

# Waiver Assessments Quick Guide

## HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY IN MANY ENVIRONMENTS (HOME)

**Updated: February 25, 2026**

As part of the Hope and Opportunities in Many Environments (HOME) project, Iowa HHS is working to make the assessment process easier and more person-centered. Iowa HHS plans to make a more uniform (or standard) way to assess all people on waivers or needing waiver services.

### **What is an assessment?**

**An assessment** is a way to check what kind of help someone needs. An assessment uses a tool with standard questions to measure a person's functional eligibility, which means how much care or support a person needs to do everyday tasks. Iowa HHS uses assessment results to place people on waivers and identify the needs that may be met by waiver services.

### **What is the uniform assessment?**

**The uniform assessment** is a complete assessment that looks at a person's unique strengths and challenges. It includes a core set of questions that everyone will answer, so Iowa HHS can fairly and consistently measure need across all waiver members.

It also includes some extra questions tailored to each person's diagnosis and situation, to give a full picture of the kinds of support they need. Iowa will use interRAI tools for these assessments. Each year, members and their care team will work together to choose the interRAI tool that best fits the person's unique needs.

Iowa HHS has used interRAI assessment tools with some populations before. Starting in 2026, everyone's assessment will use an interRAI tool.

## What are the steps of the uniform assessment process?

Process Step	Description	Implementation Date
Waitlist Priority Needs Assessment (WPNA)	Members joining a waiver waitlist have the option to complete the WPNA to share information about needs. Starting in 2026, this form will include a few new questions and open fields where members can choose to say more about their needs.	WPNA will be updated in January 2026
Assessment Tool Questionnaire	Once enrolled in waivers, new and current members complete the Assessment Tool Questionnaire to direct them to the right interRAI assessment tool.	January 2026
InterRAI assessment tool	All waiver members complete an interRAI assessment tool, which includes core assessment questions and additional questions based on their needs and diagnosis.	January 2026

## Why is Iowa using the interRAI assessment tools?

[Researchers and experts created the interRAI assessment tools.](#) These tools have been tested many times to make sure they work well. They ask the same questions each time, measure what they are supposed to measure, and give similar results every time.

Because of this, the tools clearly show the daily living and health needs of older Iowans and people with disabilities of all ages. Iowa HHS already uses several interRAI tools, including Home Care, Intellectual Disability, Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH), and ChYMH–Developmental Disability.

## Which interRAI assessment tools will be used?

Everyone will have an assessment done using a type of interRAI Assessment tool. The table below shows which tools will be used.

<b>interRAI Tool</b>	<b>Members who will complete the tool</b>
Intellectual Disability (ID)	Adults with ID who are 18 years and older.
Home Care (HC)	Adults with disabilities other than ID who are 18 years and older.
Pediatric Home Care (PEDS-HC)	Children and youth with health needs ages 4 to 20.
Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH)	Children and youth with serious mental illness ages 4 to 20.
ChYMH- Developmental Disabilities	Children and youth with developmental disabilities ages 4 to 20.
Early Years	Children ages 0 to 3.

## **What types of questions do the interRAI tools include?**

The tools gather information about different areas where a person might need support, such as:

- Community and Social Involvement
- Relationships
- Lifestyle
- Communication and Vision
- Thinking (cognition)
- Health Conditions
- Independence in Everyday Activities
- Mood and Behavior
- Medications
- Services

## **How long will the interRAI assessments take to complete?**

How long an assessment takes depends on a few things. This includes having information ready ahead of time, who is on your team, your health and daily needs, and how experienced the assessor is.

It helps to have medical records and school records, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), ready before the assessment. The first assessment when you join the waiver will take longer than later assessments.

## **Who participates in the interRAI assessment?**

The interRAI tools are person-centered, which means you are in charge of the assessment. You help decide how the assessment is used to create your service plan. You share the information needed and can choose to include family members or friends in the assessment if you want.

## **Who completes the assessment with members?**

Iowa HHS heard from people and their families that they would feel more comfortable if their managed care organization (MCO) did not do the assessment. Because of this, Iowa HHS made a change.

Now, assessors are separate from case managers who help with person-centered service planning. The Core Standardized Assessment vendor began doing assessments for all members on July 1, 2025.

## **Will these changes affect the services I get?**

Your service plan is created through a person-centered planning process. This plan is based on your needs and preferences, your assessment results, and input from your doctors. You can also choose to include caregivers or family members. This process will stay the same. Iowa HHS does not expect your services to change because of the uniform assessment. If you have concerns about your services, talk with your case manager.

If your needs change before your yearly assessment, you can complete an Emergency Needs Assessment (ENA) with your case manager. The ENA helps decide if you need a new assessment because your needs or risks have changed.

## **What if I have questions or feedback about assessments?**

You can always talk to your case manager about your assessment and ask them any questions you have about how the assessment process works. You can also email [AssessmentsIowa@telligen.com](mailto:AssessmentsIowa@telligen.com) with questions or feedback about assessment changes.

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*This proposed chapter underwent a Red Tape Review pursuant to Executive Order 10. As a result of the Department's review, the Department deleted redundant, restrictive, and outdated language and added dates certain. The revisions in this proposed rulemaking are separate and distinct from changes the Department may make to its rules as a result of the upcoming waiver redesign process.*