



**DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES, AGING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES DIVISION**

Changes to Process for Assessing Individual Needs for Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Services

What's happening?

The State is working to improve and standardize the way people's needs are assessed for the Developmental Disabilities Services Home and Community-Based Services Program. A Needs Assessment is required for people to start getting services and it is reviewed every year and updated whenever a person's needs change. The State is implementing a new, standardized Needs Assessment and is working on a new process for completing Needs Assessments.

What's Changing? A new tool for completing the assessments will be used. This tool is called the Supports Intensity Scale-Adult Version (SIS-A™). The tool was developed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) It is a well-researched, standardized tool used in multiple states and countries to measure the amount of support people with developmental disabilities need in their everyday lives. The SIS-A™ focuses on the strengths of people instead of their challenges. This assessment is consistent with the values of community including self-direction, individual choice/control, and person-centered services.

The other change is that the State has hired an independent organization, Public Consulting Group, (PCG), to complete the assessments. PCG is an organization that specializing in Medicaid and related health, human services, and education programs. They have experience in all 50 states and some other countries as well, including a focus on Home and Community-based Services for people with developmental disabilities.

Why is the State Making a Change?

The current process for assessing people's needs for supports and services is not standardized across the State of Vermont. The goal of standardization and of a new process is that people with similar needs across the state will be assessed in a similar way so that funding is then provided to people in a fair and equitable way. Having an independent organization will help to ensure that assessments are completed by well trained assessors in an unbiased way using a consistent process.

When is this changing? Starting approximately July 1, 2021, Public Consulting Group will begin completing assessments for people over age 16 who are currently receiving Developmental Disabilities Service Home and Community-Based Services.

What does this mean for people currently receiving services? The first 500-700 assessments that will be completed in the upcoming year will **not** change anything about the services that people receive or their individual budgets at this time. The State is planning to use the information from those assessments to help design a new way of paying agencies for the services that are provided to people. The new way of paying for services is not expected to be in place prior to 2023. Until then, provider agencies will also continue to conduct Needs Assessments that will be used to develop individual plans and budgets. Some people will

participate in two assessments in a year, one with the agency and one with Public Consulting Group. People are required to participate in both assessments when they are notified.

People will receive information in advance if and when any changes are being made to their package of services and they will continue to have the right to appeal any decisions.

What should people expect with the new Needs Assessment? Public Consulting Group’s scheduling team will contact the individual, family member, or guardian to schedule the assessment. The case manager will also be contacted. The scheduling team will work to find a convenient time and location for the assessment. (It will be completed by videoconference until the current state of emergency due to the pandemic ends.) The person, family member, or guardian will let the scheduling team know who else they would like to be invited to the assessment meeting. At least 2 people who know the person well need to be involved. The scheduling team will explain how the process will work. Assessments typically take a couple of hours to complete. The case manager will receive a copy of the completed report and will share it with the person, family member, or guardian. The person receiving services and their team should be prepared to share demographic information, current needs for support, and other important information to help the assessors understand the person as an individual.

Where can I get more information?

AAIDD

Information about the SIS-A is available on the AAIDD website:

- <https://www.aaid.org/sis>
- SIS-A [FAQ](#)
- <https://www.aaid.org/sis/sis-a>
- [“Get ready for your assessment”](#) – video presentation with information about participating in an assessment.

DAIL/DDSD website:

<https://ddsd.vermont.gov/projects-initiatives/dds-payment-reform/dds-payment-reform-standardized-assess-workgroup>

Provider Agencies

Case managers can help members of a person’s team understand and prepare for their assessments.