

# Payment Reform Update

Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and  
Independent Living

Developmental Disabilities Services Division

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# Independent Assessment of Need

Vermont is using the Supports Intensity Scale- Adult assessment (SIS-A)

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires that we use an independently administered assessment tool to address conflict of interest in case management (the people who assess need can't also deliver the services).
- DDS chose a standardized tool because it offers an independent assessment of a person's support needs in a reliable, validated format, which will help reduce conflict of interest in services and provide an equitable approach to matching people to the services that fit their individual needs.
- Everyone who receives Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) will need to have a SIS A assessment when we come into compliance with conflict-of-interest rules.
  - We now know that the timeframe CMS will give us to make these changes is 3 years.

# Sample Update

- The SIS A sample group consisted of 500 people receiving HCBS through Developmental Services (DS) and were selected because they represented all regions of the state, agencies who provide services, types of services received, and housing/living situations.
- The sample started in July of 2021 and ended in September 2022, we allowed extra time when agencies or individuals and families request it.
- These assessment results will be used to help determine a possible payment method. We need to finish analyzing the sample assessments and then work with our contractors to create the budget framework before we can present it to stakeholders and ask for input.
- Our contractor at HSRI is currently analyzing the 500 sample assessments.

# Next Steps for SIS-A Assessments

- As the sample was ending, we asked for feedback about starting the 3-year cycle of regular SIS-A assessments. We asked the DS Directors, the DS Payment Reform State Leadership Team, the DS Standardized Assessment Team, DS Payment Reform Advisory Committee, the DS SPSC, and the DAB (on 7/14/22) if we should move forward with starting regular assessments so we could be in alignment with the new conflict-of-interest rules going into effect for Vermont in 2025.
  - Most people who provided feedback agreed that it would be better for individuals/families and providers to start the 3-year cycle now and avoid trying to get everyone assessed in a short amount of time.
- Everyone receiving HCBS will complete a SIS A assessment once every three years, or more often if needed due to a change in their life that results in needing new or different services.
- Requirements under CMS:
  - Everyone must have an independently administered assessment to receive Home and Community Based Services once we make changes to our system to address conflict-of-interest in case management.
  - We have three years to come into compliance with the conflict-of-interest rules.

# Payment Model Update

- There will be three important phases in the payment model design:
  1. Identify the different levels of unique support that people need. States typically identify between 5-7 unique support levels. This comes from the analysis of the 500 assessments, currently underway.
  2. Double check that the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the SIS-A, coming in early 2023, is similar enough to the first edition to use the levels of support identified in the first sample. We will sample a small portion of the folks who take the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition to compare.
  3. Draft a payment model that connects SIS-A results with a level of support need, which then informs a budget amount needed to provide the supports.
- A future payment model will include:
  - a way to request a new SIS-A if needed
  - a way to ask for an exception if the funding is not enough
  - a way to identify people who will need budgets and services that are based on a high level of need
  - an appeal process if the exceptions process did not meet the person's needs (grievance and appeal rights are always in place for Medicaid services and can be accessed at any time).
- Our contractor at HSRI is currently processing the 500 sample assessments. We are actively working on identifying the levels of support needed in Vermont.

# Feedback We've Incorporated

- DAIL/DS has updated our written communications, available on our website
- DAIL/DS is hosting engagement sessions each quarter to make sure everyone understands the SIS A, the work that still needs to be done, and possible future impacts on services and budgets.
- The Standardized Assessment Team, which advises DAIL/DS, helped pick the SIS-A, form supplemental questions, and is currently working on ways to add more context to the assessment process. This group will become the basis of a Payment Modeling Workgroup and will help advise on the payment modeling work so we can present drafts and ideas to everyone for input.
  - This group is, and will continue to be, made up of Self-Advocates, families/guardians, DS Providers (reps from DAs, SSAs, and TII), a DD Council member, State/DS Staff, and VT Care Partners.

# Resources

## DDSD Payment Reform Information:

- [Payment Reform Information on DDSD website](#)

## SIS-A Information:

- [General SIS A Information on the DDSD website](#)
- [Plain Language Document about the SIS A](#)
- [Videos about the SIS A](#)
- [SIS A information from AAIDD, the creators of the tool](#)

# Questions? Suggestions?

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