

Virginia Support Levels/Rate Tiers Updates Report | Plain Language Summary

Who is this summary for?

This summary is for people receiving services from *Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)* and their families, advocates, providers, DHBDS, and other people interested in the support levels and rate tiers.

What is this summary about?

In 2013, Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) and our partners with Health Management Associates (HMA-Burns), worked with DBHDS. We developed support levels and rate tiers. A **support level** shows the amount of help that someone needs. A **rate tier** is how much DBHDS pays for services for each support level. The support levels are based on the Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS®), supplemental questions, and a document review for some people. These support levels are used today.

In 2020, the SIS-A® changed. Some of the changes are:

- Different questions about the person
- New medical questions
- A new behavioral question
- Scoring

These changes are important to make sure the assessment is still a good assessment. These changes are called the SIS-A® 2nd Edition. Because of these changes, DBHDS must update the support levels.

Over the last year, HSRI and our partners at HMA-Burns, DBHDS, Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), and a project advisory group, researched these changes. Based on this research, support levels should be updated.

How should support levels be updated?

We analyzed the support levels. Analysis shows that there should be six support levels. There are seven today. Analysis also shows that we should use the entire SIS-A 2nd Edition to decide on the support levels. There should be 4 support levels for people with low to very high general supports needs. General support needs are the help people need with their daily life. General support needs include help for eating, bathing, dressing, getting out in the community, and other things people need help with every day. There should also be a support level for people with extensive medical needs

and a support level for people with extensive behavioral needs. The updated support levels and rate tiers are shown in the chart “Proposed Support Levels and Rate Tiers.”

*Proposed Support Levels and Rate Tiers**

Rate Tier	Current Support Level	Proposed Support Level	Support Level Descriptions
1	1	1	Low general support need, no exceptional medical or behavioral needs
2	2	2	Moderate general support need, no exceptional medical or behavioral needs
3	4	3	High general support need, no exceptional medical or behavioral needs
4	5	4	Very high general support need, no exceptional medical or behavioral needs
4	6	M	Exceptional medical support need, no exceptional behavioral needs
4	7	B	Exceptional behavioral support need

*Previous Support Level 3 is not shown. The remainder of the support levels are comparable.

Our analysis also shows that the SIS-A 2nd Edition scores that get people into each support level should also change.

Should the rate tiers be updated?

The rate tiers do not need to be updated. The support levels are comparable to today. That means that they are similar. For example, the current Support Level 4 is for people who have high general support needs. The updated Support Level 3 is also for people who have high general support needs. Support levels that are comparable to the support levels today will still match to the same rate tiers. For example, Support Level 6 today is for people with extensive medical support need and gets a rate tier of 4. The medical support level, Support Level M, that we propose, also matches to rate tier 4. We show the match of the support levels to rate tiers above.

How will these updates affect people receiving services?

If DBHDS decides to update the support levels, people won't receive a new support level until they take a SIS-A® 2nd Edition. When people take a SIS-A® 2nd Edition, we think most people will get a similar support level as today. Our analysis shows that about 3 of every 4 people will get a similar support level. Some people may get a higher support level. Our analysis shows that about 18% of people would get a higher support level. That means that if their support level is a 2 today, after they take their SIS-A® 2nd Edition it may be a 3. About 6% of people would get a lower level. That means that if their support level is a 3 today, after they take their SIS-A® 2nd Edition it may be a 2.

Our analysis shows that most providers delivering tiered services will be paid more. This is because we expect that more people will get higher levels. How much providers get paid depends on people they serve.

Our analysis shows that it will cost DBHDS about \$34.3 million to update the support levels. This cost will be spread over four years as people begin taking the SIS-A 2nd Edition.

When will DBHDS start using the SIS-A 2nd Edition?

DBHDS plans to begin using the SIS-A 2nd Edition on October 1, 2024. DBHDS will need to complete work to prepare for using the SIS-A 2nd Edition. DBHDS will need to share information about these changes with everyone to make sure that people are ready to begin using the SIS-A 2nd Edition. DBHDS also needs to make sure people understand the changes.

How can I learn more?

You can learn more by going to our webpage here: <https://dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/waiver-services/>