

DHCS-APPROVED YOUTH TRAUMA SCREENING TOOLS FOR SPECIALTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (SMHS) DELIVERY SYSTEM ACCESS CRITERIA

DHCS approved the use of the following youth trauma screening tool(s) to establish that a member under the age of 21 meets access criteria to the SMHS delivery system.

There are various pathways for members to meet access criteria for the SMHS delivery system. If a provider determines that a youth trauma screening tool is necessary to identify whether a member under 21 years of age meets access criteria to the SMHS delivery system, as of April 1, 2026 only the DHCS-approved tools listed in Enclosure 1 may be used.

If trauma is identified or screened for during a clinical assessment of a Medi-Cal member under the age of 21, clinical judgment may be used to determine the need for further assessment and/or to determine whether the member meets access criteria for the SMHS delivery system.

Standard tool-specific scoring methodology shall be used to establish whether a member scores in the “high-risk range” on a youth trauma screening tool approved by the department. In cases where this is no “high-risk” scoring range, BHPs must establish a process for determining whether a member meets access criteria for SMHS.

Note: Not all DHCS-approved youth trauma screening tools listed below are eligible for Medi-Cal reimbursement. Please see [APL 23-017](#), or superseding guidance, and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) section of the Provider Manual¹ to identify youth trauma screening tools eligible for reimbursement in the Medi-Cal managed care and fee-for-service delivery systems under the ACEs screening services benefit.

¹ The Provider Manual for Medi-Cal managed care and fee-for-service delivery systems is searchable at the following link: <https://mcweb.apps.prd.cammis.medi-cal.ca.gov/publications/manual>

DHCS-approved youth trauma screening tools

1. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaireⁱ
2. Standard Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Trauma Module (also referred to as the National Child Traumatic Stress Network CANS – Trauma Comprehensive)ⁱⁱ
3. California Integrated Practice – Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CA IP-CANS)ⁱⁱⁱ
4. Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen (CATS)^{iv}
5. Child PTSD Symptom Scale – 6-item Screening Version (CPSS-5-Screen)^v
6. Child Trauma Screening (CTS)^{vi}
7. Life Events Checklist for DSM-V Standard Version (LEC-5)^{vii}
8. Pediatric ACEs and Related Life-Events Screener (PEARLS), including Parent-Caregiver report and self-report versions.^{viii}
9. UCLA Child/Adolescent PTSD Reaction Index for DSM-5 Brief Form (UCLA PTSD RI-5 BF)^{ix}

Note: Endnotes reference examples of youth trauma screening tools listed above. In cases where the youth trauma screening tool(s) are not available online, DHCS included links to literature references.

ⁱ The ACEs Questionnaire is available at: <https://www.acesaware.org/learn-about-screening/screening-tools/screening-tools-additional-languages/>

ⁱⁱ The CANS Trauma Module is available at: https://praedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/REFERENCE-GUIDE_Standard-Comprehensive-CANS-3.0_CWBH_Final_Hyperlink_2021.01.13.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ The CA IP-CANS rating sheet is available at: https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/ISU/CANS/CA_CANS_IP%20Rating%20Sheet_1.0_CW_ENGLIS

[H.pdf](#); the CA-IP CANS Guide is available at: <https://cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/ISU/CANS/ca-ipcans-guide-hyperlinked.pdf>

^{iv} The CATS is available at: <https://depts.washington.edu/uwhatc/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Child-and-Adolescent-Trauma-Screen-CATS-Youth-Self-Report-7-17-years.pdf>

^v The CPSS-5-Screen is described at:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15374416.2017.1350962>

^{vi} The CTS is available at: <https://www.chdi.org/our-work/trauma-informed-initiatives/ct-trauma-screen-cts/>

^{vii} The LEC-5 is available at:
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/documents/LEC5_Standard_Self-report.PDF

^{viii} The PEARLS is available at: <https://www.acesaware.org/learn-about-screening/screening-tools/>

^{ix} The UCLA PTSD RI-5 BF is described at:
<https://escholarship.org/content/qt0xf2998r/qt0xf2998r.pdf?t=rrnq7v>