

**Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare**  
**Office of Developmental Programs**  
**Supports Intensity Scale™ and PA Plus**  
**Fact Sheet**

**Why Am I receiving this Fact Sheet?**

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) has assured the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that a statewide, standardized assessment would be adopted to consistently assess the needs of Waiver participants. ODP determined the instrument of choice would be the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS™), as it is a reliable and valid needs assessment developed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). The intent of the SIS™ is to focus on the level of support needed by a person instead of evaluating deficits in skills.

The SIS™ is the primary needs assessment for everyone enrolled in the Person/Family Directed Support (P/FDS) or Consolidated Waiver. Over the next few years, all individuals enrolled in either Waiver will receive a SIS™ assessment. Individuals entering a Waiver will receive a SIS™ assessment prior to the receipt of Waiver-eligible services. The SIS™ is not required for base-funded individuals.

**What is the SIS™?**

The SIS™ is used to evaluate the support needs of people aged 16 to 72 with intellectual disabilities. The SIS™ focuses on the level of support needed by a person instead of deficits in skills. The individual him/herself and people who know the person best provide the information for the assessment during a structured interview. Topics included in the SIS™ that are covered during the interview include home living, community living, lifelong learning, employment, health and safety, social activities, protection and advocacy, and exceptional medical and behavioral support needs.

**What is the PA Plus?**

The PA Plus was developed by stakeholders to be used concurrently with the SIS™. It consists of a set of nine questions to provide additional planning information not covered in the SIS™ assessment. Topics include supports needed for mobility, transfers, vision, hearing, communication, and safety, as well as assistive technology, treatments, medications, and behavioral health. These additional questions are designed to support the planning process and better serve the needs of the individual.

### **How will the SIS™ and PA Plus be Used?**

Traditional assessments usually measure skills and deficits. The SIS™ measures how much support is needed for the individual to successfully complete a task, how often the support is needed, and what type of support is needed (e.g. monitoring, verbal or gestural prompting, partial or full physical assistance). The PA Plus, developed by a group of local stakeholders, asks additional questions about the individual's capacities and supports.

The SIS™ and PA Plus support the ISP process by prompting the team to discuss supports needed to keep the person healthy and safe, and to help achieve personal outcomes. The assessments do not indicate what specific types of supports are needed, or whether they are paid or unpaid. ODP has pledged that assessment scores will not be used to determine individual budgets.

### **How Often is the SIS™ Completed?**

The SIS™ is current for up to three years. At the end of the three-year period, another assessment will be conducted. For example, an initial assessment conducted in October 2007 would be reviewed for currency and accuracy in October 2008 and October 2009. The next full assessment for this individual would occur in October 2010. If at any time between 2007 and 2010, this person experiences a significant life change that has a lasting impact on his or her support needs, a new assessment would be conducted.

The SIS™ is reviewed at least annually by the ISP team to determine if the assessment results accurately reflect the needs of the person. Any time a person experiences a significant life change that has a lasting impact on his/her needs, the SIS™ must be reviewed and evaluated by the ISP team for currency and accuracy. If, at any time, it is determined that the SIS™ no longer accurately captures the support needs of the person, a new assessment will be completed.

### **Who Completes the SIS™?**

In order to ensure that the assessments are conducted in a manner that is independent and conflict-free, a vendor hired by ODP will conduct all SIS™ assessments. ODP has selected Ascend Management Innovations LLC, doing business as "Ascend," to administer the SIS™ in the state of PA.

Ascend works with individuals, families, supports coordinators, providers, and all other people participating in the assessment interview to schedule the meeting. The meeting is scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for the individual and family.

All interviewers (people who conduct the assessments) are trained by ODP and must meet AAIDD assessor requirements. The ODP training covers topics including the PA service delivery system, Everyday Lives, the P/FDS and Consolidated Waivers, the ISP, and the process and procedure for conducting interviews.

### **Where is More Information Available?**

Additional information about the SIS™ is available through your Supports Coordinator and Administrative Entity. You can also call the Office of Developmental Program's Customer Service Line at 1-888-565-9435 or access AAIDD's SIS™ website ([www.siswebsite.org](http://www.siswebsite.org)).

Information regarding ODP's use of the SIS™ can be found at the Office of Developmental Programs consulting website, [www.odpconsulting.net](http://www.odpconsulting.net). For information regarding Ascend, please view [www.ascendami.com](http://www.ascendami.com).