

March 11, 2026

DHCS Approved Youth Trauma Screening Tools

Effective April 1, 2026, when a Mental Health Provider determines that a youth trauma screening is necessary for Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) eligibility, only the DHCS-approved youth trauma screening tools listed below may be used.

Guidelines for Use:

- Standard tool-specific scoring methodology must be used to establish whether a Member scores in the "high-risk range".
- If youth trauma is identified or screened during a clinical assessment of a Member under 21 years of age, clinical judgment may guide the need for further assessment and/or determination of SMHS access criteria.

DHCS Approved Youth Trauma Screening Tools:

1. ACEs Questionnaire
2. Standard Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Trauma Module (also referred to as the National Child Traumatic Stress Network CANS – Trauma Comprehensive)
3. California Integrated Practice-Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (IP-CANS) Tool
4. Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen (CATS)
5. Child Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Symptom Scale – 6-item Screening Version (CPSS-5-S)
6. Child Trauma Screening (CTS)
7. Life Events Checklist for DSM-V Standard Version (LEC-5)
8. Pediatric ACEs and Related Life-Events Screener (PEARLS) (includes Parent-Caregiver and self-report versions)
9. UCLA Child/Adolescent PTSD Reaction Index for DSM-5 Brief Form (UCLA PTSD RI-5 BF)

Important: Only ACEs Questionnaire and PEARLS are approved reimbursable tools under Medi-Cal (ACES Screening Benefit).



Reference

Please see **Attachment A: Department of Health Care Services-Approved Youth Trauma Screening Tools for SMHS Access Criteria:**

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/MMCDAPLsandPolicyLetters/APL%202026/APL26-002AttachmentA.pdf>

Provider Bulletins are available on the Kern Health Systems (KHS) website. Please visit regularly to stay informed of the latest updates and announcements.

For questions or additional assistance, contact your Provider Relations Representative at 1-800-391-2000, silent prompt option #5.

Sincerely,

Melinda Santiago
Director, Behavioral Health
Kern Health Systems