

*The American Association on Intellectual
and
Developmental Disabilities*

Parent/Family Information Guide
Supports Intensity Scale

Parents want the best support for their family member with a developmental disability. Supports help their sons or daughters learn new skills or to do things that are important to them. Often, it is hard to determine what kind of support or how much of a support is needed. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) understands how important identifying needed supports are not only to individuals with disabilities, but also to their parents, and those who provide support services. AAIDD has developed a way for understanding the support needs of people with developmental disabilities. The *Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)* is a new way of discovering what supports are needed.

Traditionally, a person's level of developmental disability has been measured by the skills the individual lacks. The SIS measures supports. It shifts the focus from what a person lacks to what a person *needs*. The Scale looks at practical supports people with developmental disabilities need to lead independent lives. It looks at 57 life activities and 28 behavioral and medical areas. The assessment is done through a face-to-face interview with the person with developmental disabilities, and those who know the person well. Often, parents or other family members help with the interview process.

SIS measures support needs in the areas of home living, community living, lifelong learning, employment, health and safety, social activities, and protection and advocacy. The Scale ranks each activity according to *frequency*, *amount*, and *type* of support. There are no right or wrong answers. However, all questions are important and must be answered.

There are many benefits of the Supports Intensity Scale. Here's what SIS provides family members and professional supporting a person with an intellectual disability:

- Direct, reliable, and valid measurement of supports needs in 57 life activities.
- Ranking of support needs in 15 medical and 13 behavioral areas.
- Comparing a person's needs to others based on national field test data.
- Solid knowledge on person's needs, preferences, and goals for life.
- Directions on resource allocation and financial planning.
- Help to talk about support needs during the person-centered planning process.
- Opportunity to help the person plan a life of *their* choice.
- Long-term independence and enhanced quality of life for persons with intellectual disabilities.

If you want to learn more, or if you have any questions, please call AAIDD.