

FAQs

Why is Iowa Health and Human Services changing their assessment tool?

The company that makes the Supports Intensity Scale-Adult (SIS-A) is changing their assessment tool. Starting in 2025, Iowa HHS will switch to the interRAI-Intellectual Disability (interRAI-ID) assessment. The interRAI-ID is a complete assessment tool for adults with some extra questions to understand their strengths and preferences for their care plan. In the same way, the interRAI Children and Youth Mental Health- Developmental Disabilities (ChYMH-DD) tool is a dependable tool for children that will check their strengths and preferences as they grow and change. As part of the Hope and Opportunities in Many Environments (HOME) project, Iowa HHS is working to make the assessment simpler and more person-centered. We think the planned shift to these interRAI assessment tools will help us do that. Iowa HHS plans to make a more consistent (or uniform) way to assess all people on waivers or needing waiver services in the future.

What is the interRAI Intellectual Disability tool? What is the ChYMH-DD tool?

The interRAI-ID assessment is a standard tool for understanding the needs, strengths, and preferences of adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The ChYMH-DD assessment is a standard tool for understanding the needs, strengths, and preferences of children with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Iowa HHS already uses other interRAI assessment tools, such as the interRAI Home Care and the interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health. The interRAI-ID and ChYMH-DD assessments are new to Iowa, but other states have used them for many years.

What is the difference between the SIS and the interRAI assessments?

Both assessment tools show the needs of people with intellectual disabilities in different parts of their lives. The SIS assessments are designed to show the level of support a person needs, while the interRAI assessments focus on how serious their medical and behavioral conditions are.

How will Iowa HHS use my results from the interRAI assessment?

Similar to how Iowa HHS used the SIS tools to understand the level of support you need, Iowa HHS will use the interRAI tools to understand your unique needs. You may remember your SIS 'score' helped determine what level of support you qualified for or what services you could receive. The interRAI scores will help Iowa HHS do the same. In fact, more sections from the interRAI tools factor into your score. We hope the interRAI tools will show a more complete picture of you and your unique needs.

How do I know the interRAI tools will work for me?

Iowa HHS asked members to help test the interRAI tools in May and June 2024. Members were assessed using the interRAI-ID or ChYMH-DD tools. Iowa HHS then used a process, known as a decision tree, to analyze member's responses to the interRAI-ID or ChYMH-DD tools and match them

with their previous SIS-A or SIS-C data. This helped Iowa HHS make sure the tiering and scores from the interRAI tools match the SIS tools.

What is a decision tree?

A decision tree is a tool that helps sort items into categories. It takes information and identifies common features across similar groups to help label them. Here's a simple example: imagine we want to sort different types of fruit. We have information about the fruits, like color, shape, and whether they have seeds. The decision tree model starts with all of this information and finds the best way to split the information into groups (i.e. branches) that mostly have only one type of fruit. For example, it might separate fruits with seeds from those without seeds. The process keeps going, making more detailed branches, looking at different features like color (yellow, red, purple) until the tree reaches its "leaves" that each contain only one type of fruit, like bananas, apples, or strawberries.

So, how does that apply here? This means that we treated your tiers as independent and unique groups (leaves on the decision tree, like the type of fruit) that needed to be explained. The model used information from interRAI assessments done in May and June 2024, along with existing member tiers, and created branches (like the fruit color, shape, seed) to figure out which tier each member belongs to. The figures that come with this FAQ show the "branches" for each tier.

How will a change to an interRAI assessment affect my current tier?

Iowa HHS knows that change can be hard. Because this tool is new for all of us, Iowa HHS will **not** change your tier based on your interRAI score in the first half of 2025. However, if your condition changes and you need to move to a different tier, Iowa HHS will review your assessment and adjust your tier if necessary.

As more people take the interRAI assessments and Iowa HHS has better information on how the assessments work and how accurately the assessments predict your needs, Iowa HHS will keep improving and adjusting the scoring process.

Where can I go for more information?

This work is part of Iowa HHS' Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments (HOME) project. You can read about the HOME project at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/welcome-iowa-medicaid/current-projects/home> or contact iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com.