



## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is a Core Standardized Assessment?***

A core standardized assessment is a tool for gathering information from the individuals in the same service population by asking a standard set of questions about basic functional skills and abilities. A service population is, for example, the population of people with Intellectual Disabilities, or the population of people with Brain Injury.

Once the information has been gathered, it can be used to:

- Determine each person's eligibility for long term supports and services
- Identify the individual support and service needs of each person
- Assist in developing the person's individual service plan
- Guide the allocation of resources in a way that is equitable and consistent with the identified needs of the individual

A variety of different assessment tools, or sets of interview questions, have been developed and used to gather this type of individual information. Core standardized assessment tools are designed to be welcoming and easy to use, identify the strengths and support needs of the individual, and take into account the opinions of the individual, as well as the needs of the person's family or caregivers.

### ***What is meant by resource allocation?***

Resource allocation means identifying methods for assessing the support needs of individuals and allocating resources as efficiently and equitably as possible based on those needs. This generally includes using a standardized assessment process for allocating funding as well as developing reasonable service reimbursement rates.

### ***What is the Supports Intensity Scale?***

The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) is a core standardized assessment tool used to evaluate the support needs of a person with an Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability through a positive interview process. The SIS has been identified as the core standardized assessment that will be used for persons with intellectual disabilities in Iowa. Since 2004, at least thirty three (33) other states have used the SIS tool and eight (8) have used SIS in combination with resource allocation to reform service delivery. Different assessment tools are needed for different populations of people with disability. The specific core standardized assessment tools to be used with other populations have not yet been determined.

# Core Standardized Assessments: Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)



## ***Why is this change being made now?***

The Mental Health and Disability Redesign Workgroup recommended implementing standard assessment instruments, specifically recommending use of the SIS. The 2013 Health and Human Services appropriations bill (Senate File 446) directed the Department of Human Services (DHS) to contract with an independent entity to perform the SIS. In addition, core standardized assessments are also an essential element of the Balancing Incentive Program, which is providing additional federal funding to Iowa.

The concept behind using standardized assessments is to provide a basis for consistent statewide information for matching the individual's support needs with the services and resources they receive – providing the right kind and amount of support, not too much, not too little.

## ***Who does this apply to?***

**The first group of people who will receive a core standardized assessment will be individuals currently served by the Intellectual Disabilities Waiver and Intermediate Care Facilities for People with Intellectual Disabilities.** This includes approximately 14,000 people, who will start to receive the SIS interview in April 2014. It will take three years for all 14,000 individuals to be assessed. Core standardized assessments will be introduced for other HCBS Waiver populations over the next few years. In all, about 27,500 people served by the Waivers will be included in the new assessment process.

## ***What will the transition to this new assessment model look like?***

SIS assessments will begin April 2014 and each year will include one third of the total population of Iowans who participate in the HCBS Intellectual Disability (ID) waiver and Intermediate Care Facility-Intellectual Disability (ICF-ID) facilities. The remaining ID waiver and ICF/ID population will receive a SIS review within three years.

After stakeholder input and final selection, the remaining assessment tools for the other HCBS waiver populations will begin implementation in October 2014, with one third of each group receiving an assessment each year.

## ***When will the new assessments be completed?***

The new assessments will be completed on or near your regular Medicaid anniversary and will replace the current assessment process. Annual Level of Care assessments and Continued Stay Reviews will occur on the member's regular annual schedule and will be the sole responsibility of the bidder contracted to perform the SIS and other CSA's.

# Core Standardized Assessments: Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)



## ***How often is the SIS assessment done?***

After the first SIS assessment, a new one is conducted every three years. If a person's condition or life circumstances change, they can request a new SIS assessment prior to the three year schedule.

## ***How does the SIS assessment work?***

A meeting with a trained SIS assessor is scheduled for the individual and a small group of other people who know the individual very well. The SIS assessor leads a discussion of the individual's need for support in different life activities using a standard set of questions. The assessor documents the frequency, duration and type of support needed in each area. The meeting usually takes three to four hours. The assessment information is used to develop the individual's service plan and guide resource allocation.

