

Questions and Answers

SIS Interviews

July 2008

[General SIS Information and Selection](#)

1. What is the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)?

The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) is a nationally recognized, standardized assessment tool. It uses a structured interview to collect information about the supports a person with developmental disabilities would need in order to be successful in the world. The information collected will be used to help determine funding allocation.

Note: Developers in AAIDD (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) are working on a SIS assessment for persons under age 16 with disabilities that should be ready in the next few months. It will be Piloted by Utah and Washington—likely published in 2008.

2. Who wrote the Supports Intensity Scale?

The SIS was developed over a five year period by a team of experts from AAIDD (formerly AAMR), Washington, DC in response to changes in how society views and relates to people with disabilities.

[Assessment Tool Recommendation](#)

3. How was the SIS chosen?

An Oregon group of consumers, advocates, family members, providers and state staff first defined what was important. [Assessment Tool Selection Criteria](#). With the help of a consultant, Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) the group then looked at available assessment tools across the United States. The SIS was chosen because it meets Oregon's needs.

4. What other states are using the SIS?

Since its publication in January of 2004, the SIS is being used across the United States and abroad by service providers and agencies. The states of Georgia and Utah have adopted it as their official planning tool for consumers with intellectual disabilities, as well as Durham County, North Carolina. Other states who have adopted the SIS are: Colorado, Washington, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Alta Regional Center in California, Missouri, Utah, and Oklahoma. Internationally, the SIS has been translated into Dutch, Chinese, French, Icelandic, Italian and Spanish. More foreign language translations are forthcoming.

5. How is the SIS being administered across the country?

The SIS is administered in most states by the case managers. However Oregon is developing a State Operated Assessment Unit. Staff of this unit will be located in various locations throughout the State. This staff will conduct all SIS Assessments that are done in Oregon.

6. Who is using the SIS for budget and resource allocation?

Like Oregon, several states are currently working on using SIS assessments to help with resource allocation. States currently using it for resource allocation are: Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Washington state.

7. Can I see a sample interview form?

Yes, please visit <http://www.siswebsite.org/site/pdf/SISInterform&casestudy.pdf> to read a case study and a completed SIS interview form.

8. Where can I get more information about the SIS?

For general information about the SIS instrument go to www.siswebsite.org

[Goals](#)

9. Why is the SIS being used in Oregon?

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) which is the federal Medicaid agency, awarded a five-year Systems Transformation Grant to Oregon to develop and test a new system for the funding of certain comprehensive waiver services (DD50 24 hr. residential, DD51 supported living, and DD54 employment and inclusion) for people with developmental disabilities.

- The SIS is part of building the new system where service needs and rates align in a consistent manner across the state
- The SIS focuses on a consumer's current support needs and can be helpful in the person-centered Individual Support Plan
- The SIS has been proven to work by testing it on consumers with all levels of developmental disabilities in 33 states and Canada (see #4)

10. When will the SIS be used in Oregon?

The SIS was used in a Pilot Test conducted from June 2007 through August 2007. We hope most individuals in comprehensive waiver services of DD50 (24 hr. residential), DD51 (Supported Living), and DD54 (Employment and Day services) will have a SIS assessment completed within the next few years, or as determined by a "Rollout Plan" that is being prepared by Project Staff. Many decisions need to be made about how it will work between now and then.

SIS assessments on a select number of consumers of comprehensive services will begin as early as November, 2008

[Pilot Implementation](#)

11. What consumers were in the Pilot sample and received SIS assessments?

The pilot group was a representative sample of all consumers receiving services on the comprehensive waiver in DD50, DD51, and DD54. They were each given a SIS to help Oregon develop its model.

12. What did the Pilot Evaluation/Outcome consist of?

The Pilot evaluation consisted of: interview participant feedback on the process from questionnaires, county feedback on the process from a survey, AAIDD interviewer feedback on the process, stakeholder feedback on the process, reports on 15% of inter-rater reliability checks (see #27), cost survey information on the agency and the consumer, and SIS scores to help develop a model of Individual Budgeted Amounts.

13. How were consumers in the representative sample for the Pilot Test identified?

ReBAR project staff, consultants, and stakeholders identified a variety of county, consumer, and provider characteristics considered important in the sample selection. Independent consultants from Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) analyzed available information and selected a random sample that became the final group in March 2007. The sample group included 400 consumers from eleven counties.

14. Who led the SIS interviews?

Oregon contracted with AAIDD to provide independent, professionally trained interviewers for the Pilot test. The results of the Pilot Test have helped SPD decide to develop a State Assessment Unit in the summer of 2008 that will administer the SIS on an on-going basis.

15 How long does it take to assess one person?

The experienced interviewers in the Pilot took an average of 2-3 hours. Time taken depends on a number of factors, including the consumer's attention span, time scheduled, number of people in the group, etc.

16. Whose responsibility is it to coordinate the interview participants?

In the Pilot, the counties had the responsibility to schedule the participants for the interviews and worked in coordination with providers. SPD expects to utilize a similar process before SIS assessments begin **in November 2008**.

17. If consumers can't speak, how can they be interviewed?

The expectation is that every consumer will be invited to his/her own interview. If he/she normally uses an augmentative device, or relies on a sign language interpreter, staff, or family member, to communicate, those accommodations should be put in place. The same method of communication with the consumer in his/her typical ISP meeting can be used for the interview. The interviewer wants to be able to meet the consumer if at all possible, even if it is only for a short amount of time.

