

**ND Department of Human Services – Developmental Disabilities Division (Division)  
Supports Intensity Scale (SIS®) & Inventory for Client and Agency Planning (ICAP®) COVID 19 Protocol**

*Revised Sept. 4, 2020. First posted April 20, 2020.*

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) has temporarily waived its best practice recommendation for face-to-face SIS assessments with this waiver only being applicable during this national crisis. The Division supports and agrees with this temporary waiver of best practice and will be allowing exceptions to the administration of SIS and ICAP assessments.

Completing a SIS/ICAP assessment face-to-face may still occur, per policy, given the following considerations: the prevalence of COVID-19 cases, CDC recommendations can be appropriately practiced, and people's health and safety can be met. The Rushmore Group, LLC. (Rushmore) will discuss with the provider on the feasibility of conducting a face-to-face SIS/ICAP assessments during COVID-19.

ND Administrative Code 75-04-05-09.1 designates timelines for when initial or reassessments must be completed, therefore, the time of SIS/ICAP assessments have not been waived. Extenuating circumstances preventing the timely scheduling of an initial or reassessment will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Following is guidance outlining exceptions and continued requirements for completion of SIS and ICAP assessments.

**When will remote/virtual assessments begin?**

Scheduling remote/virtual assessments began in April of 2020. ~~The Rushmore Group, LLC. (Rushmore) is currently assessing various HIPAA compliant platforms for completion of remote/virtual assessments. The platform will include audio and video capabilities for completion of the SIS assessment as well as the ability to participate telephonically.~~ The Rushmore Group, LLC. (Rushmore) is utilizing Webex to conduct virtual assessments. This platform allows assessments to be completed visually and the opportunity to join the meeting via telephone. The scheduling process will continue as it has in the past; Rushmore will communicate dates of assessor availability to the SIS scheduling contact at each provider.

**What are the expectations for remote/virtual assessments?**

- ~~The assessor will need to meet the client prior to the assessment. It is anticipated this will occur 30 minutes prior to the scheduled assessment through video. After meeting the assessor, the client continues to be welcome to remain for the entirety of the assessment.~~ Rushmore will no longer be scheduling a meeting time 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the assessment. The assessor will meet the client at the time the assessment is scheduled to begin and the client continues to be welcome to remain for the entirety of the assessment.
- The requirements for qualified responders have not changed. There must be at least two qualified responders present for the entire assessment who have known the client for at least 90-days and are able to speak to the client's support needs to be successful in current and potential situations. The respondents must know the individual well in one or more environments and provide accurate answers that do not over or under-estimate abilities and support needs. All qualified responders must be present at the beginning of the assessment and remain for the entirety of the interview.

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- Qualified responders must assure the assessment is being conducted in a manner that allows for confidentiality for the client and their information.
- Providers are required to complete the SIS Assessment Spreadsheet sent by Rushmore and return the spreadsheet along with a copy of the client's face sheet and Overall Service Plan (OSP) from the web-based case management system prior to the scheduled assessment.
- The provider shall continue to notify the Developmental Disabilities Program Manager (DDPM) of the scheduled SIS assessment.
- To protect intellectual property, AAIDD has developed a Respondent's Guide for remote/virtual SIS assessments. The Respondent's Guide will be electronically submitted to providers for dissemination to qualified responders participating in the assessment in lieu of the Interview Profile Form and Rating Key.

**Are providers required to participate in this assessment process?**

Yes, providers are required to participate in this temporary assessment process. Qualified responders, who are employees of a provider organization, are required to participate in the assessment via video. The provider must assure that each qualified responder has access to the Respondent's Guide for remote/virtual assessments thus allowing the responders to utilize it as a reference document during the assessment.

**What if technology to support a video assessment is not available?**

If the provider organization does not have access to the technology required to participate in an assessment, they will notify Rushmore and the Division. This will assure those clients impacted by the inability to participate by video are prioritized for assessment completion when the waiver for face-to-face assessments is rescinded.

**What if a client, family member or guardian does not have the required technology?**

If a family member or guardian does not have access to or desire to utilize technology to participate in the assessment via video, they will have the option for connection telephonically. If a family member or guardian determines they will not participate in the assessment virtually or by telephonic means this determination shall be documented on the Provider Checklist SFN 1802 along with the decision by the family member or guardian the assessment should proceed. If the family member or guardian desires to participate in the assessment but are not able to do so, the provider shall provide this information to Rushmore to assure the client is prioritized for assessment completion at a later date.

**What if a client declines participation in the assessment?**

Circumstances in which there is an absence of or inadequacy of technology or a personal choice to not participate in the assessment (e.g. client receives Independent Habilitation or only Supported Employment and does not desire to travel to participate in the assessment or does not want staff in their home) will be relayed to Rushmore. This will assure the client is prioritized for assessment completion at a later date.

