



Adult Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the ANSA?

The Adult Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA) is a functional assessment tool developed to support decision-making, including treatment planning, facilitating quality improvement initiatives, and monitoring the outcomes of services. The tool collects information in a consistent manner and improves communication between those providing services and clients receiving services. The ANSA reviews the strengths and needs of an individual considering past behavior but focuses on the current needs to help the client. The ANSA has different sections, which have various items about the client.

Why the ANSA?

Decision-Making: The ANSA provides the adult client and their caregivers and providers with information on what are the adult's needs and strengths to help inform the treatment planning process as related to the Partnership Plan for Wellness. Since the tool is used over time, it is useful in informing decisions on transition needs to higher or lower level of care. The ANSA helps to create a shared vision or common goal as it provides data on how or why a decision was made.

Collaboration: The ANSA is a communication tool that aids collaboration, such as in collaborative treatment planning, across all systems the adult is involved by integrating data into one place, creating a common language.

Outcomes: The ANSA can help the provider and adult client measure improvement towards goals and see how needs and strengths change. Data can be used to assess service strengths and gaps at the individual, program, and system levels.

How was the ANSA developed?

The ANSA was developed from a communication perspective to facilitate the linkage between the assessment process and the design of individualized treatment plans. The six key principles guiding the ANSA are:

- Items impact service planning.
 - The levels of each item translate immediately in action levels.
 - It is about the adult not about the service.
 - Always consider cultural and developmental contexts before establishing action levels.
 - It is about the 'what' not about the 'why'.
 - There is a 30-day window for ratings unless otherwise specified but this is just to keep the ratings 'fresh' and relevant to the adult's present circumstances.
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How is the ANSA completed?

The ANSA is NOT a self-report questionnaire filled out by the adult client. The ANSA is typically completed interview style with a provider who is certified and trained to use the tool.¹ Providers are encouraged to introduce the ANSA early in the assessment process and complete the ANSA together or discuss results during collaborative treatment planning with the adult. For direction in completing the ANSA, refer to the **ANSA Manual** that includes details for each ANSA item.

¹ Training is available from Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services.

Each item is rated on a 4-point scale: 0, 1, 2, and 3. Refer below.





The action levels for ratings for **need** items are:

- 0 – indicates no need for action.
- 1 – indicates a need for watchful waiting to see whether action is needed (i.e., flag it for later review to see if any circumstances change) or prevention planning.
- 2 – indicates a need for action (i.e., the need is sufficiently problematic, that it is interfering in the adult’s life in a notable way).
- 3 – indicates the need for either immediate or intensive action, dangerous or disabling levels of needs are rated with this level.

The action levels for ratings of **strengths** are:

- 0 – indicates a centerpiece strength. The focus of a strength-based plan.
- 1 – indicates a useful strength. It can be included in a strength-based plan.
- 2 – indicates an identified strength. It could be developed with significant strength building efforts to become useful.
- 3 – indicates no strength has been identified.

What do the ratings mean?

Needs				Strengths			
	Rating	Level of Need	Action Level		Rating	Level of Strength	Action Level
	0	No evidence of need	No action needed		0	Centerpiece strength	Central to planning
	1	Suspicion or history of need	Keep an eye on it or collect more information		1	Strength present	Useful in planning
	2	Need interferes with functioning	Take action/intervention needed		2	Identified strength	Needs building or development
	3	Intensive need, dangerous or disabling	Immediate and/or intensive action		3	No strength identified	Strength creation or identification may be indicated

What ANSA do I use?

Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services (CCBHS) has their own versions of the ANSA. The ANSA Brief is completed for clients that are in crisis residential or are receiving medication only services. The ANSA Full is completed for all other clients.

Who completes the ANSA?

Anyone who completes an ANSA must be certified through the Praed Foundation by passing the online certification test.

When is the ANSA completed?

Starting December 1, 2020, the ANSA is completed at the beginning of treatment, at the end of treatment (i.e., discharge), and every six-months following the first administration for full ANSA or annually for the ANSA Brief. The ANSA is completed for adults ages 21 and older receiving mental health services. The ANSA is required as part of the initial and annual assessments. (Note that the CANS is completed for adults ages 18-20.)

What track do I use at 6-months?

Follow the UR track; add an additional requirement at the half-way (6-month) point of the track. For example, for a UR track that is January through December, providers can count June as the mid cycle, or "6 month" mark. Remember that an ANSA should not be completed earlier than 4 months or later than 8 months from the date the last ANSA was completed. Additionally, there is a 4-month window for when the 6-month reassessment needs to be done (anytime between 4- and 8-months).

How do I bill for the ANSA?

You can bill under assessment, review plan, or evaluation. Evaluation (procedure code 313) is used to assess functioning in the community, and licensure is not required for billing.

What about medical necessity?

In order to receive services in the system of care, the client must meet medical and service necessity criteria. The three parts of medical necessity are:

- 1) an included DSM5/ICD10 code (and corresponding narrative)
- 2) an impairment in an important area of life functioning
- 3) a plan devised to deal with minimizing the impact of the impairment

In order to received services at this level of care the client must have an impairment in an important area of life functioning that was deemed "moderate" or "severe". The ANSA Life Functioning Doman should indicate that there is a significant enough problem to require care planning or to take immediate action. So if there is no significant impairment in any area of life functioning, then they are not appropriate for services.

Who uses ANSA data?

ANSA data are used by two separate Contra Costa Behavioral Health departments: 1) CCBHS Utilization Review (UR) Unit for authorization and 2) CCBHS Quality Improvement/Assurance Unit (QI/QA) for mandated data reporting and analysis.

Where do I save ANSA data?

Objective Arts (OA) is a software company that provides cloud-based software applications to empower state, county, and local healthcare providers. Contract providers have two data entry options: 1) Direct data entry or 2) Batch data upload (*most appropriate for those with an electronic health record [EHR]).

Where can I find more information?

For more information, visit the following webpages:

- Clinical Documentation – <https://cchealth.org/mentalhealth/clinical-documentation/>
 - Outcome Measures – <https://cchealth.org/mentalhealth/outcome-measures.php>
 - Quality Improvement & Quality Assurance – <https://cchealth.org/bhs/qiqa/>
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