

Report
On
Implementation of Supports Intensity Scale
(SIS) Assessment Tool Pilot Project



Session Law 2010-31, Section 10.6(b)

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities
and Substance Abuse Services

**Report On
Implementation of SIS® Assessment Tool Pilot Project**

April 1, 2011

In accordance with Session Law 2010-31 Section 10.6. (b) (2):

The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services makes and submits the following report on the progress of the Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS®) pilot project to the Senate Committee on Mental Health and Youth Services, the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, the House Health and Human Services Subcommittee on Mental Health, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, and the Fiscal Research Division.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS) began implementation of the Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS®) Pilot Project in April of 2008 in an effort to improve the assessment of individual service and support needs and to more reliably inform the person centered planning process. The SIS® uses an interview process to assess the support needs of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It has been proven to be a valid and reliable instrument, for individuals ages 16 and above, that provides specific information which assists individuals and support teams with identifying the specific strengths and support needs of the individual. The long range plan for the system-wide use of the SIS® is to assist the DMH/DD/SAS with planning for individual budgets and for use in determining intensity of support needs related to resource allocation.

The Supports Intensity Scale® was developed over a period of five years by a team of national experts endorsed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), the world's leading organization for professionals in the developmental disabilities field since 1876. The SIS® is a multidimensional scale designed to determine the pattern and intensity of the support needs of an individual with intellectual or developmental disabilities. It was specifically designed to (a) assess support needs (b) determine the intensity of needed supports (c) monitor progress and (d) evaluate outcomes of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The SIS® is not intended to measure an individual's deficits, but rather, focuses on the supports needed for the individual to fully participate in everyday life successfully within his/her home and community. The SIS® assessment results present a graphic representation of an individual's support needs across these six life-activity domains: home living, employment, community living, health and safety, lifelong learning, and social activities. It also produces a composite score reflecting an individual's overall intensity of support needs relative to others with developmental disabilities. The assessment information gained assists the planning team in developing individualized support plans that are responsive to the needs and choices of individuals with disabilities.

While the Adult version of the SIS® is a proven valid and reliable assessment tool, the Supports Intensity Scale® for Children (Children's SIS®) has yet to be determined valid and reliable. A study comprised of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been designed by AAIDD to examine the usefulness of the Children's SIS®. This study will collect data that will enable the authors of the Children's SIS® to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument. If successful, the Children's SIS® will provide states with a tool that will enable them to determine eligibility for developmental disability services based upon a child's needs instead of, or in addition to, disability categories, IQ, and other measures currently in use. If proven valid and reliable it will allow the assessment of a population not currently addressed by the Adult SIS®. AAIDD projects the completion of this study to be 2013.

The Developmental Disabilities Training Institute (DDTI) - UNC School of Social Work is the vendor with which the DMH/DD/SAS contracts for the coordination of the Supports Intensity Scale®. The DMH/DD/SAS and DDTI utilize licensed independent practitioners (assessors) with at least two years of experience working with adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to conduct SIS® Assessments. The assessors are directly enrolled with Medicaid and receive thirteen hours of SIS® training prior to completing SIS® assessments; they also receive yearly refresher training. SIS® assessors are also trained in entering completed assessment data into the AAIDD secured online SIS® database. The DMH/DD/SAS has policies in place to ensure that the administration of the SIS® assessment tool is independent from service delivery. The majority of SIS® assessors are in private practice and, therefore, are independent of provider agencies delivering services. However, SIS® examiners that provide services to provider agencies are not permitted to conduct SIS® assessments for individuals served by a provider agency with which they are affiliated.

The DMH/DD/SAS and DDTI ensures inter-rater reliability of the SIS® assessors using the following process:

- the assessor trainees are required to conduct three SIS® assessments that are shadowed by a previously certified assessor (“rater”);
- the assessor trainee is observed by a rater who simultaneously completes an independent rating of the same individual to assess the correct administration of the test;
- the rater compares the results of the assessment he/she completes with that of the assessor trainee. An inter-rater reliability formula is used which allows the rater to help determine if an assessment was conducted reliably. The acceptable standard of inter-rater reliability is 86% level of agreement between assessor and rater. If this standard is not achieved with the assessor additional training and shadowing of assessments, by a previously certified “rater” assessor is required; and
- upon completion of 13 hours of SIS® training and achieving the acceptable standard of inter-rater reliability the assessor trainee is granted certification to conduct SIS® assessments for up to one year. The SIS® Examiner is granted recertification annually upon achieving the acceptable standard of inter-rater reliability.