18. Who should be at the SIS interview with the consumer?

Individuals who know the consumer very well and have had frequent contact with him/her should be invited to the interview. The minimum number participating in an interview can be two. These participants could include: service coordinator, day services representative, residential services representative, and guardian/family member, in addition to the consumer himself/herself.

19. What does frequent contact mean?

The SIS manual defines frequent contact as someone who has had recent observation of and interaction with the consumer in one or more environments for substantial periods of time over a 3 month period. The residential manager, and or Employment/ATE (Alternatives to Employment) staff may have the most recent knowledge about the consumer's needs for support. The involved guardian or family member (with consumer's consent) may also be invited to participate in the interview. Of course, the consumer will always be asked to be a part of his/her own interview. The goal of the interview is to gather information from a small group who knows the consumer very well.

20. How many respondents can each provider have at an interview?

In the Pilot, providers and counties worked together to determine who knew the consumer best, and who should be attending interviews. It is preferable that one representative from day services and one representative from residential services participate in individual interviews, along with the county case manager and the individual and/or guardian.

21. Can respondents participate in interviews by phone?

The interviews are face-to face interviews and only in very unusual circumstances will information be collected over the phone.

22. What happens if the consumer has to leave in the middle of the interview?

The expectation is that all consumers will be invited to their own interviews; however, some will not be able to stay the entire time. Proactive planning needs to take place to anticipate when a consumer may need to leave early so that the interview can continue to completion.

23. What is the policy if everyone that is invited to the SIS interview does not show up?

The interview will go on as scheduled as long as two informed participants are available, and as long as at least one is not a paid provider representative.

24. Does the consumer have to participate?

No, but it is preferred if at all possible. There may be alternative methods of obtaining information from a consumer who does not do well in a structured/group setting. The interviewer would like to meet the consumer if at all possible.

25. When a consumer uses assistive technology such as, a communication device, wheel chair, hearing aid, etc., is the SIS administered with the equipment in place?

Yes. If the person already uses the assistive device, he/she will be scored with the device in place.

26. How is reliability verified? Who does it?

For the Pilot test, the lead trainers of the AAIDD interviewers did inter-rater reliability checks (where an interviewer was observed by a senior trainer who validated the process and the scoring) on 15% of the 400 interviews that took place in the Pilot Test.

Policy decisions have now been made for the State Assessment Unit to be the long-term administrators of the SIS. Inter-rater reliability checks will be done by Sr. Assessment Specialists. For technical information about the SIS, see the website at:

<http://www.siswebsite.org/page.wv?section=Product+Info&name=Quick+Facts>

27. Other assessments administered over time and across informants often result in a great deal of variability. Is there anything about the SIS that makes the data more objective or consistent?

The inter-rater reliability of the SIS is .87, which is in the “excellent” range based on conventional standards for adaptive behavior scales. A recent study by Thompson et al. showed that being properly trained in administering the SIS plays a major role in obtaining reliable results from a SIS assessment.

28. How is conflict within the interview participants handled?

The interviewer will ask probing questions in order to make the best decision for the rating of each question.

[Use of the SIS](#)

29. Once the SIS interviews are done and scored, will the providers get them? If not, what information will they receive?

At this time, it is not known what information the providers will receive from the interviews conducted in the Pilot Test or even when they are implemented into the system in rollout.

30. What happens if there is a disagreement over the SIS score?

SPD is developing a formal appeals process at this time that will be used when SIS interviews begin in November 2008.

[Oregon SIS Supplemental Information](#)

31. Will Oregon be asking any extra questions unique to consumers of our state in addition to the SIS questions?

In the Pilot, Oregon added several supplemental questions along with the SIS interview questions. Specific questions were asked about: aspiration, dehydration, constipation, diabetes management, psychiatric diagnosis, consumers whose behavior requires legal or court mandated conditions or restrictions, and day or night situations where additional staffing is required. The need for additional questions as part of SIS implementation is still under consideration.

[Full Implementation](#)

32. Who will be affected by the administration of the SIS ?

When fully in place, all consumers who are in group homes, supported living, and employment or community inclusion services will have the SIS conducted with them.

33. What will Oregon be doing to be ready for full use of the SIS?

- Oregon “tried out” the SIS in the Pilot Test which began in June of 2007 and ended in August of 2007. The SIS interviews were done on the statistically random sample of 400 **consumers** with a variety of characteristics in group homes and supported living situations as well as day services. The SIS results along with other data has

been used to design a model for identification of the level of support needed and individual budgets for funding for consumers.

- Rate models have been and are being developed that will be used uniformly statewide for service reimbursement to providers of residential and day/employment services.
- The new assessment unit has been developed by the State to do the assessments statewide, ensuring consistency, and standardization in how the SIS is conducted
- Information and tools for orientation of stakeholders are being developed

34. How does SIS work with person centered planning and greater choice for the consumer?

The SIS score will be used along with the new residential rate model to identify an Individual Budgeted Amount (IBA) from which residential and day services can be identified based on consumer choice. The assessment will also provide an additional source of information to the team that develops the ISP about the supports an individual needs.