

# Waiver Assessments Quick Guide

## HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY IN MANY ENVIRONMENTS (HOME)

**Updated: July 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 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?**

<b>Process Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>
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 carefully tested many times. The assessment uses the same questions (this is called standardized), measure what the the assessment is supposed to (this is called validity) and give similar results every time (this is called reliability). This means the tools show the everyday living (functional) and health-related (clinical) needs of older lowans and lowans 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 assessment 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 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?**

The time it takes to complete an assessment depends on things like having information ready before starting, who is involved in your team, your health and social conditions, and the assessor's experience. You might want to have medical records and Individualize Education Plans (IEPs) or other school records ready before the assessment. The first assessment you go through when joining the waiver will take longer than future ones.

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

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

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

Iowa HHS heard from people and their families that they would feel more comfortable with the assessment process if their managed care organization (MCO) did not do it. So, Iowa HHS made a change so that assessors will be separate (or independent) from case managers who support person-centered service planning. The Core Standardized Assessment vendor started completing assessments with all members on July 1, 2025.

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

Your service plan is developed through the person-centered service planning process. This process builds a service plan based on your preferences and needs, your assessment results, and input from your medical providers, as well as your caregivers and family members if you choose. This process will not change. HHS does not expect that people's services will change based on the uniform assessment process. If you have concerns about your services, talk to your case manager.

If your needs change before it is time for your annual assessment, you may complete an Emergency Needs Assessment (ENA) with your case manager. The ENA is a tool to determine if you need a reassessment due to changes in need and other risk factors.

## **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 [Assessmentslowa@carestar.com](mailto:Assessmentslowa@carestar.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.*