SIS® Pilot Project

The implementation of the SIS® Pilot Project has been focused on seven Local Management Entities (LMEs). The seven LME(s) are: The Durham Center, East Carolina Behavioral Health, Five County Mental Health Authority, The Guilford Center, Mecklenburg County Area Mental Health, Sandhills Center for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, and Smoky Mountain Center. DDTI employs one full time position dedicated to the SIS® Pilot Project to provide coordination and management of the project. The DMH/DD/SAS has been successful in the development and expansion of the project. This has involved the following activities:

- recruitment and training of 15 SIS® assessors;
- development of an effective supervision model for use with the SIS® assessors;
- development of curricula and provision of SIS® overview training to the pilot LMEs, case managers and other provider staff;
- development of an informational packet and distribution plan about the SIS® instrument for use by the pilot LME(s);
- development of a SIS® specific web page on the DMH/DD/SAS website;

- maintenance of an active working relationship with the AAIDD, the sponsoring organization of the SIS®, to ensure that the implementation meets evidence-based practice guidelines and to maintain the SIS tool’s validity during implementation;
- review and analysis of the AAIDD database maintained on NC SIS® assessments completed;
- provision of information and reports regarding the completion of SIS® assessments within the pilot LME(s); and
- consultation with DMH/DD/SAS staff and stakeholders regarding the SIS® tool and the SIS® Pilot project.

The DMH/DD/SAS has expanded the use of the SIS® beyond the Pilot LME(s). This is to support the assessment of individuals who have an interest in participating in the Self-Direction option within the Supports Waiver, of the CAP MR/DD Waiver Program, as the assessment provides valuable information to assist the individual and support team with determining support needs related to participation in Self-Direction.

The following table represents the growth trend of assessments that have been completed to date in the seven pilot LME sites and the non-pilot LME(s) over the time period reflected. Over all there have been a total of 1,111 Adult SIS® assessments completed to date. The numbers in the table below are not cumulative but reflect the number of assessments completed as of the time period indicated.

LME	Total number of assessments completed as of:	8/26/2010	9/23/2010	10/21/2010	11/24/2010	12/20/2010	1/6/2011
Pilots:							
Durham		101	101	101	102	102	102
ECBH		70	70	73	79	89	89
Five County		100	114	132	142	146	147
Guilford		37	38	38	39	40	40
Mecklenburg		118	119	121	125	129	129
Sandhills		213	224	228	237	236	236
Smoky Mountain		30	97	178	212	236	239
Non-Pilots:							
Alamance		13	13	13	13	13	13
Orange-Person-Chatham MH/DD/SA Authority		5	5	5	5	5	5
Southeastern Region		1	1	1	1	1	1
CenterPoint		9	19	28	31	36	36
Pathways MH/DD/SA		6	15	32	28	47	47
Mental Health Partners		1	4	4	9	27	27
Total		704	820	954	1025	1107	1111

Proposed Infrastructure and Resource Requirements for full implementation of the SIS®

The DMH/DD/SAS is projecting the completion of SIS® assessments for approximately 11,500 individuals over the next three years. This number represents the number of individuals currently receiving Community Alternatives Program for Persons with Mental Retardation and Other Developmental Disabilities (CAP-MR/DD) funding. The infrastructure needed to ensure the continued use of the SIS® assessment tool across the system to meet the projected outcomes includes several components: one full time position to manage the implementation of the SIS®, one quarter-time administrative support position to assist with coordination of training, website management, data processing and analysis, AAIDD License fee per assessor *per year*; and the cost of the SIS® assessment tools.

The table below represents the proposed infrastructure costs needed to ensure continued use of the SIS® assessment tool with participants of the CAP- MR/DD Waiver Program. Training costs are not yet identified and are not included in this table. *Actual costs may vary due to fee increases, number of assessments completed as well as the number of assessors.

<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Primary Responsibilities</i>	<i>Annual Costs*</i>
One Full-Time SIS® Coordinator Position salary and benefits	Manage the overall implementation of the SIS®	\$80,373
One quarter-Time Administrative Support Position salary no benefits	Assist with coordination, training, website management, data processing and analysis	\$12,000
AAIDD License Fee	License fee of \$178.00 each year for 15 SIS® Practitioners	\$2,670
SIS® Assessments	Assessment tool cost of \$13.06 for 11,500 assessments	\$150,190
	Total Proposed Annual Cost:	\$245,233

Progress to date of implementation of the SIS® per legislation

Session Law 2010-31, Section 10.6.(b) added the following requirement (paragraph 1a) to Session Law 2009-451, Section 10.12.(f). Paragraph (1a) states:

The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, shall require the seven LMEs participating in the current Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) assessment tool pilot project to administer a SIS assessment to all clients with developmental disabilities no later than October 1, 2010. The participating LMEs shall use the results of the SIS assessments to assign clients with developmental disabilities to one of the tiers within the CAP-MR/DD Waiver and to other needed services, according to their relative intensity of need.

