



INFORMATION BRIEF

Applications of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) for Informing Resource Allocation

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While the SIS has only been available for five years, it has stirred considerable interest in the United States and other countries:

- In Europe, three European Union countries are considering using the SIS for resource allocation purposes (The Netherlands, Belgium and Italy). The Netherlands and Belgium together have 14,000 completed SIS interviews. The tool has been translated into ten languages. Other countries as far spread as Iceland and Taiwan have recently been visited by SIS authors.
- In Canada, three provinces are exploring the SIS (Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba). Ontario has taken the lead by building the SIS into their application for services, and now has 8,000 completed SIS interviews.
- In the US, fourteen states, local jurisdictions or organizations utilize the SIS for assessment and/or resource allocation purposes. As of January 2009, SIS Online had acquired 90,000 SIS administrations.

Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, and Washington have selected the SIS as their baseline assessment tool. Nebraska is assessing the utility of employing the SIS. North Carolina is using the SIS for people self directing in their new support waiver. Several states have chosen to supplement the SIS:

- Utah¹, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Louisiana have designed supplemental questions to the SIS to capture additional information.
- Washington also has added a limited number of additional items to the SIS. Washington spent 3.5 million dollars making the SIS an integral part of their standard agency dataset and application for services. Interest also has been expressed by state mental health agencies in employing the SIS as a supplementary assessment tool for assessing the support needs of people with serious mental illnesses.

¹ Information about the Utah supplement and the state's implementation of SIS is available at: hsdspd.state.ut.us/sis.htm

- Pennsylvania is supplementing the SIS with information that is presently captured through its Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) waiting list profiling tool. However, Pennsylvania does not have active plans to employ SIS for resource allocation purposes.
- In North Carolina, Piedmont Behavioral Healthcare uses the SIS as its baseline assessment tool and to support person-centered planning in its HCBS b/c five county waiver.

By and large, the early state adopters of the SIS are focusing on applying it for its principal intended purpose – i.e., supporting the individual planning process. However, other applications also are emerging, including funding.

Funding-Related Applications of the SIS

Not surprisingly, only recently have funding-related applications of the SIS emerged. Georgia and Washington State are the furthest along in employing the SIS along these lines:

- **Georgia** is redesigning its two HCBS waivers for persons with mental retardation and began a new comprehensive and support waiver in November 2008 with CMS approval. Georgia has the oldest comprehensive community waiver in the United States. Now there will be a new comprehensive and a new supports waiver. Both waivers will feature service plan authorization limits. These limits will be based in part on each individual's historical spending and in part on an amount figured by applying a DOORS-like methodology that uses SIS, results to calculate an individual budget amount. This methodology employed statistical methods to find a best statistical fit between SIS data elements and current expenditures. The Georgia design is intended to begin the process of shifting individual resource allocations to rely increasingly on assessed need and other situational factors as prime determinates. The Georgia approach is a resource allocation approach. Service rates will still be based on a state determined fee-schedule. In part, the Georgia approach also is driven by the state's objective of incorporating self-direction features into its waivers. Georgia has over 10,500 new individual budgets for participants in the two new waivers in play as 2009 began.
- **Washington** has developed a payment model that incorporates selected elements of the SIS and other consumer-related factors into a unified methodology for determining payments for people who receive community residential services (either in the form of group home or supported living services). The design of this payment model is very sophisticated and entailed calibrating the model to the results of a concurrent independent survey of experts to estimate service hours needed by level of support. This model operates in conjunction with seven broad levels of residential support intensity but generates individual payment amounts. Development of this model began in 2005; the model is still being refined but was implemented statewide in 2007. It has continued to be refined in 2008. It is important to point out that the SIS and other consumer-related factors drive the "direct supports" portion of the residential rate. Transportation and other administrative costs are figured separately. Washington's approach has many compelling features and was based on an especially well-conceived research design. The state also has completed work to develop payment models for employment and adult community access services that also will selectively integrate SIS and other information about individuals into the models.
- **Colorado** is using the SIS to form levels for its Comprehensive HCBS waiver in January 2009 and is working on individual caps for its SLS waiver for July 2009. Historically Colorado led the way

in early SIS informed resource allocation. The Resource Exchange in Colorado Springs was one of the first organizations nationwide to adopt the SIS. By report, The Resource Exchange in 2006 already employed the SIS in making resource authorization decisions based on support needs. Colorado Springs was the first city to adopt the SIS for use. Colorado rolled out SIS informed resource allocation models for comprehensive services in January 2009 and for support services in July 2009. Colorado was the first state to field a support waiver (SLS waiver).

- **Louisiana** will examine the potential for employing SIS data either to establish individual resource allocations and/or service unit authorization levels in its principal HCBS waiver for individuals with developmental disabilities. The state has completed sufficient “Louisiana Plus” assessments and added community safety risk. They are rolling out a model based on Virginia System SIS reimbursement style levels that will help over 2,000 NOW waiver applicants move from their registry into waiver services and supports.
- **Oregon** is using the SIS results for reimbursement of residential adult services.
- **Utah** officials report that they also may employ the SIS to revamp the state’s present resource allocation scheme. Utah developed one of the first supplemental sets of SIS questions and has used it for a number of years.
- Alta Regional Center in **California** (which serves about 13,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities) has started work on developing SIS-based individual resource allocations. One additional California regional center has also joined in studying the use of the SIS to inform planning and explore reimbursement allocation potential.
- The Macomb-Oakland Regional Center and The Authority in **Michigan** is considering developing an individual resource allocation system based on the SIS. They serve one fourth of the people with intellectual disabilities in Michigan.
- **Virginia** has completed a 550 person pilot using the SIS and is anticipating a statewide SIS informed resource allocation by 2012.
- **Missouri** has completed 2,800 SIS assessments and anticipates a statewide SIS informed resource allocation model perhaps as early as 2010 with individual budgets for their three waivers and 8,000 waiver participants.
- **Oklahoma** began SIS assessments on their multiple waiver populations in 2008.
- **Rhode Island** began a 500 person pilot study of the SIS in 2008 and is exploring resource allocation applications for people with intellectual disabilities as they prepare to merge into a global waiver with 11 Rhode Island waivers.

Other states also have expressed interest in using the SIS along these lines.