

Supports Intensity Scale – Adults 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)

- 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).
- DDSD 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 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 current group completing SIS A assessments consists of 500 people receiving Developmental Services who 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 should finish up in late July or early August 2022, we're allowing 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 the sample assessments and then work with our contractors to create the framework before we can present it to stakeholders and ask for input.
- DAIL/DS would also like to propose a payment model that does not tie a SIS A score to a budget, so assessment results would be used for person-centered service planning.
- It will take several months for our contractors to complete this work after the sample assessments have been completed.

Next Steps for SIS-A Assessments

- Since the sample is going to finish up this summer, we need to start planning for when we start regular assessments for everyone receiving Home and Community Based Services.
- Everyone receiving Home and Community Based Services 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.
- Because we have three years to address conflict of interest, we are proposing that we start the three-year cycle of getting everyone in Home and Community Based Services a SIS A assessment so we are inline with the timeframe for any changes we will see under conflict of interest.

Concerns We've Heard So Far...

- DAIL/DS will need time to draft possible payment model frameworks, get input, and choose a payment model which could take a year or longer. This would mean that people would need to take assessments before we know how their results will be used, which is very stressful and concerning for everyone.
 - Keep in mind we will have an exceptions process if we choose a payment model that is tied to a SIS A score, so there would be a way to request more funding if it doesn't meet the person's need.
 - We will offer a possible payment model that does not tie a SIS A score to a budget
 - People will always have appeal rights anytime they are receiving a Medicaid funded service, these rights are in addition to an exceptions process.
 - If we wait until all the payment modeling decisions have been made, we'd need to try to get around 3,400 people assessed in one or two years, and everyone so far has agreed that that would be too stressful for everyone involved. It's taken over a year to get the sample of 500 completed, so trying to get everyone in DS services assessed in 1-2 years would be very stressful.
- Some providers suggested mid-September as a target to start the assessments because they are still finishing their sample and need breathing room.
 - Other providers finished their sample months ago and may be able to start scheduling earlier than that.
- DAIL/DS would need to focus on updating written communication, hosting townhalls and/or engagement session to make sure everyone understands the SIS A, the work that still needs to be done, and possible future impacts on services and budgets.
- Want to make sure a context assessment is incorporated. One is currently being drafted by a group of folks who are not state employees, but it is not yet ready to be presented to DAIL/DS.

Suggestions We've Heard So Far...

- We've spoken with DS providers who shared that they would like DAIL/DS to continue to generate a list of names for people to take the SIS-A but have the option to swap out anyone who needs more time or is not in a good situation to complete an assessment at that time. This way the process is person centered and driven by the individual/family's availability and preference.
- This would also allow the agency to decide if the timing is right for their staff to help support the assessment, they could make sure the staff are available and have been working with the person long enough to get to know them and understand their support needs.
- Public Consulting Group (PCG) conducts the assessments and can keep agencies informed about who has taken the assessment to help them keep track. They will also be able to keep track of when someone is due to take a new SIS A every three years and send agencies reminders when it's time to schedule, taking the administrative burden off the agencies. Providers have all agreed so far that this would be very helpful.
- We've talked with the DS Providers over two meetings about this and the DS Standardized Assessment Work group so far. We'd like input from you all, the DAB, and we'll be talking with the DS Payment Reform Advisory Committee, the State Program Standing Committee for Developmental Services and scheduling ongoing engagement sessions for individuals and families to continue to get input. We held 5 engagement sessions for individuals and families in June and will continue to offer these through an ongoing series.

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?

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