

**Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services**  
**Division of Developmental Services**  
**Virginia Standard Operating Procedures for the SIS® and Review Process**  
**COVID-19 Pandemic Version**

**What is the Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS)?**

The Supports Intensity Scale is a standardized and norm-referenced assessment which was developed in 2004 by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). This assessment has been tested nationwide to ensure validity and reliability. More information can be found on the AAIDD web site: [www.aaidd.org](http://www.aaidd.org).

The SIS is an assessment of an individual's support needs at the time of the interview. The SIS gathers information through an interview with the individual and people who know the individual well, and with whom they have frequent contact. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SIS assessments ordinarily conducted in face to face interviews may be conducted via electronic video and/or audio means. The people who answer interview questions are called "Respondents."

A "Primary Respondent" is defined as a person who has known the individual well for at least the last 3 months and has observed the individual closely in one or more environments for substantial periods of time. A trained Interviewer collects information from respondents and/or the individual on many aspects of community living. The interview questions focus on the supports an individual would need if he/she were to do these activities like any other person his/her age living in the community without a disability.

A copy of the SIS report, which includes explanation and background on the SIS, is sent to the family and providers within 15 business days of the SIS interview by the Support Coordinator (SC). If electronic attempts to email the report are unsuccessful, an extension of 5 additional business days is permitted for the delivery of a hard copy. A copy of the SIS report is maintained in the individual's record by the Support Coordinator and providers.

**Virginia Standard Operating Procedures for the SIS**

1. The SIS is administered by an AAIDD endorsed SIS Interviewer. Only an AAIDD SIS with the Virginia Supplemental Questions will be utilized.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, it is expected that the individual participate as a respondent in his/her interview. The individual is free to choose his or her level of participation in the interview. Regardless of the individual's participation level, the SIS Interviewer must meet the individual. Guardians must be invited to participate in the SIS interview.
3. The SIS Interviewer will explain the reason for the SIS, the assessment process, and the role of respondents prior to starting the interview.
4. The SIS interview must be conducted with at least two primary respondents who are defined as people who have known the individual well for at least the last 3 months and have observed the individual closely in one or more environments for substantial periods of time.
5. At least two primary respondents must be present throughout the full SIS interview.
6. Each question on the assessment must be asked and opportunity for discussion given during the assessment. Each item in the assessment must be described before it is rated.
7. The individual's support needs will be described for the interviewer by the respondents in response to each question and discussed, if necessary. The Interviewer will guide the discussion. Based upon the information shared by respondents and the Interviewer's professional training, the Interviewer will make an item rating determination. The final rating of each question will be shared with the respondents.
8. Individuals' medical or behavioral support needs are identified in Sections 1A and 1B of the SIS. The Virginia SIS Supplemental Questions will be completed as indicated by specific medical and behavioral support needs identified.

## Virginia Standard Operating Procedures for the SIS and Review Process COVID-19 Pandemic Version

9. At the beginning of the assessment, the interviewer will document the names of all participants and note the means by which each participated on the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Checklist for the SIS Interview Participation log as well as the time at which this activity occurred. Immediately following the session, the interviewer will verbally review the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Checklist for the SIS Interview with participants and will ask for their verbal agreement/disagreement with these items. The interviewer will note the responses and the time at which they were obtained, on the form. . If a respondent must leave before the interview has ended, he/she will be asked before leaving to indicate his/her agreement or disagreement that SOPs were followed while he/she was present.
10. No audio or video recording of the SIS interview is permitted. This prohibition includes the use of security recording devices.

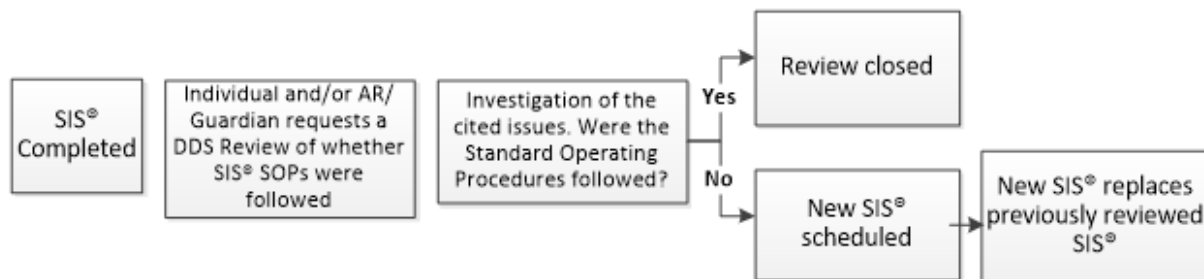
### What if there are concerns about how the SIS was conducted?

