

## **Technical Questions Re: Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) Final**

**1. What is the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)?**

Response

The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) is a standardized assessment tool that uses a structured interview that is designed to identify the pattern and intensity of supports a person with developmental disabilities needs in order to be successful. It is designed as a planning tool for individuals, agencies, and systems.

**2. Who wrote the SIS?**

Response

The SIS was developed over a five-year period by a team of experts from the American Association on Mental Retardation (now the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities – AAIDD) in response to changes in how society views and relates to people with disabilities.

**3. Why is the SIS going to be used in Colorado?**

Response

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which is the federal Medicaid agency, conducted a review of Colorado's Comprehensive Services Waiver in 2004. In November 2005, concerns were raised by CMS about the adequacy of the "audit trail" in Colorado. As a result, the Department of Human Services was directed to develop a new way of determining how levels of reimbursement are decided for people with developmental disabilities who are receiving services through the State's Comprehensive Services Waiver. It is required that the new rate setting methodology be uniform and transparent.

**4. Why was the SIS chosen?**

Response

The SIS was chosen based on an analysis done by the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI). HSRI is an independent contractor that was hired by the State to analyze assessment tools that the State could utilize to establish tiered funding rates that are tied to consumer support needs for residential and day services provided under the Comprehensive Services Waiver. HSRI recommended the SIS and the State agreed for numerous reasons:

- The SIS is principally designed to directly feed into and support the development of person-centered plans by measuring the frequency, intensity and volume of support that individuals need in various dimensions of everyday functioning and living.
- The SIS includes a focus on employment- related supports.
- The SIS provides and evaluation of significant medical and behavioral conditions.
- The SIS focuses on an individual's current needs rather than a look back approach. Although historical usage is important information, the SIS identifies needs for supports that may not have been used in the past.
- The SIS yields reliable and valid information about individual support needs and, thereby, is a foundation for linking funding for such needs.
- The SIS is a national tool that was normed on a sample of over 1,300 adults with intellectual disabilities from thirty-three states and two Canadian provinces.
- Agencies can use the results to help plan for staffing, staff training, budgeting, strategic planning, and evaluation. Systems can use the results for systems planning, program evaluation, and resource allocation.

**5. On what population has the SIS been validated?**

Response

For technical information about the SIS, see the website at:  
<http://www.siswebsite.org/page.wv?section=Product+Info&name=Quick+Facts>

**6. Who is administering the SIS and how were they trained?**

Response

Consultants from AAIDD trained 19 individuals from Colorado to train other professionals to be certified SIS interviewers. They are now training individuals from around the State to be SIS interviewers. Everyone who is selected to be a SIS interviewer must be trained and then pass a reliability test before they are allowed to conduct interviews on their own.

**7. Who should be at the SIS interview with the consumer?**

Response

It is the responsibility of the certified SIS interviewer to assure that, along with the individual, one or more appropriate respondents are included in the SIS interview. A qualified respondent is someone who knows the individual well and has had recent and frequent contact with them. According to AAIDD, a respondent must have known the person for at least three months (a full year is recommended) and have had recent opportunities to observe the person in one or more environments for substantial periods of time (at least several hours per setting).

Since all initial SIS interviews will be with individuals in Comprehensive Services, guardians or authorized representatives may not have had as much recent opportunity to spend as much time with the individual as have service providers. While a residential manager, staff or host home provider may have the most recent knowledge about the individual's needs for support, the interested guardian or authorized representative and the parent, with consumer consent, should always be invited to participate in the interview. This means that guardians, authorized representatives, parents and family members (with consent) should be notified when a SIS interview is to occur and be afforded the opportunity to be present.

If any interdisciplinary team members meet the criteria for respondents, they may be invited to participate in the SIS interview unless there are others who are more knowledgeable about the individual's support needs. It is not appropriate to have large number of people present during a SIS interview. The consumer, the interviewer and a few respondents are essential. The number of observers should be kept to a minimum so as not to overwhelm the consumer or respondents.

- 8. How are the SIS results going to be used to determine the funding level for each person being served?**

Response

That process is going to be designed by HSRI and Navigant Consulting (independent contractors) based on the results of SIS interviews with a sample of approximately 500 people currently being served under the Comprehensive Services Medicaid Waiver. The interviews with people included in the sample are scheduled to be completed by December 31, 2006.

