

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Certification Changes

General Questions about the Changes

Q: What is changing?

A: New services are being added to the list of services that may be certified by Iowa Medicaid's Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) HCBS unit including Home-Based Habilitation, intensive residential services. More services will be added as outlined in the communication document over the next few years. Additionally, other updates are being made to the certification process including new titles for the certification levels and the establishment of core and specialized service certifications.

Q: Why are the certifications processes and requirements changing?

A: These changes serve multiple purposes:

- To provide additional certification options and more ways for providers to qualify for services
- To reduce the use of "dependent" qualifications (such as requiring SCL certification to provide HBH)
- To ensure that provider skills and expertise better align with the specialized needs of members served
- To incorporate the IRSH designation process into the certification system following changes to Iowa's behavioral/mental health system

Q: When will these changes take effect?

A: These changes will be implemented in three stages over the next few years. Specific dates will be provided in future communications from Iowa Medicaid.

Q: Will these changes affect an organization's current certification status?

A: The transition process varies depending on the organization's current certifications and means of qualifying for enrollment for each service. Providers will receive specific guidance based on the organization's individual situations.

Questions about Core and Specialized Service Certifications

Q: What is the difference between "core" and "specialized" certifications?

A: Core certifications are for foundational services including SCL, HBH, Supported Employment, and Day Habilitation. Specialized certifications are "add-on" certifications for specific services or modalities of services that require providers to first be certified and maintain at least a Developing Level of certification for the corresponding core service. For example, an entity wishing to enroll to deliver ID waiver RBSCCL services must first be certified as meeting the requirements of the core SCL service before they may initiate the process for certification for the RBSCCL services and designation of the locations where those services will be delivered.

Q: What are the specialized/add-on certifications?

A: Specialized certifications include:

- RBSCCL (Residential-Based SCL) - requires SCL core certification
- IRS (Intensive Residential Services) - requires SCL and/or HBH core certification
- Host Home Modality – will require SCL and/or HBH core certification
- Remote Supports Modality – will require SCL and/or HBH core certification
- IPSE (Individual Placement and Supported Employment) – will require Supported Employment core certification

Q: Can I have a specialized certification without the corresponding core certification?

A: No. To be eligible for a specialized certification, an organization must achieve and maintain at least a Developing Level of certification in the corresponding core service.

Q: What happens if an organization is certified for a specialized add-on certification but then achieves less than a Developing Level of certification in the corresponding core service at a subsequent review?

A: The organization must achieve and maintain at least a Developing Level in the core service to keep specialized service certifications active. If the organization drops to Remedial Level certification after previously achieving Developing Level or higher, the organization must develop and implement a corrective action plan (CAP) and demonstrate compliance in the areas requiring corrective action within the term of the Remedial Level certification period (270 days). If the organization is unable to demonstrate compliance before the Remedial Level certification period expires, the organization is at risk for losing both the core and specialized service certifications and therefore qualifications to remain enrolled for those services.

Questions About Specific Services

Q: Are providers of HBH and IRS required to be certified for those services?

A: Yes. If an organization is providing or wants to provide HBH or IRS, the organization must be certified for those services or meet one of the other qualifiers established by Iowa Medicaid.

Q: Do an organization need to get a stand-alone HBH certification if currently qualifying for HBH through SCL certification.?

A: Yes. Iowa Medicaid is moving away from dependent qualifications wherever possible. If an organization provides or wants to provide HBH, the organization must be certified for HBH or meet one of the other qualifiers established by Iowa Medicaid.

Q: If an organization wants to add-on certification for IRS and is providing both SCL and HBH services in an IRSH setting, does the organization need both certifications?

A: Yes. An organization must be certified for all core services being provided in the IRSH setting. If providing HBH in the setting, the organization must be certified for HBH and IRS. If providing SCL in the setting, the organization must be certified for SCL and IRS.

Q: What is happening with Respite certification?

A: Certification for Respite is being phased out during Stage Three as the BI and ID waivers are transitioned into the Adults with Disabilities (AD) and Children and Youth (CY) waivers the HOME-HCBS waiver redesign project. Iowa Medicaid will establish other qualifications for Respite providers as an alternative means of qualifying.

Q: When will certification for Day Habilitation and Supported Employment become available?

A: Day Habilitation and Supported Employment certifications will be established in Stage Three. Specific timing will be communicated in future updates.

Q: What are Host Homes and will they require certification?

A: Host Homes are community-based family home settings where the owner or renter provides SCL or HBH services to no more than 2 unrelated individuals who reside with them in their primary residence. In Stage Two,

certification for the host home modality will be established as a specialized add-on certification for those certified and maintaining a Developing Level certification for SCL and/or HBH.

