

Standardizing Care: Transforming Vermont's IDD Services with SIS-A® Assessments



Case Study

The Client

Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL)

The Project

Supports Intensity Scale® Needs Assessments (SIS-A) for Adults

The Challenge

Prior to 2021, Vermont relied on providers to assess the needs of individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Without a standardized approach to assessments, individuals may not have needs measured similarly and promote equitable access to resources. The state needed a fully operational, systematic assessment program to ensure that individuals would be matched with the proper services and supports.

The Solution

In 2021, Public Consulting Group (PCG) partnered with Vermont's DAIL to implement a new SIS assessment program for adults with IDD. Our team recruited staff in Vermont, with experience working in the state, and trained staff in accordance with all American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) requirements. Our team supported DAIL with:



An Expert Leadership Team. Establishing a team of subject matter experts (SMEs) and experienced project managers was the first step in setting up a successful implementation. A project leadership and advisory team that had implemented countless similar projects offered a foundational level of leadership and stability. That proved crucial for a project team tasked with navigating undefined processes and needs as well as a stakeholder landscape that was largely skeptical of the new assessment program.



A Deliberate Operational Staffing Plan. We began assessor recruitment efforts upon contract award, ensuring we would have sufficient staff to maximize AAIDD's initial training plans and be prepared for project implementation with fully trained assessors. In addition to recruiting for the levels of experience and skillsets necessary to effectively conduct the assessments, PCG prioritized a geographically diverse group whose locations aligned with the expected state-wide distribution of assessments.



An Effective Assessment Process. PCG's approach to helping DAIL conduct assessments through a detailed plan, from intake through reporting, is depicted in the figure below.



Stakeholder Engagement Matters. A significant issue that put the startup of this project at risk was buy-in from the individual and provider stakeholder groups. The SIS assessment was being implemented to provide consistent, conflict-free assessments for individuals in need of services. PCG worked with DAIL to develop a stakeholder engagement plan through which PCG was able to disseminate clear and detailed information and respond to stakeholder questions and concerns.

Steps	Process Overview
Intake	PCG receives from DAIL a report listing individuals due for a SIS assessment.
Verification	PCG coordinates with each agency's points of contact (POC) on scheduling SIS assessments with a secure, online referral scheduling form. The form collects the name of the person to be contacted, their demographics, respondents to be included in the assessment, contact information for those respondents, preferred location for the assessment, proposed date(s) and time, any special accommodations, interpreters, or health/safety information needed for the assessment.
Notification	PCG contacts the person to be contacted to schedule the SIS. Upon receipt of the scheduling form, PCG reaches out to the contact person listed on the scheduling form—typically the service coordinator/case manager (SC/CM)—verifying their information and choosing a date/time most convenient for the individual and stakeholders.
Scheduling	Once a date and time has been agreed upon, PCG schedules the assessment, generating a calendar invitation for the assessor and all respondents participating in the assessment. Additional information about the assessment and SIS resources are attached as documents in the invitation, and the setting (in-person or virtual) is included, based on the individual's preference.
Completion	PCG conducts a complete assessment adhering to all DAIL requirements and AAIDD standards.
After Completion	PCG assessor validates the assessment. Following an internal quality assurance process, the SC/CM and respondent team can expect a SIS Summary Report within approximately two weeks of the assessment date.

The Result

In addition to standing up the program and conducting assessments, PCG has supported DAIL through the transition to the SIS-A 2nd Edition and has provided extensive stakeholder engagement with individuals, families, guardians, advocates, and providers to build relationships in the communities and provide education about the SIS assessment and process.

PCG has conducted more than 2,000 assessments since 2021 and employs staff many with strong assessment and human services backgrounds, including direct experience with IDD populations, needs, and services.

To learn more about PCG's work, contact us today!



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