## ***Who can administer the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)?***

The SIS is intended to be administered by a trained professional evaluator who has completed a four-year degree program and is working in the field of human services (for example, a case manager, psychologist, or social worker). The Iowa Medicaid Enterprise has issued a Request for Proposals for a contractor to perform core standardized assessments for specific populations served by the HCBS Waivers.

## ***What are the benefits to individuals?***

The SIS is a comprehensive assessment tool that includes background information on health, medical conditions, activities of daily living, and cognitive, social, and emotional skills to give a complete picture of the individual. It is strength-based, centering on support needs rather than deficits. Each person has an important role in expressing his or her opinions and preferences. The information gathered is used to develop person-centered service plans that will address the individual's unique needs and provide a basis for resource allocation.

## ***What affect will this change have on individuals receiving services?***

Individuals will receive supports that are appropriate to meet their needs based on the information gathered during their assessment. There may be some changes in the level of services and supports if the assessment indicates that the current level is not the most appropriate for that individual.

# Core Standardized Assessments: Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)



## ***Will individuals lose services they are receiving now?***

If the assessment indicates that an individual is receiving a higher level of services and supports than that person needs to function successfully, there could be recommendations for reductions in services. Likewise, if the assessment shows that a person needs more intensive services and supports than he or she is receiving, there would be a recommendation for a service plan with an increased level of support. No one should lose services needed to live successfully.

## ***What if the individual needs more service after the assessment is complete?***

Generally, a new SIS assessment is conducted every three years. If a person's condition or life circumstances change, a new assessment can be requested prior to that time to determine if more services are needed. If an emergency arises, there is a process for an expedited assessment.

## ***Will individuals lose their current case managers?***

Case managers will work with the SIS evaluators in providing information for completing the assessment and they will still maintain their care planning and service coordination functions. Individuals and case managers will be able to maintain the relationships they have built.

## ***How will the individuals and the case manager know what the assessment says?***

The results of the assessment will be reported to the individual and the person's case manager, guardian, or other designated representative.

## ***What if the individual or family disagrees with the assessment?***

If an individual has a question or disagrees with the assessment outcome they will have an opportunity to discuss with Medical Services. The formal Department of Human Services appeal process is also available for resolving disagreements regarding individual assessment results.

## ***What affect will this change have on providers?***

Providers will be reimbursed for providing the support an individual needs to function in the most inclusive environment possible. Resources will follow the individual if he or she moves into different programs or services.

## Core Standardized Assessments: Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)



### ***How does this affect Targeted Case Managers?***

Independent SIS evaluators will complete the assessment. Case managers and others who know and work closely with individuals will be included as an important component in the information gathering process. Targeted Case Managers will participate in the SIS and CSA processes, as appropriate, by collaborating to ensure the accuracy of information obtained by the evaluator during the interview. Case Managers will not be responsible for attending the personal interview, but may bill appropriate allowable units of time as collateral contact.

### ***How can an outside assessor do a thorough assessment when the case manager knows this person so much better?***

The outside assessors will be specially trained in interviewing and information gathering using this assessment tool and working with this particular population. They will depend on not just the individual, but also family members, case managers, and others who have personal knowledge of the individual to ensure that the information gathered during their assessment is thorough and complete.

### ***What about the assessments for other populations?***

In addition to conducting the SIS assessments for persons with intellectual disabilities, the successful bidder (contractor) for the RFP will manage a stakeholder input process that will review and recommend appropriate assessment tools for the other HCBS Waiver populations, including AIDS/HIV, Brain Injury, Elderly, Health and Disability, and Physical Disability. Once the tools are selected by DHS, the contractor will conduct assessments for the other populations as well, including conducting the SIS for Iowans with Developmental Disabilities who were not part of the original population.

### ***Will stakeholders have an opportunity for input?***

Yes, DHS and the contractor will seek and gather stakeholder input throughout the process of selecting the assessment and implementing these tools.