

Streamlining Support: Transforming Virginia's IDD Needs Assessments with SIS-A® and SIS-C®



Case Study

The Client

Virginia (VA) Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)

The Project

Scheduling Supports Intensity Scale-Adult (SIS-A) and Supports Intensity Scale-Child (SIS-C) Needs Assessments

The Challenge

In 2024, VA DBHDS was seeking a Quality Improvement Organization (QIO)-like entity, as designated by the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS), to administer SIS-A and SIS-C assessments for all individuals aged five and older with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) across the Commonwealth. In addition, Virginia was looking for help with transitioning to the SIS-A 2nd Edition. The state contracted Public Consulting Group (PCG) to assist with their needs.

The Solution

From the onset, PCG recruited and onboarded experienced assessors statewide, transitioning them from the previous vendor in Virginia. To ensure a smooth implementation, our team partnered with the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), the creators of the SIS assessment tool, to provide training on the second edition. These efforts enabled the delivery of standardized assessments to evaluate individuals' support needs and facilitate their long-term success. PCG's team scheduled assessments based on a prioritized list maintained by DBHDS. Assessments were conducted for individuals new to home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver programs, those due for routine reassessment, and individuals experiencing life events or transitions that might impact their support needs. Upon contract award, PCG supported DBHDS 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 a complex stakeholder landscape.



A Deliberate Operational Staffing Plan.

We began assessor recruitment efforts upon contract award, ensuring we would have sufficient staff to maximize DBHDS'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 that aligned with the expected statewide distribution of assessments.



An Effective Assessment Process.

PCG employed a structured and comprehensive approach to support DBHDS in conducting assessments, ensuring accuracy, consistency, and efficiency at every stage. Our detailed plan encompasses the entire assessment life cycle, from initial contact to final reporting, including:

- **Streamlined Intake Process:** Efficiently gathering the necessary information to initiate assessments and ensure individuals receive timely attention.
- **Scheduling and Coordination:** Using an automated referral system and a prioritized scheduling framework to facilitate seamless appointment management.
- **Standardized Assessment Administration:** Conducting SIS assessments with trained professionals to ensure reliability and consistency in evaluating support needs.
- **Quality Assurance and Training:** Providing ongoing training for assessors and implementing rigorous quality control measures to maintain high assessment standards.
- **Comprehensive Reporting:** Delivering detailed reports that accurately reflect individuals' needs, guiding informed decision-making for services and support planning.

The Result

Since the contract commenced in October 2024, PCG has actively scheduled and conducted assessments, working closely with DBHDS to establish a structured and efficient approach. Key achievements include:

- **Seamless Onboarding of Experienced Assessors:** Successfully transitioned Cohort 1, consisting of assessors previously employed by the former vendor, and provided comprehensive training on the SIS-A 2nd Edition to ensure continuity and consistency in assessments.
- **Training and Certification of New Assessors:** Onboarded Cohort 2, comprising newly hired assessors who completed the full AAIDD orientation, Coach-to-Pass assessments, and Interview Reliability Qualification Reviews (IRQRs) to meet certification standards.
- **Ongoing Assessor Support:** Provided targeted guidance and resources to assessors, ensuring the successful completion of IRQRs and adherence to best practices in SIS administration.
- **Process Development and Implementation:** Established and refined policies and procedures for scheduling, training, and quality assurance to enhance operational efficiency and maintain assessment integrity.
- **Automation of Scheduling Workflow:** Designed and launched an automated referral system to streamline scheduling, improve coordination, and optimize the assessment process.

Through these efforts, PCG has strengthened the SIS implementation process, ensuring high-quality assessments and a sustainable framework for long-term success.

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

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