

March 14, 2022

The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) has learned that the Supports Intensity Scale-Adults (SIS-A) will be updated next year. The second edition of the SIS-A is planned for early 2023 and will include updates to the information used to understand individual people's scores in the context of people served by developmental disability services in the United States as a whole, also referred to as 'norms' or 'norming'. There will also be new questions, improvements to the clarity of questions, the flow of the assessment, and how the scores are calculated. Updating assessment or diagnostic tools helps to make improvements and check that the tool is still able to measure what it was intended to measure, which will continue to make it valid and reliable. DAIL supports the update to the SIS-A and will continue to look at what this change means as we learn more.

The company that designed the SIS-A is the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities or AAIDD. To update the tool, AAIDD reviewed over 100,000 assessments from 2017 through 2020. Below are some facts from AAIDD about the changes, please see the links further down for more information:

- The SIS-A is still a good tool for older adults, now up to age 84 years old.
- New norms were created for the second edition of the SIS-A based on the people using it more recently.
- Several items have been added to the section of the SIS-A that identifies exceptional medical, behavioral, and communication support needs that might have an impact on a person's support needs.
- The Protection and Advocacy Activities scale will be renamed and added to the overall Support Needs Index score.
- The SIS-A helps identify the areas where supports are most needed. This information can be used to help create high-quality person-centered plans of support.
- The effect of the new norms and the addition of the Advocacy Activities scale on standard scores in the second edition of the SIS-A are slight. Overall, most people (roughly 67%) will see no or almost no difference using the old and new norms. Among those with score shifts of 4 or more points, roughly 3% of people will see their overall Supports Need Index score decrease and 30% will see their overall Supports Need Index score increase.
- The second edition has not been released yet and States do not have a copy. We will continue to share information and updates as it becomes available.

What does the SIS-A update mean for VT?

- Vermont may not need to make a lot of changes. We are just starting to use the SIS-A. We have not changed any budgets or services based on the tool we are using.
- The first 500 people who were asked to do the SIS-A between June 2021 and April 2022 will not see any changes to their services or budgets based on their scores. There will be a chance to do it again before any changes take place.

- Anyone who completes a SIS-A, and isn't part of the group of 500, will have a lot of time before any changes might happen.
 - Having a SIS-A assessment doesn't necessarily mean you will have any changes to your budget or services.
 - It will only change if your needs are different from the services you get.
- Any changes to budgets or services based on a future SIS-A score will not happen for a few years. DAIL will wait to make changes, so they happen at the same time we address Conflict of Interest in Case Management.
- There will be a chance to ask for more funding if you need it.
- There will still be an appeal process if you don't agree with the funding decision.
- There will be opportunities for stakeholder input about the SIS-A process later this year.
- There will be opportunities for stakeholder input about possible future budget models. We need to get the results of the first 500 assessments before we can start talking about possible budget models, and the first 500 assessments are still happening.
- There will be opportunities for stakeholder input about Conflict Free Case Management next year.
- Right now, we expect changes around services and budgets related to the SIS-A and Conflict Free Case Management to happen within the next 4 - 5 years.

Information from AAIDD About the Changes to the SIS-A:

Plain Language Summary:

https://www.aaid.org/docs/default-source/sis-docs/sis-memo-plaintext.pdf?sfvrsn=82da3f21_2

Memo About the Changes:

https://www.aaid.org/docs/default-source/sis-docs/sis-memo.pdf?sfvrsn=da3f21_2

SIS-A 2nd Edition Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

https://www.aaid.org/docs/default-source/sis-docs/sis-faqs.pdf?sfvrsn=9eda3f21_4

Video About the SIS-A 2nd Edition:

<https://youtu.be/ThQhmW8di80>