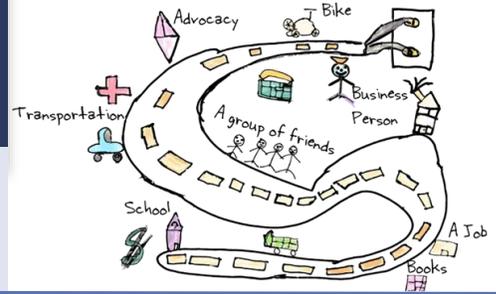


Supporting Individual Success

For People with Intellectual Disabilities & Autism

SIS and SIS-A Frequently Asked Questions



Introduction

The Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) uses the Support Intensity Scale® or **SIS** to assess the support needs of members with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and/or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) receiving Section 21 services. Members are assessed once every three years, and sometimes sooner if needed. In 2015, the publishers of the SIS, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) released an updated version of the tool called the SIS-A (Support Intensity Scale- Adult). OADS will begin using the SIS-A in January, 2016. Below are answers to frequently asked questions about the SIS and SIS-A.

How does the SIS measure support needs?

The SIS assesses the support needs of people with IDD/ASD. It has been in use since 2004. There are now two versions of the SIS. The “Child SIS” (SIS-C) is for children aged 5 to 15 years old. The “Adult-SIS” (SIS-A) is for individuals aged 16 to 72 years old. Before the SIS, a person's level of need was most often measured by the skills a person lacked or by level of disability. The SIS shifts the focus to what *support a person needs* to successfully live as independently as possible. Such as taking care of personal needs, working or volunteering, housekeeping, or maintaining relationships and connecting with their community. In addition, two sections of the SIS assess the support needs a person may have due to serious medical conditions or behavioral challenges. The assessment is conducted as an interview where a trained assessor facilitates a discussion with the individual with IDD/ASD and others who know him or her well.

How is SIS Information used?

The information gathered during the SIS-A assessment is used in two ways. First, the information can help inform support planning discussions by identifying the type and amount of support a person needs in various areas of life (i.e., home, work, social) and with serious medical conditions or behavioral challenges. SIS-A information may also introduce new topics of discussion such as supports the person would need to work, move to another living setting, or have romantic relationships. Second, SIS information is used to assign individuals to one of five support levels (1-5). These levels group together members with similar support needs. Based on the member's type of residence (i.e., family home, agency home support, etc.), OADS can anticipate the types and amounts of services a member will generally need by level. In turn, the member's assigned level is used as a guide during the service planning process.

How is the SIS-A different than the SIS?

The SIS-A includes newly added demographic information like language spoken and where people live. The SIS-A also reorders and rewords some portions of the assessment. Most notably, three new items were added to the Exceptional Medical Needs section. These items ask about support needs related to Hypertension, Allergies, and Diabetes.

Will the items added to the exceptional medical needs section change support level assignments?

Individuals are assigned to one of five support levels. Level 4 includes people with extraordinary medical needs. A score of 7 on the Exceptional Medical Needs section results in an individual automatically being placed in Level 4. The addition of these 3 new items in the medical needs section makes it possible for an individual to score up to 6 additional points in this section.

When deciding how to address these additional available points, OADS looked at a number of options with the help of our consultants at the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI). OADS selected the following approach:

- Respondents will be asked to identify their support needs on all nineteen items in the Exceptional Medical Behavioral Support Needs Section (i.e., the original 16 items and the three new items).
- Each item will be scored independently on a scale of 0-2 (0= no support needed, 1= some support needed, 2= extensive support needed).
- The new items will be scored *collectively* as part of the “Other” category.
- This means that while respondents can indicate support needs in as many of these conditions (Hypertension, Allergies, Diabetes, and Other) as apply, 2 is the maximum number of points available in the “Other” category toward the 7 needed for automatic inclusion into Level 4.

Note that, as was the case with the original SIS, if the member has extensive support needs in any of the areas listed in the Exceptional Medical Needs Section (including the newly added items) he or she may be referred to the Supplemental Verification Team (SVT) for review.

Why did OADS take this approach?

OADS took this approach to assure consistency in level assignments between those assessed with the SIS and those assessed with the SIS-A. Members receive a new assessment every three years, so for the next three years there will be some individuals who have a current SIS assessment, and some individuals who have a current SIS-A assessment. The approach ensures that members will not be treated differently by virtue of their reassessment date. The newly added items were previously noted in the “Other” category, and will therefore be scored as part of the “Other” category for the purpose of automatic inclusion in Level 4.

In addition, OADS notes that any new information produced by the SIS-A pertaining to the new medical items is not “lost” but still may be used within the service planning process.

How will this affect members?

In Maine, use of the SIS-A will begin in January 2016. If a member is scheduled for a SIS assessment after that date, the SIS-A will be used. SIS assessors have received training on the changes in SIS-A, and will be well prepared to administer the updated SIS assessment.

It is important to note that many things will remain the same:

- The assessment interview process will be the same
- There is no change to the way items are scored
- Assessment information will still be used to inform members' support level and budget

Where can I find more information?

Information on the SIS instruments (SIS-A and SIS-C) can be found at www.aaid.org/sis

Or contact OADS at:

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41 Anthony Avenue
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-9200

www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads

**For updates on *Supporting Individual Success*,
Join OADS every Friday at 8:00 am**

First, dial: **1-877-455-0244**

Then, enter the passcode: **207-287-6642**

For all SIS inquiries and requests, please email:

sis-info.dhhs@maine.gov