Q: What are Remote Supports and will they require certification?

A: Remote Supports are a modality of providing SCL or HBH services where a remote support professional stationed outside of the member's home engages with the member through enabling technology with live two-way communication, in addition to or in place of on-site staffing. In Stage Two, certification for remote supports will be established as a specialized add-on certification for those certified and maintaining a Developing Level certification for SCL and/or HBH.

Questions About Certification Levels and Terms

Q: What are the new names for certification levels?

A: The certification levels are being renamed in Stage One. The new terminology will include "Developing Level" as the minimum level required to add on specialized certifications. Specific details about all certification level names will be provided in updated materials.

Q: How long will certifications be valid?

A:

- SCL, HBH, Host Homes, Remote Supports, Supported Employment, and Day Habilitation will have a maximum certification level of 3 years
- RBSCCL and IRS will have a maximum certification level of 1 year
- Non-certified providers will continue to be reviewed on a pre-established 5-year cycle

Q: Must an organization provide the certified service to maintain certification?

A: Yes. Organizations must actively provide the certified service to remain qualified for re-certification.

Questions About Designation

Q: What does "designation" mean?

A: "Designation" means the service setting is for the exclusive use of a specific service like IRS or RBSCCL. RBSCCL and IRS certification will include designation of specific locations as settings that meet additional criteria and are set aside specifically for the designated service.

Q: What is the difference between designation and certification?

A: Certification refers to the approval of an organization to provide a specific service based on meeting quality standards and requirements. Designation refers to the approval of a specific physical location/setting to be used exclusively for a specialized service such as IRS or RBSCCL.

Q: What is an IRSH?

A: IRSH stands for Intensive Residential Service Home. It is a designated setting where intensive residential services (IRS) are provided. Effective July 1, 2025, Iowa Medicaid assumed responsibility for the IRSH designation process following the rescission of IAC 441- Chapter 25.

Q: What is the difference between RBSCCL and regular SCL?

A: RBSCCL (Residential-Based Supported Community Living) services are medical or remedial services provided to children. RBSCCL is "daily" SCL for children under the age of 18 living outside the family home in a residential-based living environment that is owned or controlled by an HCBS RBSCCL provider. The services eliminate barriers to family reunification and help individuals develop self-help skills for maximum independence. RBSCCL services must also address the ordinary daily living needs of the child, excluding room and board, such as needs for safety and security, social functioning, and other medical care.

SCL services are services that assist the member to develop and maintain skills for independent living. SCL is delivered to children and adults by a certified SCL provider. SCL services are delivered in daily or 15-minute units. SCL services are intended to meet the daily living needs of the waiver member. Children under the age of 16 may receive intermittent SCL. Transition age youth ages 16 to 18 and adults over the age of 18 may receive daily SCL. SCL services must focus on skill development in the areas of personal management, health, safety and wellness, socialization and communication.

Daily SCL means SCL delivered for 8 or more hours per day as averaged over the course of a calendar month.

Intermittent SCL means 52 hours of SCL per month.

SCL may be provided through the host home modality or remote supports modality.

Questions About Deeming and Accreditation

Q: Will Iowa Medicaid continue to allow organizations to deem from CARF or other accrediting bodies?

A: Yes, organizations may continue to deem from CARF or other accrediting bodies for SCL or HBH services. However, providers are not eligible to add on specialized service certifications from deemed eligibility for the corresponding core service. If an organization wants to add a specialized service certification, the organization must have the actual certification (not deemed eligibility) for the core service.

Q: If an organization currently deems eligibility from CARF for SCL, what changes should that organization expect?

A: If an organization is only deeming SCL qualifications and not seeking any specialized service certifications, there will be no changes to that organization's SCL certification status. However, if an organization wants to add RBSCL, IRS, Host Homes, Remote Supports, or other specialized certifications, the organization will need to obtain actual certification for the core service (SCL or HBH) rather than relying on deemed eligibility.

Questions About Reviews and Standards

Q: Will these changes mean organizations are reviewed more frequently?

A: In some cases, organizations may be reviewed more frequently. Non-certified providers and deeming providers receive quality oversight reviews on a five-year cycle, while certified providers are reviewed based on the term/level of certification they achieve.

Q: Which standards will be scored for HBH certification?

A: The same standards that are scored for SCL certification will be applied to HBH certification.

1. Purpose and Mission
2. Fiscal Accountability
3. Organization Oversight
4. Quality Improvement Processes
5. Staff Training
6. Admission and Discharge
7. Member Confidentiality
8. Incidents and Incident Reporting
9. Members' Medications

10. Appeals and Grievances
11. Identifying and Reporting Abuse
12. Person-Centered Planning
13. Restrictive Interventions
14. Service Documentation
15. Personnel Requirements
16. Service Contracts

Q: Which standards will be scored for IRS certification?

