

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Supports Intensity Scale- *Adult Version*[™] (SIS-A[™])

1. **Why is AAIDD transitioning from the SIS to the SIS-A?**

The Supports Intensity Scale[®] (SIS[®]) was launched in 2004, and is a standardized assessment tool designed to measure the pattern and intensity of supports that a person (16 years and older) with intellectual disability requires to be successful in community settings. The SIS-A, released in 2015, features user enhancements that address users feedback to collect additional demographic information and reorder the sections and subscale items on the paper form. In addition, a few minor changes in word choice were made to enhance clarity and to better align with item descriptions. The new name more clearly identifies that it is intended to be used with adults, and distinguishes from the soon to be released Supports Intensity Scale-Children's Version[™] (SIS-C[™]).

2. **How does the additional demographic collection contribute to the administration and scoring of the SIS-A?**

The collection of demographic information has no influence on the Support Needs Index (SNI). The time taken to collect the demographic information during the assessment interview is minimal, and once aggregated, state users will be able to generate reports on those who have been assessed according to a variety of demographic variables. Notable examples of the demographics collected now include IQ range, adaptive behavior range, race and ethnicity, presence of disabilities, residence type, residence location (urban, rural, etc.), educational attainment, current employment, and language spoken.

3. **Are SIS-A assessors required to complete the demographic information on page one?**

AAIDD encourages SIS-A users to complete all demographic information as aggregate data collected will be valuable for data analysis purposes. Data will assist in understanding the overall profile of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities served by state systems. In addition, future analyses will enable investigations of the intersection of SIS scores and demographic variables.

4. **Was the SIS-A re-normed?**

The SIS-A (2015) uses the same norms and is based on the same standardization sample as the original SIS. The SIS-A will be re-normed in the future, most likely with heavy reliance on SISOnline[®] data. SISOnline data were used to further investigate the psychometric characteristics of the scale, and all analyses indicate that the SIS-A is a valid measure of support needs. Several studies reporting these findings have already been published in peer reviewed journals and more are in press. With the collection of demographic data in the SIS-A, more thorough analyses of the intersection SIS scores and demographic variables will be possible.

5. Can current SIS interviewers and trainers use SIS-A without further training?

All SIS interviewers and trainers will maintain their recognition by AAIDD for the timeframe determined at their last Interviewer Reliability Qualification Review (IRQR) conducted by AAIDD Trainers or an AAIDD recognized SIS trainer. SIS-A is an enhancement to the original SIS; therefore, AAIDD recognized interviewers and trainers may use SIS-A within that same recognition.

6. Do the changes to section order in any way impact the standard score?

No. Since its release, instructions on SIS administration indicated that items could be asked in any order – and could be temporarily skipped and returned to if respondents got “stuck” on an item; however, interviewers were instructed to complete subscales in their entirety and not to jump between items in different subscales. These instructions still hold true, and assessors could ask the items in the original order if they chose to.

The changes in order were done based on the experience of AAIDD trainers and respondents for the past 10 years. While all items must be rated, the interview has been observed to be more fluent and comfortable when items were asked in the order now reflected in the SIS-A. Rather than beginning the interview with questions on toileting, a very personal and sensitive question, the form begins with items on respiratory care.

7. Do the changes in item wording in any way impact the standard score?

No. Minor changes were made to the wording of a few items for greater clarity and to better align with item descriptions. These minor changes more clearly communicate the **intent of the items** based on the more expansive item descriptions provided in the *SIS-A User’s Manual*. For example, in the SIS (2004) the item “Participating in recreation/leisure activities in community settings” (Section 1, Part B, item 2) was worded in the SIS-A (2015) as “Participating in recreation/leisure activities in the community” (Section 2, Part B, - item 2; note that the placement of Sections were reordered.) The minor wording adjustment was recommended by AAIDD trainers as the word “settings” distracted respondents from the item’s intent; the removal of the word “settings” from the item better enables people **to focus on the activities themselves**. By removing the word “settings” in this item, the focus is more clearly on the support needed when going to movie, for example, than on the support needed in a movie theatre setting.

8. What is the reason for the change in the order of the three rating dimensions (Type of Support, Frequency, and Daily Support Time)?

The “new” order of the dimensions of the rating key has been in use in the field in North America and reflected in SISOnline for a number of years now; the SIS-A form has been brought into alignment with longstanding practice and data collection. Although all dimensions must be rated, interviews have been observed to be more fluent and comfortable when items were asked in the

order now reflected in the SIS-A. Since its release, instructions on SIS administration indicated that dimensions could be asked in any order. These instructions still hold true, and assessors could pose the dimensions in the original order if they chose to.

9. Are the changes to the item order and rating dimensions a change in administration procedures?

No. Because the order of items and the rating dimensions have always been flexible, this is not a change in administration procedures.

10. Why have three items (Hypertension, Allergies, and Diabetes) been added to the Exceptional Medical Support Needs section?

These three health concerns were so commonly identified on the SIS under the “other” item in SISOnline data that the launch of the SIS-A presented an opportunity to enhance the data collection on these issues. The items are not “new” in the sense this data had always been captured (and conspicuously so) under “other”. Rather, these items enhance the SIS-A by making it easier to report the conditions and increase possibilities for aggregate data analyses.

As the Exceptional Medical Needs section does not contribute to standard scores, the additional items do not affect the subscale standard scores or the composite score, the Support Needs Index (SNI). In addition, this section is consistent with items in the Exceptional Medical and Behavioral Needs section of the soon to be released SIS-C.

11. Does the inclusion of these three medical items (Hypertension, Allergies, and Diabetes) in Section 1A impact those jurisdictions that use these scores in their funding formulas?

The extraordinary medical support needs section helps to identify the level of support needs related to medical issues, and some jurisdictions use the medical section of the SIS to help allocate resources or assign individuals a personal supports budget. The three most commonly reported medical issues reported under “other” on the SIS have been added to the SIS-A list of possible conditions for which extraordinary medical support may be needed. The responses to the new questions offer additional information to inform service planning; however, the addition of these items requires that policy makers in those jurisdictions that use this section of the tool to help allocate resources or supports budgets elect to either (a) keep the original decision criteria in place to maintain consistency in results between those interviewed with the SIS and the SIS-A or (b) adjust the decision rules used to make this determination.

12. How can I learn more about SIS-A?

AAIDD SIS Trainers will incorporate SIS-A training materials into existing jurisdiction training. AAIDD SIS Trainers will partner with customers to align training with implementation and roll-out planning. A SIS-A webinar will be archived on AAIDD’s website, with additional information found on the SIS website at www.aaidd.org/sis