

The Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS®) and Person-Centered Plan (PCP) in Virginia

The purpose of this document is to explain the relationship between the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS), the person-centered planning process, the person-centered plan (otherwise known as the Individual Support Plan or ISP), and the support needs levels and reimbursement tiers for the Virginia Developmental Disabilities (DD) waivers. Person-centered planning focuses on the individual's needs and preferences, empowering and supporting individuals to define the direction of their own lives. It promotes self-determination, community inclusion, and control over one's life. The SIS suite of tools includes the Supports Intensity Scale-Adult® Version (SIS-A®, 2015) and SIS-A, 2nd Edition (2023) for individuals aged 16 years and older, and the Supports Intensity Scale-Children's™ Version (SIS-C™2016) for individuals aged 5-15 years who utilize a tiered DD waiver service. In Virginia, the SIS is used as the comprehensive assessment tool required by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for persons receiving DD waiver funding. Information learned through the SIS contributes to person-centered planning in terms of identifying what is important to and for people. The individual, family, and the team should consider the results of the entire SIS assessment as planning proceeds.

1. To provide complete and accurate information about the person's support needs, the SIS assesses a person's pattern and intensity of support needs in the following areas (Table 1):

Table 1: SIS Assessments in Virginia

SIS-C	SIS-A	SIS-A, 2nd Edition
Section 1: Exceptional Medical and Behavioral Support Needs		
Section 1A: Exceptional Medical Support Needs		
Section 1B: Exceptional Behavioral Support Needs		
Section 2: Supports Needs Index Scale		Section 2: Support Needs for Life Activities
A: Home life Activities	A: Home Living Activities	
B: Community & Neighborhood Activities	B: Community Living Activities	
C: School Participation Activities	C: Lifelong Learning Activities	C: Health and Safety Activities
D: School Learning Activities	D: Employment Activities	D: Lifelong Learning Activities
E: Health & Safety Activities	E: Health & Safety Activities	E: Work Activities
F: Social Activities	F: Social Activities	
G: Advocacy Activities	Section 3: Protection & Advocacy	G: Advocacy Activities

2. SIS assessment ratings should reflect a person's support needs for successfully participating in each activity; a lack of providers or opportunities to participate is not considered a barrier when determining ratings. Responses should reflect the essential supports outlined in the PCP, and the SIS can reveal additional support needs to be included. It's critical to recognize that everyone benefits from the support that enables participation in everyday activities and the support we all need to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
3. The individual's dreams, desired outcomes, and definition of a good life are an essential part of determining their support needs. These can be communicated by the individual in their preferred way or shared by others who know the individual well.
4. The support coordinator provides a copy of the SIS Family Friendly Report (SIS-C/SIS-A) or the SIS-A, 2nd Edition Summary Report (SIS-A, 2nd Ed.) to the person, family, and guardian (if applicable) within 8-15 days of completion. Provider(s) assigned via the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) Waiver Management System (WaMS) can access copies via WaMS.

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5. The DBHDS uses a mathematical algorithm, the scores from the SIS, and a verification process to assign the appropriate support needs level and one of four corresponding reimbursement tiers as a result of each SIS assessment.
 - A. The result is called the support needs level and reimbursement tier. The support needs level describes the type of support the individual needs. The reimbursement tier is the amount a DD Waiver service provider is reimbursed for services provided to an individual with a specific identified support needs level based on approved service authorizations.
Neither support needs level nor reimbursement tier determines service eligibility.
 - B. SIS-A and SIS-C (Table 2) have seven support needs levels. Support needs levels one through five are for general support needs; levels six and seven are for intensive support needs (medical and behavioral).

Table 2: SIS-C & SIS-A support levels/rate tiers

Tier	Support Level	Support Level Descriptions
1	1	Mild Support Needs -no support need for medical and behavioral challenges
2	2	Moderate Support Needs -little to no need for medical and behavioral supports
3	3	Mild/Moderate Supports Needs with Some Behavioral Support Needs -behavior support needs are not significant
	4	Moderate to High Support Needs -behavioral support needs
4	5	Maximum Support Needs -high to maximum personal care and/or medical support needs
	6	Intensive Medical Support Needs -intensive need for medical support
	7	Intensive Behavioral Support Needs -significantly enhanced supports due to behavior

- C. SIS-A 2nd Ed. (Table 3) has six levels of support, four general support levels and two exceptional support needs levels (medical and behavioral).

Table 3: SIS-A, 2nd Edition support levels/rate tiers

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

- D. The reimbursement tier sets the rate at which the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) reimburses the DD waiver provider for the service provided. Not all services are tiered. Tiered services include group home residential, sponsored residential, group day support, community engagement, supported living residential, and independent living residential (18 years old and above).