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**What about the SIS Notification Letter, Assessment Provider Checklist - SFN 1802, Assessment Protocol Checklist - SFN 1808 and the Assessment Experience Survey?**

Yes, these forms will continue to be required. The provider shall complete the SIS Notification Letter and complete SFN 1802 for any scheduled assessment. This document will be scanned by the provider and submitted to Rushmore's Project Manager, John New, via email [john.new@rushmore-group.com](mailto:john.new@rushmore-group.com)

The assessor will complete SFN 1808 with the qualified responders participating in the assessment. The Division will accept the assessor signing the qualified responders name on SFN 1808 during this time. The assessor will document the means in which the responder participated, video or telephonically.

The Assessment Experience Survey will be electronically submitted to providers for responders to complete if they choose. Upon completion of the survey they can be submitted to Rushmore at the address on the survey. Both the SIS and ICAP assessment surveys can be completed online at the following links:

SIS: <https://secure.rushmore-group.com/SISSurvey>

ICAP: <https://secure.rushmore-group.com/RGSurveyNet/Survey.aspx?surveyType=ICAP>

**What if qualified responders are not available?**

If qualified responders are not available for participation in an assessment due to a provider temporarily ceasing operations or having furloughed staff the assessment will be scheduled at a later date. An example of this would be a client receives residential services from provider A and day supports from Provider B however the day service provider has temporarily ceased operations and staff are not available to participate in the assessment. Provider A would document this and inform Rushmore the assessment will need to be scheduled at a later date due to qualified responders with key knowledge and information to support the client being unable to participate in the assessment.

**Will assessments take longer?**

Yes, this process is a paradigm shift for all involved in the assessment. Qualified responders should plan on a remote/virtual assessment taking a minimum of three hours for completion. As with face-to-face assessments, the assessor has no direct knowledge about the individual and it may take additional time for that interaction at the beginning of the assessment. Explaining the interview process and the new rating key will likely take longer. Responders who are familiar with the assessment may hear things differently as the assessor will have to work differently to set the scene at the beginning of the assessment as well as each section of the assessment. Assessors will need to make sure all qualified responders continue to be engaged during the entire assessment. The assessment is the responsibility of all responders and the assessor will need to make sure the conversation is not dominated by one responder. The assessor will need additional time to document the basis for their ratings and decisions. As is the process now, the assessor will reiterate what has been shared to assure the appropriate determination of support needs has been made. If the assessor, in their profession judgement, feels critical information has been missed they will contact respondents for clarification. **At the beginning of the assessment, the assessor will remind those attending if they are experiencing technical issues at any**

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time during the assessment to let the assessor know. This is important to make sure all responders and the assessor are hearing all pieces of the assessment conversation. During the assessment, the assessor will periodically check with all responders to make sure there are no technology issues taking place. If technology issues are identified these will be addressed on a case by case basis during the assessment.

**How will Rushmore prioritize scheduling?**

~~With the anticipated increase in completion time for an assessment (a minimum of three hours) Rushmore will begin the scheduling process with two assessments per day when an assessor is available.~~ **Rushmore will schedule three assessments per day when possible.** Rushmore continues to track assessment due dates and will begin scheduling with providers who have clients that have assessments that are overdue as a result of postponement due to the pandemic. The next group of assessments that will be scheduled are those clients whose current assessment will expire in the next 30-days and then those whose assessment expires in the next 60-days.

**How are scores handled for an assessment that was due however was postponed due to the pandemic?**

The scores from the most recent completed assessment will be utilized until such time that a new assessment will be completed. Upon completion, the new assessment will follow process and timelines outlined in the current SIS and ICAP assessment policy. The effective date of the new assessment results will be 30 calendar days from the date of notice sent by the DDPM via SFN 1815. The new assessment results cannot be made retroactive to comply with the 30-day appeal notice.

**Can an out-of-sequence assessment be requested?**

Yes, an out-of-sequence assessment can still be requested by following the process outlined in the SIS and ICAP assessment policy.

**Does a remote/virtual assessment impact the Right to Appeal?**

No, a client or guardian's right to request a reconsideration and/or file a formal appeal regarding a completed assessment remains intact.

**What happens at the end of the pandemic?**

Upon determination the COVID 19 crisis has subsided in North Dakota, this exception will be revoked and SIS/ICAP assessments will be required to be completed in-person; additional guidance will be sent at the time of this determination.

**Who should I contact with questions?**

If you have questions related to services and supports or SIS/ICAP scores related to COVID 19, please contact Tina Bay, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities.

If you have questions related to SIS/ICAP scheduling, using the identified interview platform or submission of any assessment documents, please contact John New, Project Manager, The Rushmore Group, LLC.