A: Specific standards for IRS certification will be communicated to affected providers through their first IRS certification review. Certification requirements are closely aligned with the IRSH designation requirements as outlined in the former IAC Chapter 25.

Q: What does "in good standing" mean?

A: Being "in good standing" means the organization maintains the required level of certification, continues to meet all quality standards and requirements, and has no unresolved compliance issues or corrective action plans.

Questions About Transition and Implementation

Q: How will the transition from the old process to the new process work?

A: The transition process varies depending on the organization's current certifications and means of qualifying for enrollment for each service. Specific scenarios and guidance will be provided based on each organization's current status.

Q: If an organization is currently certified for SCL only, what does that organization need to do?

A: The organization's next certification review will use the new certification level titles. If the organization is also enrolled for HBH and has been qualifying through SCL certification, the organization will need to obtain HBH certification separately going forward.

Q: If an organization is certified for SCL and RBSCCL what should the organization expect?

A: The organization's next certification review will include "designation" of the RBSCCL setting, and the certification letter will be updated with the new titles of certification levels. Otherwise, no major changes are expected.

Q: If an organization currently deems SCL eligibility and is enrolled for RBSCCL or IRS, what happens at the organization’s next review?

A: When adding RBSCCL or IRS certification, SCL will also need to be certified (not just deemed). If the organization achieves at least a Developing Level of certification in the core service, certification for both the core service and specialized service will continue as usual.

Q: Will there be training available on the new certification requirements?

A: Iowa Medicaid and the QIO will create education materials and provide outreach to affected providers on the new certification requirements as part of the implementation process.

Questions About Application and Enrollment

Q: Will the application process for certification change?

A: Yes. Application processes will be updated to reflect the new core and specialized certification structure. Updated procedures and applications will be made available as each stage is implemented.

Q: What is the process to add a new specialized service?

A: An organization must first be certified and maintain at least a Developing Level of certification in the corresponding core service. Once that requirement is met, the organization can apply for the specialized service certification.

Q: Will there be changes to Iowa Medicaid enrollment requirements?

A: Yes. As part of this redesign, Iowa Medicaid is updating provider qualifications for services, billing procedure codes and modifiers, and updating service definitions and the scope of services. These changes will be reflected in waiver amendments, manual updates, and administrative rule updates.

Questions About Support and Resources

Q: Who are the contacts for questions about how these changes?

A: Organizations may contact their assigned HCBS specialist through Iowa Medicaid's Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) HCBS unit. Here is a link to the HCBS specialist assignments including contact information: [Home and Community-Based Services | Health & Human Services](#). Scroll down to the section titled “Find an HCBS Specialist”.

Q: Will there be ongoing technical assistance available during the transition?

A: Yes. The QIO HCBS team provides everyday support and technical assistance to providers. This support will continue throughout the transition period.

Q: Where will updated information about certification requirements be found?

A: Updated information will be available on Iowa Medicaid's website, through provider communications, and in updated manuals and administrative rules. A comprehensive FAQ document will be maintained and updated regularly.

Q: What should organizations do to prepare for these changes?

A: Organizations should:

- Review the staged implementation timeline and identify which changes affect the organization
- Assess the organization's current certifications and services provided including reviewing responses on the organization's most recent Provider Quality Self-Assessment (PSA) submission.
- Determine if there is a need to pursue additional core or specialized certifications
- Watch for communications from Iowa Medicaid about specific action items and deadlines
- Ensure the organization maintains at least a Developing Level of certification in any core services, especially when providing specialized services
- Participate in training and education opportunities as they become available

Administrative Questions

Q: Will these changes require updates to the Medicaid provider agreement?

A: Any necessary updates to provider agreements will be communicated by Iowa Medicaid. Changes may require waiver amendments, state plan amendments, and updates to the Iowa Administrative Code.

Q: How will reimbursement be affected by these changes?

A: Iowa Medicaid is reviewing codes, modifiers, and reimbursement structures as part of the overall waiver redesign. Any changes to reimbursement will be communicated separately through official provider notices.

Q: Are these changes related to waiver redesign and consolidation?

A: Yes. Iowa is presently redesigning the waivers to consolidate from 7 diagnosis-based waivers to 3 age-based waivers. The goal is to enhance services, support people to remain in their communities with their loved ones and make it easier for people to access the support they need. and to equalize the services offered under each waiver. The certification changes are being implemented at the same time to ensure waiver members have access to high quality services while improving efficiency through systemic alignment of service certification and oversight.