



# DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS BULLETIN

## COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

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April 26, 2007

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SUBJECT:

**Overview of the Supports Intensity Scale®  
(SIS®) and the PA Plus**

BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin T. Casey".

Kevin T. Casey  
Deputy Secretary for Developmental Programs

### SCOPE:

Administrative Entity Administrators/Directors  
Supports Coordination Entity Directors  
Providers of Service

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to disseminate information regarding the Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS®) and the Pennsylvania (PA) Plus and the Office of Developmental Program's (ODP) intention for their future use as a statewide standardized needs assessment instrument. Further information on implementation of the SIS® and PA Plus will be disseminated in future bulletins.

### BACKGROUND:

In March of 2005, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) outlined several significant issues that required ODP's attention before CMS would renew Pennsylvania's Consolidated Medicaid Waiver. One primary issue was the assurance that necessary supports and services are consistently and appropriately delivered to waiver participants.

In response to CMS's concerns, ODP assured CMS that a statewide, standardized assessment would be adopted to consistently assess the need of waiver participants. After an extensive review of available assessments, the Supports Intensity Scale®, an instrument developed and copyrighted by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), was chosen. The AAIDD was formerly known as the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR). ODP has added a small number of additional questions, known as the PA Plus, to be administered with the SIS® in order to gather additional information that will be used for planning.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

**The Appropriate Regional Program Office**

## **DISCUSSION:**

The SIS© was developed to:

- Assess support needs of individuals aged sixteen (16) and older;
- Determine the intensity of the need; and
- Over time to monitor individual progress and evaluate outcomes.

The intent of the SIS© is to focus on the level of support needed by a person instead of evaluating deficits in skills. Some areas measured are: home living, community living, lifelong learning, employment, health and safety, social activities, and protection and advocacy. Activities are ranked according to frequency, amount, and type of support within the SIS© *Scale*. Ultimately, a *Supports Intensity Level* is established based on the *Total Support Needs Index*. The *Total Support Needs Index* is defined as the standard score generated from scores on all the items tested by the *Scale*. However, the score will not drive the development of the Individual Support Plan (ISP). The ISP will be developed by the team, utilizing all available information, including the SIS© and the PA Plus as an assessment tool.

## **SIS© AND PA PLUS ADMINISTRATION:**

ODP will be contracting with an outside entity beginning in July of 2007 to administer the SIS© and the PA Plus. SIS© and PA Plus assessments will begin to take place in September of 2007. The outside entity will be independent of State or County government and may not be a provider of mental retardation services or a current Administrative Entity under contract with ODP. The responsibilities of the assessment entity will include working with both ODP and Administrative Entities to ensure the SIS© and PA Plus are delivered in an appropriate, effective, and timely manner. The assessment will be entered into the Home and Community Services Information System (HCSIS) and will be made available to the Administrative Entity for utilization in planning processes.

People who participate in the SIS© and PA Plus assessment must know the individual well (for at least three months). There should be at least two (2) respondents at every SIS© and PA Plus meeting. Respondents can be the individual, family members, friends, direct support or other staff from residential or day service providers, or the Supports Coordinator (SC).

The SC will use the information gained through the discussion at the SIS© and PA Plus meeting in the development of the ISP. For this reason, it is recommended that SCs attend the SIS© and PA Plus meeting as an observer, even if they do not know the individual well enough to participate as a responder. In a pilot of the SIS©, SCs found meeting participation to be especially useful if the individual was new to their caseload. The information discussed at the meeting helped the SCs get to know new individuals and provided valuable information for the development of the first and all subsequent ISPs.

Use of the assessment information is essential in the development of the ISP. In addition to the data provided by the SIS© and the PA Plus information from the Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) and any other necessary assessments must be utilized as part of the ISP process. Services and supports

included in the ISP must match the needs demonstrated through the assessment process. Please note that the SIS© and PA Plus assessment is not a budget tool. It is a tool used to help guide conversation and to help identify services and supports to meet needs in the individual planning process.

The SIS© and PA Plus meeting should be scheduled as one meeting with all respondents in attendance. The SIS© and PA Plus entity will be responsible for administering the assessment at a time convenient for the individual and family. Every reasonable effort will be made to time the assessment appropriately, taking into consideration the ISP process timelines for each individual. The assessment meeting should take place wherever the individual chooses. This can include but is not limited to the individual's home, their day service provider, or the home of a family member or friend. If the individual has chosen not to participate in the assessment meeting the respondents may choose the meeting location.

Qualified assessors will have several years experience working with individuals with mental retardation or other related disabilities and a four (4) year Bachelor's degree. Assessors will be trained in the SIS© by certified SIS© trainers before administering assessments and in the PA Plus by knowledgeable ODP staff. Other training curriculum will include an overview of the Office of Developmental Programs System, *Everyday Lives*, and an overview of Pennsylvania's Medicaid waivers.

Attachment