The individual, and/or his/her guardian/authorized representative who participated in the interview may request DBHDS to review whether the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures for administration of the SIS were followed. A SIS score itself is not appealable as professional training is required to assign an accurate rating.

### Process for Individuals and Guardians to Seek Review of Compliance with the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures:

1. If a review is desired, the individual, and/or his/her guardian/authorized representative who were in attendance at the interview, shall request review within 30 business days of the date of receipt of the SIS results by submitting a completed and signed copy of the Virginia SIS Review form along with a letter that details the specific ways in which the requestor believes the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures were not followed.
2. The Review form, letter, and any supporting documentation shall be mailed to the SIS Review Unit DBHDS Division of Developmental Services (DDS), PO Box 1797, Richmond, Virginia 23218-1797.
3. The Virginia SIS Quality Manager in consultation with the DDS Regional Support Manager, the vendor, and the SC will investigate the issues raised. DDS will issue a decision finding that the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures were either followed or not followed. A final decision will be rendered within 60 business days of the date the Review form is received by DBHDS. Notification to the requestor and SC/CM will be sent within 3 business days of the decision.
4. If it is found by DDS that the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures for the administration of the SIS were not followed, a new SIS will be requested and scheduled with an AAIDD endorsed Interviewer within 90 business days of the decision rendered by DDS. If it is found by DDS that the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures were followed, the review will be closed with no further action.
5. The DDS determination regarding compliance with the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures is final.

### Review Process Flow Chart





## **DBHDS/Division of Developmental Services**

### **SIS Interview Information for Respondents**

- In order to achieve a current and accurate picture of needed supports, it is requested that respondents not bring the following:
  - Copies of old SISs
  - Copies of SIS expanded clarifications or
  - Other assessments like the Virginia Individual Developmental Disabilities Eligibility Survey (VIDES), Inventory for Client and Agency Planning (ICAP), etc., as they are not needed.
- During virtual SIS assessments cameras should stay on for the duration of the interview. If respondents require a break, the assessor will pause the assessment to allow everyone the same opportunity.
- In order to assure the interview is conducted with full attention on accurate and timely completion of the SIS, any laptops or tablets that are brought to the interview should be turned off and put away for the duration of the interview, unless being utilized as a personal communication device. The one exception to this policy is that the interviewer may use a laptop to conduct the interview.
- For the same reason, all cell phones should be turned off or set to vibrate and should not be answered unless the respondent has informed the interviewer, prior to the interview, that he expects to receive an emergency call. Texting is not permitted during any part of the interview.
- No audio or video recording of the SIS interview is permitted. This prohibition includes the use of security recording devices.
- During the interview, it is the respondent's responsibility to accurately and honestly describe needed/provided supports in response to the interviewer's questions so the interviewer may determine an accurate rating.
- To ensure that the interviewer has a clear picture of the supports needed for the individual, he/she will ask follow-up questions. The interviewer, based on the answers of the respondents and his/her training and knowledge of the SIS, will determine the appropriate rating.
- Important "To's" and Important "For's" should be identified for this coming plan year only. (Additional or replacement "To's" and "For's" in subsequent years will be addressed at Individual Support Plan meetings.)
- At least 2 primary respondents must remain for the entire interview.
- At the beginning of the assessment, the interviewer will document the names of all participants and note the means by which each participated on the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Checklist for the SIS Interview Participation log, as well as the time at which this activity occurred.
- Immediately following the session, the interviewer will verbally review the Virginia Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Checklist for the SIS Interview with participants and will ask for their verbal agreement/disagreement with these items.
- The interviewer will note the responses and the time at which they were obtained, on the form. If a respondent must leave before the interview has ended, he/she will be asked before leaving to indicate his/her agreement or disagreement that SOPs were followed while he/she was present.