Currently, the CAP-MR/DD Waiver does not require the use of the SIS® assessments tool. Therefore, individuals receiving CAP-MR/DD services within the seven LME’s participating in the SIS® pilot project cannot be mandated to participate in the SIS® assessment. The SIS® assessment will be included in the upcoming renewal of the CAP-MR/DD waivers effective November 1, 2011. The SIS® will not replace current assessment practices. While the DMH/DD/SAS and DDTI continues to provide information and support to the LMEs regarding the SIS®, many individuals and families refuse to participate in the SIS® assessment. As indicated previously, the SIS® is proven valid and reliable for individuals ages 16 years and above.

Local Management Entities do not have the authority to assign individuals to the tiers of the CAP/MR-DD Waivers as only the DMH/DD/SAS has this authority. It is important to understand the use of the

SIS® is only one component in the creation of a systematic process for determining service costs/distribution of funding. Assessments based on the intensity of an individual's support needs are typically utilized with other variables, in addition to SIS® data, to create a statistically valid and reliable process. Adequate time and attention to the required variables of the process is required. The use of the SIS® in isolation is not best practice and jeopardizes the integrity of any process/system for determining service costs/distribution of funding based on intensity of need.

The DMH/DD/SAS is actively engaged in exploring options to create a systematic process for determining service costs and distribution of funding based on intensity of need for use in the I/DD service delivery system. Such processes will help provide data driven decisions for individuals receiving services and those waiting for services, as well as provide improved cost predictability.

The DMH/DD/SAS has been engaged in a variety of pre-planning exploratory activities required to develop a systematic process for assigning specific services based on the individual's intensity of need. These activities include:

- the implementation of the SIS® Pilot Project for individuals who are funded by CAP-MR/DD Waiver within the 7 pilot LMEs and expansion to all other/non-pilot LMEs;
- discussions with other states specifically regarding their development and implementation of processes/systems that assign specific services based on the individual's intensity of need;
- discussions with staff of the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) and national experts who have been involved in the creation of such models in North Carolina (e.g. the Piedmont Behavioral Health (PBH) waiver) and other states; and
- participation in meetings with staff from PBH regarding the development and planned implementation of the PBH Support Needs Matrix.

A system re-design requires adequate time and includes careful planning as well as ongoing stakeholder involvement from inception. Adequate time is required to complete the work necessary to define the specific parameters of the proposed changes. The development of this system re-design includes the following processes: planning and preparation, data collection, model development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation. This restructuring process requires steady focused work over a few years with a strong commitment to active engagement and collaboration with all stakeholders. This system re-design also requires staff with specific skills and competencies, in addition to external consultation with national experts.

During the planning and preparation stage, the state, in collaboration with stakeholders, sets policy goals related to what it hopes to achieve with the creation of a systematic process for determining service costs and distribution of funding based on intensity of need. The data collection stage involves decision-making related to what data to use, what data other states have used in similar projects, and the collection, compilation and analysis of data. The model development stage includes the development of the statistical model and specific payment rates for services to ensure payments for similar types of services are standardized, while taking individual support needs into account. During the implementation stage the state implements the model and works with individuals who receive services, families, providers and other stakeholders to ensure the model is working as planned and makes adjustments as needed. After implementation it is important for the state to continually evaluate the model and the accomplishment of the state's set goals.

Conclusion

SIS® is proven to be a valid and reliable instrument for use with individuals ages 16 and older who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. It provides specific information that assists individuals and support teams with identifying the specific strengths and support needs of the individual. DMH/DD/SAS has been successful at implementing the use of the SIS® over the past three years in the seven pilot LME(s) and has completed 1,111 assessments for individuals 16 years of age and older with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Children's SIS®, designed for use with children 5-15 years of age, has not yet been proven valid and reliable and therefore cannot be reflected in these numbers.

Currently, there are 15 SIS® assessors and recruitment and training of new assessors is ongoing. System barriers have been identified and have been minimized or resolved. The knowledge and capacity within the LME(s) regarding the use of the SIS® has been established with the seven pilot LME(s) and is being developed with the non-pilot LME(s). The objectives of this effort include improving the assessment of individual service and support needs to more reliably inform the person centered planning process and using the data collected to develop funding methodologies to ensure that services are allocated equitably with the highest cost services/supports and/or those delivered at the highest level of intensity provided to those individuals with the most significant needs.

DMH/DD/SAS is committed to the statewide implementation of the SIS® and the improvement in services and supports this effort may provide. This is directly related to the creation of a systematic process for determining service costs and distribution of funding based on intensity of need for use in the I/DD service delivery system. The use of such a process has the potential to create a service system that is more efficient and equitable. This system re-design will support the state in reaching its outcomes of providing services to individuals based on their intensity of need, and the reliable determination of relative intensity of need, or upon how each individual with I/DD compares to all persons with I/DD in the state.