



Pennsylvania Advocates and Resources
for Autism and Intellectual Disabilities



April 10, 2023

Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary
Department of Human Services
Office of Developmental Programs
625 Forster Street, Room 510
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Associations Express Concerns with the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) Reassessments

Deputy Secretary Ahrens,

As associations representing organizations who support individuals with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) across Pennsylvania, our members have recently expressed concerns about the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) reassessments, needs groups and needs levels, and the ODP processes associated with changes to the above items and resulting rate changes.

In response, associations surveyed members to determine the scope of the issue. The following ODP SIS process issues were identified:

- The majority of respondents reported that they were “never” or “rarely” notified when individuals' SIS scores changed and this score change resulted in a rate change. Many providers reported that they were unaware of rate changes resulting from SIS reassessments until billing for the individuals was denied. In some cases, providers have had to back-bill at a lower rate for months of service already provided, causing financial losses. Providers have also stated that individuals are also not notified when a SIS reassessment results in a change in Medicaid services.
- The majority of respondents reported that ODP is making rate changes retroactive to the SIS reassessment date.
- The majority of respondents reported that when SIS scores change, the scores are changed in past ISPs in the ODP system and that the history of the individuals' past SIS scores are gone.

Additionally, members from each of our associations have reported the following issues:

- SIS reassessment results do not always accurately reflect the individual's needs.
- No meaningful process for individuals and providers to challenge the SIS score when it does not accurately reflect the individual's needs.
- Difficulties scheduling the SIS score reassessments and a lengthy and cumbersome reassessment process, even when the need is urgent.

- In order to assure health & safety, a number of providers have been unable to reduce support levels to the individual when the individual is given a lower SIS score.
- Lack of communication and transparency regarding why SIS scores change, even when the SIS scores change significantly.
- Lack of transparency regarding how raw data is calculated into the Needs Level Scores.
- SIS score results appear dependent on the assessor.
- Individuals in the highest needs groups appear to have their SIS scores lowered more drastically than those in lower needs groups, despite their needs being generally unchanged from previous years.

Based on the above concerns with the SIS score reassessment process, we request that ODP revise this process by implementing the following recommendations:

- Provide formal, advance notice to individuals and families/guardians of significant changes in their Medicaid services, including changes resulting from a change in SIS score, in a manner that is understandable by the individual and their family/guardian. This notice should include any adverse actions ODP intends to make, the reasons for the action, the specific authority that supports the proposed action, and an explanation of the right to appeal any reduction in Medicaid service.
- Provide formal, advance notice to providers of individual rate changes. This notice should include any adverse actions ODP intends to make, the reasons for the action, the specific authority that supports the proposed action, the right to an administrative hearing to contest the proposed adverse action, and the circumstances under which services and rates will continue pending the outcome of an appeal. We further recommend that ODP adopt an internal review process that automatically identifies and evaluates any reductions in SIS score or SIS level prior to authorizing any changes or modifications affecting billing rates, service eligibility, or the ISP; and that all previous SIS scores and assessment data be archived within HCSIS or any succeeding information system.
- Retract all adverse SIS scores that have been issued since March 1, 2022 and rescind any related recoupment demands issued to ID/A providers. Repay to ID/A providers all funds that providers have repaid to ODP due to the adoption and application of invalid SIS scores; and discontinue reducing SIS scores and reducing provider payment rates and recouping payments from providers without affording individuals and their service providers effective advance notice of any proposed reductions in an individual's SIS score and the opportunity to challenge such actions.
- Investigate and rectify any fidelity and process issues with SIS assessments.
- ODP regularly release SIS score changes aggregate data to provider associations.

We thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to hearing back from you concerning these issues.

Sincerely,



Cherie Brummans
Executive Director, The Alliance CSP



Sherri Landis
Executive Director, The Arc of Pennsylvania



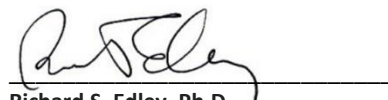
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