

Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)

Historically, persons with developmental disabilities received funding and services based on an assessment of their skills - an assessment that simply identified what they could or could not do. Funding and services were provided to “restore”, “rehabilitate” or otherwise address what the person couldn’t do - their deficits.

Though well-meaning, this view led to people being excluded from many potential roles and limited their contributions as adults. With a focus on deficits people were invariably seen as “unable” or “incapable” and denied many opportunities afforded nondisabled people.

In addition, the interpretation of what a person “needs” would vary widely between people and places leading to inconsistencies in the type and amount of services and supports that were provided.

In 2004 the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, a leading US based research and advocacy organization, released the *Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)*. The SIS was developed to better determine what individuals need and as a way to help state and provincial governments to use funding more effectively.

The SIS defines an individual’s needs differently. Unlike traditional deficit based assessments, the SIS looks at and measures the support a person needs to live a successful life in society, just like anyone else.

The SIS measures the type, frequency and daily duration of support a person needs to successfully participate in fifty-seven distinct life activities in the community. Twenty-three exceptional medical and behavioural support needs are also measured.

The SIS is a useful and effective tool for helping people make decisions about personal goals, level of care, or resource allocation. When coupled with Person Centered Planning - which assists in identifying preferred life activities and goals, the SIS can assist a person to get the right services and funding for their needs and aspirations.

In late 2009, the Supports Intensity Scale was adopted by the Province of Alberta as part of the ongoing effort to improve the PDD program. Eventually, everyone receiving PDD supports will have a SIS completed. Beginning in early 2010, all individuals applying for PDD services and funding will be required to have a SIS completed. Individuals already receiving PDD services will also be required to participate in a SIS at some point before 2012.

The SIS is completed during a face to face interview with the individual, family members or others who know the person well. A SIS specialist facilitates the interview by discussing a number of life activities then assisting the group to determine the score. The process takes about three hours and is done in a location suitable for the individual and family.

Results from the SIS are shared with the individual and their family. If a person’s situation changes, a new SIS may be conducted.

More information about the use of the SIS in PDD Central Region is available from www.pdd.org/central or you may contact Mike Machuk, SIS Project Supervisor, PDD Central Region at (403) 340-7776.

More information about the Supports Intensity Scale is available at www.siswebsite.org