- 9. How was the sample selected?**

Response

To select the sample, first all consumers with IPs due in November 2006 or December 2006 were identified. This sample was then analyzed to see how well it represented the population served in Colorado with respect to residential tier, day habilitation tier, gender, age range, functioning level (mild, moderate, severe, profound), CCB/RC service areas, hours of skilled nursing and behavioral services, and community safety risk. Additional individuals having IPs due in January 2007 were then included in order to make the sample representative and to allow for a ten percent attrition rate. The total sample consists of 525 people served by the CCBs and 49 people served by the Regional Centers.

- 10. When will the new funding rates go into effect?**

Response

July 1, 2007 for people who are enrolled in the Comprehensive Services Medicaid Waiver.

- 11. What about people in the Supported Living Services Medicaid Waiver?**

Response

Persons in the Supported Living Services Waiver (SLS) will receive SIS assessments between July 2007 and June 2008. The process for using the SIS results to establish SLS funding levels will be determined next year and is anticipated to become effective July 1, 2008.

**12. Where can I get more information about the SIS and its use in Colorado?**

Response

For more information about the use of the SIS in Colorado, contact Gail Bernstein at the Division for Developmental Disabilities, [gail.bernstein@state.co.us](mailto:gail.bernstein@state.co.us) or 303-866-7143. For general information about the SIS instrument go to: [www.siswebsite.org](http://www.siswebsite.org).

**13. What about a potential conflict of interest when the assessment is done by the agency administering the funds?**

Response

In order to insure that the SIS is administered fairly throughout Colorado, SIS interviewers must meet AAIDD's (formerly AAMR) standards for inter-rater reliability before they can be designated Certified SIS Interviewers. Then Certified SIS Interviewers in the State will be reassessed by Certified SIS Trainers who did not train them or certify them. All Certified Trainers in the State will be reassessed by AAIDD trainers.

**14. Whatever the outcome, is there a "grandfather" clause for those already in services?**

Response

The new process for allocating resources will apply to everyone receiving services through the Medicaid Comprehensive Services Waiver as of July 1, 2007. The development of a uniform rate setting methodology is a requirement of the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), which is the federal Medicaid agency.

**15. What are the costs of this assessment? We understand it is supposed to take a couple of hours per client. Would not this money be better spent on services?**

Response

The creation of a uniform rate setting methodology is a federal requirement, and the use of a standardized assessment tool is part of the creation of a new allocation process. Most of the costs of administering the SIS are the responsibility of the CCBs and the RCs because their staff is conducting the interviews.

DDD is paying for some of the start up costs. DDD paid to have 19 people (13 from CCBs, 3 from RCs, and 3 from DDD) trained as SIS trainers, and they are training SIS interviewers. DDD is also paying for all SIS materials (manuals and forms) and for access to SIS On-Line, which is an AAIDD service for storing and getting reports on SIS data. There is a \$3.00 charge per person for entry into the SIS On-Line system, Forms cost \$1.47 each, and manuals cost \$95 each.

- 16. When an individual uses assistive technology, is the SIS administered with the assistive technology in place?**

Response

Yes. This applies only to assistive technology that the person already has. For example, if a person has an assistive device (communication device, wheel chair, hearing aid and so on) they would be scored with the device in place.

- 17. What is the reliability and validity of the SIS? What studies are there to show that it measures what it is supposed to?**

Response

For technical information about the SIS, see the website at:  
<http://www.siswebsite.org/page.wv?section=Product+Info&name=Quick+Facts>

- 18. What is the potential impact on services for someone receiving a "low" or a "high" score on the SIS?**

Response

Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) and Navigant Consulting will design the process for assigning people to tiers based on information from multiple sources, including SIS results. Because the allocation process hasn't been designed yet, we are unable to be more specific about the impact of various SIS scores on services

**19. Is the intent to reduce funding for all consumers?**

Response

No, the SIS is intended to identify the supports a person with developmental disabilities would need in order to be successful in the world. It is designed as a planning tool for individuals, agencies, and systems. It is also being used, as one part of an analysis to establish tiered funding rates that are tied to consumer support needs for residential and day services provided under the Comprehensive Services.

**20. What was the role of parents in selecting the SIS?**

Response

HSRI had separate meetings with each of a group of self-advocates, the Arc of Colorado and directors of local Arc chapters, the DDD Policy Advisory Committee, CCB representatives, provider agency representatives, and DDD officials to discuss the selection of an assessment tool that would help determine funding rates