

Understanding the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST) & the Supports Intensity Scale® (SIS-A): A brief comparison and compatibility overview



The HRST and SIS-A are both widely used tools in the field of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Often, both tools are used together such as in funding/resource allocations, exceptional rate determination, Level of Care determination (LOC), individualized service planning and much more.

PURPOSE of this Document

Understanding the intent and goal of both the HRST and SIS-A is important to ensure proper use and implementation of these tools. Education on the similarities, differences, scoring interpretation, and objectives of the HRST and the SIS-A will help to ensure that the results are interpreted accurately and applied to the person appropriately. It is also important to note how particular items found in each tool relate to one another both in score assignment and scoring interpretation. This guide seeks to encourage a proper understanding of the HRST and the SIS-A, both independently and in relation to one another.

What is the HRST?

The HRST is a reliable and objective web-based instrument developed to screen for health risks associated with a wide variety of disabilities. These include (but are not limited to) Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, physical disabilities, disabilities associated with aging, and many other conditions experienced by vulnerable populations. It was designed primarily to detect health destabilization EARLY and PREVENT avoidable deaths. The HRST also helps discover health risks that can be less than obvious. To accomplish this, a trained rater scores 22 rating items that span over 5 categories: Functional Status, Behavior, Physiological, Safety, and Frequency of Services. Each of the 22 rating items are assigned a weighted score. The higher the score, the higher the identified risk or destabilization. Once scoring for each item is complete, the HRST produces a Health Care Level (HCL) that corresponds to the person's overall risk level. This Health Care Level has been proven to be prognostic of longevity and mortality. The HRST also produces a set of Considerations that assist the team in identifying other professional services, specialists, assessments, and training that may be needed for the person. This allows for targeted action to be taken on the objectively identified health risks. The HRST has been shown to reduce morbidity, reduce costs related to service delivery, lead to more accurate supports/services related to the needs of the person, allow for better staff matching, and improve quality of life due to better over-all health. The HRST empowers supporters to observe where health risks are present, decide how to respond, and act! Observe. Decide. Act!

What is the SIS-A?

Developed, tested, and normed by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), the Supports Intensity Scale is a unique tool for gauging supports. It primarily seeks to measure the support needed for persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to engage in various life activities at the same level of involvement as anyone without a disability of relative age in his or her community (also defined as, Success). The SIS-A covers several life activities, some of which have historically been unassociated with, or participated in by, people with disabilities. The interviewer explores various life activities in sections such as Home Living, Community Living, Lifelong Learning, Employment, Health and Safety, Social, Protection and Advocacy. The interviewer then works with the team to identify what Type of Support, Frequency of Support, and Daily Support Time would be needed to promote optimal contribution and involvement in these activities at a successful level. Most the tool is scored in this manner. The SIS-A helps identify the supports needed for maximum contribution in everyday tasks. It also addresses longstanding, stereotypical views by refusing to focus on the deficits of the person but rather looks at what supports the person needs, to engage in life as others do, despite these deficits.

Compatibility of the HRST and SIS-A

The HRST reveals current health risks experienced by the person, regardless of the supports offered by others or the degree of those supports. The SIS-A reveals the type of support, frequency of support, and time to give that support needed for the person to engage in life activities on or at the same level as others do of relative age in their community. Combining these two approaches allows for a more complete view of the person. In our own lives, we do not exclude our knowledge and appreciation of our health risks apart from the supports we may need to carry out everyday life activities. We may know that due to a diagnosis we need to see a physician but we may need support to get to the physician, speak to the physician, or manage the treatment offered. Our lives involve multiple aspects of these realities.

The HRST and SIS-A offer the information needed to support others with a similar approach. In addition, both tools can be used together or independently to:

- ▶ Develop Individualized Support Plans
- ▶ Allocate fiscal resources based on identified risk and support level Allocate staff and personnel
- ▶ Qualify for advanced funding and supports
- ▶ Identify quality of life dynamics
- ▶ Trend data
- ▶ Assist in continuity of care
- ▶ Aid in transition efforts from higher levels of care
- ▶ Promote person centered approaches