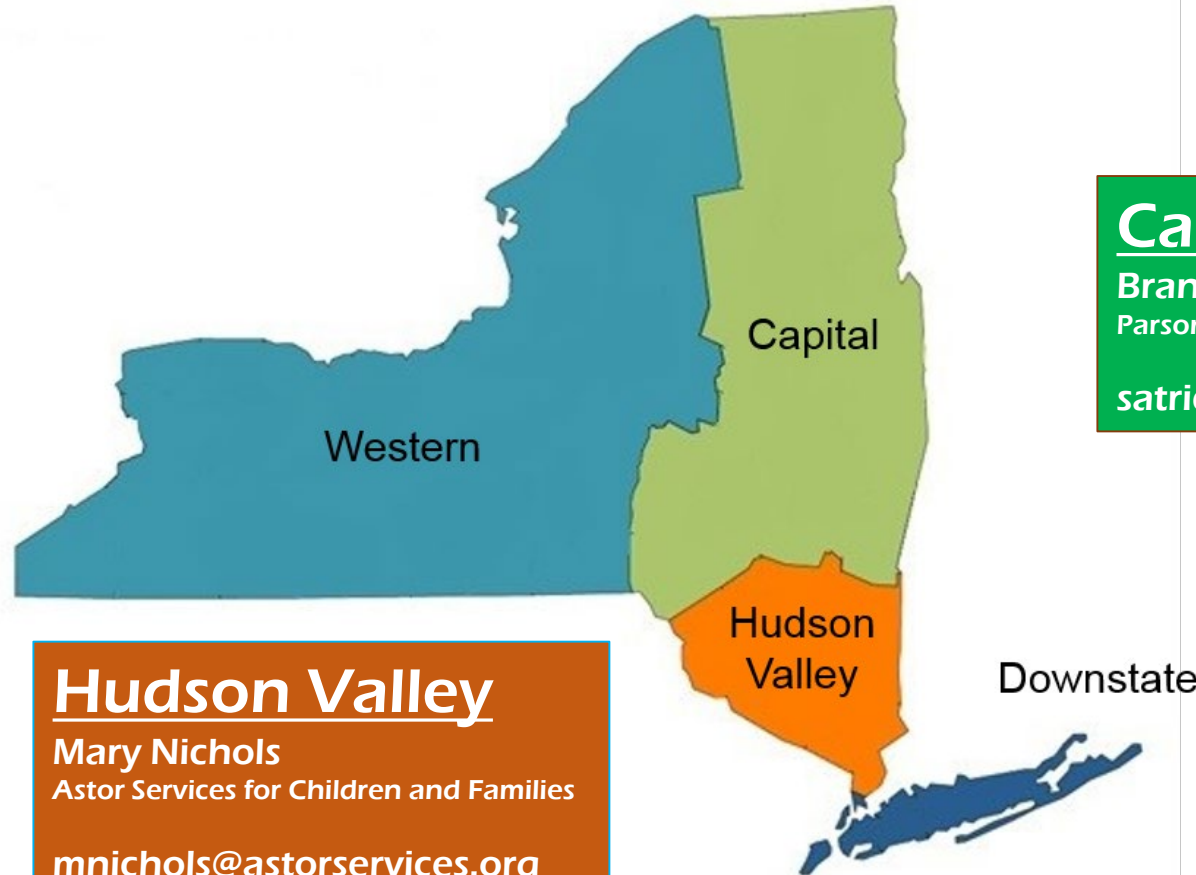
1. You Tube, *“Three Hours of Nature Scenery and Music”*
<https://youtu.be/BHACKCNDMW8>
2. You Tube, *“The World’s Most Relaxing Film”* <https://youtu.be/r3fE6FQT82s>
3. Headspace is now free for New Yorkers; <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>
4. NatureRelax is a for-a-fee service that streams through your television constantly: <https://4krelax.com/>
5. Insight Timer offers free and for-fee services and a wealth of different types, lengths, and styles of guided meditations, music, and courses:
<https://insighttimer.com/>



CANS-NY Institute

A **TCOM** Learning Collaborative

cansnyinstitute.org



Western Region

Bari Wexler
Hillside Family of Agencies

cansny@hillside.com

Capital Region

Brandon Howlett
Parson's Child & Family Center

satricanstraining@northernrivers.org

Hudson Valley

Mary Nichols
Astor Services for Children and Families

mnichols@astorservices.org

Downstate Region

Cynthia Schelmety
Collaborative for Children & Families

cschelmety@ccfhh.org

Thank You!

Suzanne Button, Ph.D.
Director, CANS-NY Institute
sbutton@chapinhall.org

For additional resources:
cansnyinstitute.org

Joshua Nellist
Policy Analyst, CANS-NY Institute
Josh.Nellist@uky.edu