

SIS[®]: Helpful Information for Respondents

What is the SIS Assessment?

The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS[®]) is an assessment tool developed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) that evaluates practical support requirements for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It is administered in the form of an 8-page interview between the individual with IDD; any family, staff, supports coordinators, therapists, etc. who have an intimate knowledge of the individual's abilities in daily life; and a highly-trained human services professional. Many states use the results of the SIS to determine necessary supports and services for the individual.

What Makes the SIS Different?

The SIS is different than most other assessments, because it asks about the support a person needs "to be successful" at each activity listed.

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 same-aged adult?" In other words, to do this task completely, in the way that other adults in the person's community without a disability would do the task, what supports would he or she need?

How Does the SIS Rank Supports Needed?

The SIS asks respondents to rate the supports that an individual needs to lead a successful, fulfilling life. Respondents' answers are not limited to supports that are actually available; instead, respondents should think about any supports the individual would need 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 currently receives instead of the supports that would help a person be successful at the level of other same-aged adults in the person's community that do not have a disability. The SIS encourages respondents to focus on success.

Sections 1 and 2: Question Themes

Sections 1 and 2 of the SIS ask questions about the support needs in seven different areas of the person's life. Examples of each of those areas include the following:

- **Home Living** — such as laundering clothes, tidying his or her home and preparing meals.
- **Community Living** — such as participating in leisure activities, visiting friends and family, or shopping and running errands.
- **Lifelong Learning** — such as learning and applying skills like reading signs or solving problems, as well as supports needed to fully participate in traditional adult learning settings.
- **Employment** — such as interacting with coworkers and supervisors and maintaining productivity and quality in a competitive employment setting.
- **Health and Safety** — such as avoiding health and safety hazards, using emergency services, and maintaining physical and mental health.
- **Social Activities** — such as successfully socializing and maintaining positive relationships with others at home and in their community.
- **Protection and Advocacy** — such as practicing advocacy, making decisions, managing money and being protected from exploitation.

Sections 1 and 2: Question Types

The SIS asks 3 different kinds of questions about items in Sections 1 and 2 of the interview. For these activities, the SIS interviewer will ask you to rate:

- 1. Type of support that would help the individual accomplish the task like other same-aged adults in his or her community.**
 - If the person were to do this activity, what kind of support would be needed to help them be successful?
 - Sometimes more than one type of support is needed for an activity (for example, both verbal prompting and partial physical assistance). Indicate which type of support is the most dominant type of assistance that is needed to be successful.
- 2. Frequency of supports needed.**
 - If the person were to do this activity regularly (over several months), how often would support be needed to help him or her be successful?
- 3. Daily support time that should be provided 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.
 - Estimate the time needed to provide these supports across a TYPICAL 24-hour day. This is 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 on a given day, add up any support provided in the morning, evening and throughout the night. We will use that total as our estimated support time.

Section 3: Question Themes

Section 3 of the SIS asks questions about the person's exceptional medical and behavioral support needs. Medical supports are measured in areas of respiratory care, feeding assistance, skin care, and any other exceptional medical needs. The behavioral section measures any supports needed to prevent injuries to self or others as well as any exceptional supports related to sexual appropriateness and other behavioral support needs. Section 3 will ask if no supports, some supports, or extensive supports are needed in the measured areas.

Section 3: Helpful Hints About Ratings

Assessing Supports

- The person's support needs should be looked at holistically. Consider the following: their skill level, any assistive technology, their motivation, health, behavior, and safety needs.
- 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's current functioning. Thus, a person who has extensive support and needs to prevent behavioral disruption will require more supports for many items than another person without exceptional behavioral support needs.

Rating support needs for activities

- The SIS is a standardized assessment, and therefore 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 adult education courses." Even if the individual expresses no desire to take classes, 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.
- The SIS asks about every item because it is the philosophy of the tool. 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 whereby the individual's preferences will be identified.

Rating support needs that vary

- The instructions call for rating the most dominant type of support that is needed. When someone's intensity of support needs seem to border both a lower and a higher rating or tend to fluctuate, the SIS interviewer will help respondents determine the rating that is most appropriate.