

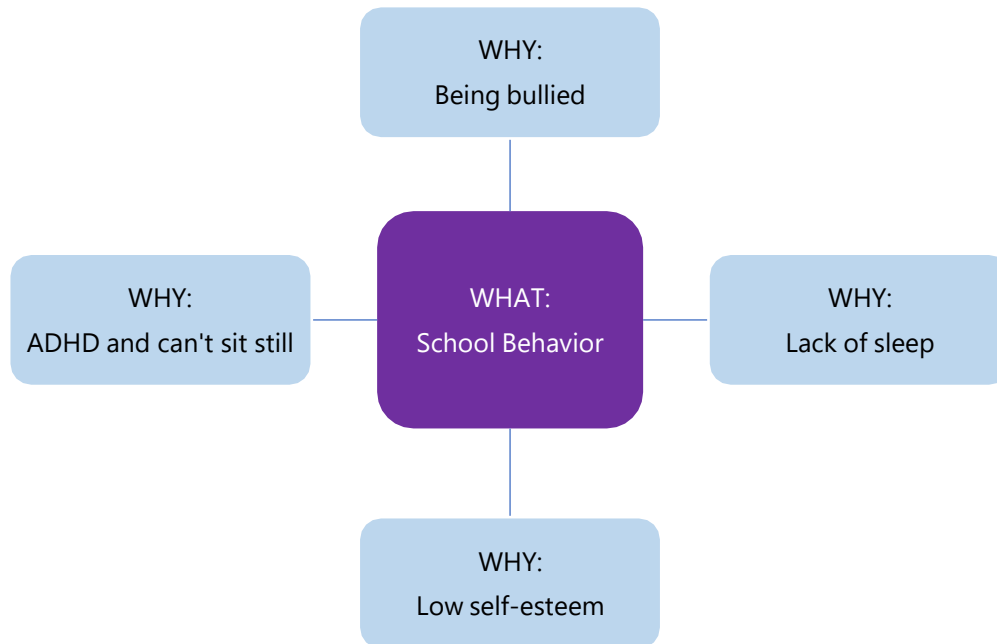
# Key Principle: Rate the “What”, Not the “Why”

## CANS-NY User Tip Sheet

The CANS-NY is a tool to organize the story we learn about each youth and family we serve. When we see evidence of a need or strength, we assign an action rating. Focusing on the “**what**” provides an opportunity to build consensus with youth and families, without bringing shame or blame into the process. While important, the underlying reasons for needs and strengths do not factor into the CANS-NY rating. We avoid making assumptions about needs being present because of other needs, and we do not explain away needs because we know the reasons for them. Later on, when we are building a Plan of Care, the “**why**” becomes important. During the assessment, we focus on the “**what**.”

The “**WHAT**” is descriptive and actionable.

The “**WHY**” is addressed in the Plan of Care, which connects youth and family to appropriate services.



The CANS-NY helps us communicate about and identify needed action around the needs and strengths of youth and families who are receiving care management. We ask: What needs have been identified? What are the strengths of the youth and family? What action is needed to address needs and build upon or build strengths? Focusing on the “**what**” helps us identify the presence of needs that we see evidence for. It keeps our assumptions from obscuring what we see.

Examples of How to Identify the “What”
<p><b>What you see –</b> Have you witnessed a youth having difficulties interacting with peers? Is action called for? You may have an actionable need for Peer Interactions.</p>
<p><b>What you hear –</b> Has a father told you his son frequently harms his siblings, but never purposefully? There may be an actionable need for Danger to Others.</p>
<p><b>What you read –</b> You read about a history of runaway behavior in a youth’s referral information. The youth has not runaway for some time. While this need is not actionable, a rating of “1” is called for, as there is a history of runaway behavior.</p>

Examples of Times to Think About the “Why”
<p><b>The Plan of Care –</b> Identifying the reasons for needs and strengths will be critical in building targeted goals objectives for Care Management. The “<b>why</b>” is important for collaborative goal-setting.</p>
<p><b>Connecting to Services –</b> Care Managers have a responsibility to support families in selecting and connecting to services that can properly address identified needs, build upon identified strengths, and build new strengths. Understanding the <b>WHAT</b> and the <b>WHY</b> are important elements of this process.</p>

De veloped in collaboration with:

## Select Notes and Examples

(See below for examples of focusing on the “why” for just a few of the items on the CANS-NY.  
Remember, this principle applies to **all** of the items.)

Item (Domain)	Scenario	Rating & Rationale
Juvenile Justice/Legal (Child Needs and Functioning)	Karissa, 16, was arrested 2 weeks ago after driving her mother home from a local store where she worked. Unbeknownst to Karissa, her mother had shoplifted several items and Karissa was implicated as an accomplice. Karissa’s lawyer reports that the prosecutor does not intend to pursue charges but they have not yet been dismissed.	<b>Rating:</b> Actionable (2/3) <b>Rationale:</b> While it appears that Karissa may be cleared of her charges, the “what” currently remains: She has pending charges which could pose a risk of out-of-home placement.
Talents/Interests (Child Strengths) and Impairment in Functioning (Medical Health Module)	12-year-old Anderson plays basketball for his local YMCA team; sports are a centerpiece of his life. He will be undergoing a month-long treatment for a childhood cancer which will keep him from playing basketball during that time. His team intends to welcome him back when he’s ready.	<b>Rating:</b> Actionable (2) <b>Rationale:</b> While Talents/Interests would typically be rated as very useful strength in Anderson’s life, we would currently assign a strengths rating of 2. Anderson’s current medical needs will limit his ability to draw from this strength. Similarly, Impairment in Functioning would be rated for action since his medical needs will interfere with at least one life domain.
Agitation (Child Development)	Carter is a single parent to his 4-year-old son Zack, whom he describes as “constantly on the move, irritable, and impossible to manage.” Zack’s pre-K teacher reports that, on an almost-daily basis, Zack becomes unruly and unable to settle during rest time. If she does not intervene, Zack moves from cot to cot poking, touching, and bothering the other children. He is not easily calmed but will sit with the teacher if she maintains one-on-one support. She is unsure if Zack’s level of activity can be managed in a regular pre-K setting.	<b>Rating:</b> Actionable (3) <b>Rationale:</b> At home and at school, Zack exhibits more restlessness and agitation than is typical of a four year old. His caregiver and his teacher are expressing concern about managing his level of agitation. Agitation is interfering with Zack’s functioning in two life domains.

**Exception:** Some items on the CANS-NY consider the why because they ask us to consider history.

**Caregiver Adjustment to Trauma item & Trauma Symptoms Module:** Items related to trauma in the CANS-NY ask us to think about cause and effect. We rate these items as actionable when we know that the trauma experience has led to adjustment problems. There is not a way to describe trauma without a cause and effect relationship. The cause describes “why it happened” and the effect describes “what happens.”