

Waiver Assessments Quick Guide

HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY IN MANY ENVIRONMENTS (HOME)

Updated: January 2, 2026

As part of the Hope and Opportunities in Many Environments (HOME) project, Iowa HHS is working to make the assessment process simpler 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 a uniform assessment?

A **uniform assessment** is a complete check of a person's strengths and challenges. It has a set of core questions that everyone answers, so Iowa HHS can fairly measure needs for all waiver members. It also has extra questions for each person's diagnosis and situation, to get a full picture of the support they need.

Iowa will use **interRAI tools** for these assessments. Each year, members and their care team will work together to pick the interRAI tool that best fits the person's needs.

Iowa HHS has used interRAI tools with some groups before, and 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 professionals from the [interRAI organization developed several tools that make up the interRAI assessment tools](#). These tools have been tested many times to make sure they work well. The questions are the same for everyone (**standardized**), measure what they are supposed to (**valid**), and give similar results each time (**reliable**).

This means the tools show the everyday living (**functional**) and health (**clinical**) needs of older Iowans and Iowans with disabilities of all ages.

Iowa HHS already uses the **interRAI Home Care**, **interRAI-Intellectual Disability**, **interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH)**, and **ChYMH-Developmental Disability** tools.

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.

interRAI Tool	Members who will complete the tool
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 17.
Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH)	Children and youth with serious mental illness ages 4 to 17.
ChYMH-Developmental Disabilities	Children and youth with developmental disabilities ages 4 to 17.
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?

The time it takes to finish an assessment depends on a few things, like having your information ready, who is on your care team, your health and social needs, and the assessor's experience. It can help to have medical records, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), or other school records ready before the assessment. The first assessment you do when joining the waiver will take longer than later assessments.

Who participates in the interRAI assessment?

The interRAI assessment is person-centered, which means you are in charge of the process and how it is used to make your service plan. You share the information that is needed and can choose to include others, like family or friends, in the assessment.

Who completes the assessment with members?

People told Iowa HHS that they would feel more comfortable if their managed care organization (MCO) did not do the assessment. So, now the assessors are separate from the case managers who help with service planning. Starting **July 1, 2025**, the Core Standardized Assessment vendor began doing assessments with all members.

Will these changes affect the services I get?

Your service plan is made through a person-centered process. This means your plan is based on what you need and want, your assessment results, and input from your doctors, caregivers, or family if you want them involved. This process will not change. HHS does not expect your services to change because of the uniform assessment. If you have questions or concerns about your services, talk to your case manager.

If your needs change before your yearly assessment, you can do 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 if you have questions about your assessment or how it works. You can also email Assessmentslowa@telligen.com with questions or feedback about changes to the assessment.