



Supports Intensity Scale ®

Helpful Information for Respondents

Pennsylvania Office of
Developmental Programs

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This handout tells about the SIS® and the kinds of questions that will be asked in the interview.

What Makes the SIS® Different?

The SIS® is different than most other assessments. It asks about the support a person needs “to be successful” at each activity listed. The SIS® defines success in a particular way. According to the SIS®, success involves thinking about the help an individual would need to perform each activity at a level comparable to a typically developing adult.

Other assessments ask questions such as: “*What can (or can't) this person do?*” The SIS® asks: “*What supports would this person need to successfully and fully participate in this activity just like a typically functioning adult?*” In other words, to do this task completely, in the way that a typically functioning adult would do the task, what supports would he or she need?

For the SIS®,
“success” means
doing an activity in
the same way as a
typically function-
ing adult without
disabilities would
do the activity.

One way to get at this difference is for Ascend's assessors to ask:

“What supports are needed for this individual to SUCCESSFULLY engage in the task so that the individual accomplishes the task just like a typically developing adult?”

How Does the SIS® Rank Supports Needed?

The SIS® is asking respondents to rate the supports that are *needed*. In answering this, respondents are not limited to supports that are actually *available*. So, respondents should think about the supports the person would need if the individual were to do each task “successfully” based on the SIS® definition. We have found that respondents sometimes talk about the support a person *wants*, or the support a person *is currently getting*, instead of the supports that would help a person *be successful at the level of a typically functioning adult*.

Information for Individuals, Family Members, and Providers

What Types of Questions will I be Asked on the SIS®?

The SIS® asks questions in six different areas of the person's life. Examples in each of those areas are below:

- **Home Living** asks questions about supports the person needs in areas such as laundering clothes, tidying his or her home, and preparing meals.
- **Community Living** asks questions about supports the person needs in areas such as participating in leisure activities, visiting friends and family, or shopping and running errands.
- **Lifelong Learning** asks questions about supports a person would need in areas such as learning and applying skills like reading signs or solving problems. It also asks about supports needed to fully participate in traditional adult learning settings.
- **Employment** asks questions about supports a person would need to be successful in competitive employment.
- **Health and Safety** asks questions about the supports a person would need to avoid health and safety hazards, use emergency services, and maintain physical and mental health.
- **Social Activities** asks questions about the supports a person would need to successfully socialize with others in a variety of settings.

What Ratings will I use to Answer Those Questions?

The SIS® asks 3 different kinds of questions about each of the 81 items in the interview. For every activity, the SIS® interviewer will ask you to rate:

1. THE FREQUENCY OF SUPPORTS NEEDED

When you are asked questions about *frequency*, the SIS® instructions ask that you focus on the following:

- If the person were to do this activity regularly (for many months), how often would *extraordinary* support be needed to help him or her be successful? "*Extraordinary support*" means assistance that most typically functioning adults would not need to do the task successfully.
- The *frequency scale* measures how often the person would need support to do the activity successfully, not how frequently the person *currently* does the activity.

2. THE DAILY SUPPORT TIME THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO DO THE TASK SUCCESSFULLY

When you are asked questions about *daily support time*, the SIS® instructions ask that you focus on the following:

- This rating is estimating the time needed to provide these supports across a TYPICAL day (24-hour period) when the support is provided. In doing this, we want to know the time that it takes to teach the person to do the activity, as well as the time it takes to

directly help the person during the activity.

- On days that any kind of support is given for this activity, how much time needs to be set aside to help the individual be successful?
- To estimate the total time given in a day, we would add up any support given in the morning, evening, and throughout the night. We would use that total as our estimated support time.

3. THE TYPE OF SUPPORT THAT WOULD HELP THE INDIVIDUAL ACCOMPLISH THE TASK LIKE A TYPICALLY FUNCTIONING ADULT.

When you are asked questions about *type of support*, the SIS® instructions ask that you focus on the following:

- If the person were to do this activity, what kind of *extraordinary* support would be needed to help him or her be successful? "*Extraordinary support*" means assistance that most typically functioning adults would not need to do the task successfully.
- Sometimes more than one type of support is needed for an activity. (for example, both verbal prompting and partial physical assistance). We will want to know which type of support best represents the assistance that is needed to be successful.

Helpful Hints About Rating

ASSESSING SUPPORTS

The person's support needs should be looked at holistically. That means that their skill level, any assistive technology, their motivation, health, behavior, and safety needs must all be considered.

If the individual uses assistive technology, he or she should be rated with that technology in place.

Support needs across all SIS® items should be completed based upon the individual as he or she is. Thus, a person who has extensive support needs to prevent behavioral disruption will require more supports for many items than another person without exceptional behavioral support needs.

The whole person, including his or her skills, motivation, health, behavior, and use of technology should be considered when choosing a rating.

RATING SUPPORT NEEDS FOR ACTIVITIES THAT THE PERSON DOES NOT DO, HAS NEVER DONE, OR HAS NO INTENTION OF DOING

The SIS® rules say that all items must be completed, even if the person does not do, has never done, or has no intention of doing the activity. For example, the interviewer will ask about “lifelong learning and college type courses.” Even if the individual expresses no desire to take college type courses, that activity must be rated as though the individual was going to fully participate. Similarly, interviewers will ask about supports that would be needed for a person to be successful in competitive employment, even if the individual is not interested in competitive employment.

All items must be rated, even if the person does not do, has never done, or has no intention of doing an activity.

The reason that the SIS® asks about every item is that the philosophy of the tool is that every person with an intellectual or developmental disability has a right to have their support needs measured for every type of activity. The SIS® is not asking about *preferences*, it is asking about support needs. The ISP is the process where the individual's *preferences* will be identified.

RATING SUPPORT NEEDS THAT VARY

The instructions call for rating the typical intensity of support that is needed. When someone's intensity of support needs seem to border both a lower and a higher rating, the higher rating should be selected.

When more than one rating applies, the highest rating should be selected.