

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to explain how the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disability Supports (OIDD) conducts the Screening for Urgency of Need (SUN) process. This guidance provides individuals, families, legal representatives, providers, and other stakeholders with information regarding the purpose of the SUN, how urgency is determined, the role of Medicaid State Plan services, and the process for review and reconsideration.

The SUN is a structured tool intended to promote consistent, equitable, transparent, and person-centered decisions regarding the prioritization of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver opportunities.

Guiding Framework

OIDD shall use the Screening for Urgency of Need (SUN) as the standardized tool for determining an individual's current disability-related support needs and the urgency of those needs for waiver prioritization.

Urgency determinations shall be based on consideration of the individual's current circumstances, disability-related support needs, the availability and sustainability of existing supports, and identified health and safety risks. The SUN also considers known or reasonably anticipated changes that may affect an individual's ability to remain safely supported in the home and community.

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver programs operate within finite state and federal resources. OIDD must prioritize waiver opportunities based on documented disability-related need and urgency. The SUN supports the responsible stewardship and long-term sustainability of waiver resources by helping ensure that available funding is directed to individuals whose current circumstances demonstrate the greatest need while maintaining equitable, consistent, and person-centered decision-making. The SUN process ensures that OIDD is able to provide supports when people most need them and as quickly as possible.

The SUN tool and process were developed with individuals with I/DD and their families who used waiver supports and those who were waiting for waiver supports, through a process from 2014 through 2017 with a pilot completed between 2017 and 2019. The tool and process allowed OIDD to meet all urgent and emergent needs within the year they were identified, with no individual actively waiting with unmet current needs. It also allowed OIDD to work with other parts of LDH and other departments to ensure individuals and families were aware of and able to access other available services so that the best combination of supports were accessed.

Guiding Principles

The SUN process is guided by the following principles:

- Every individual has unique circumstances and these are considered in the screening process.
- The process is person-centered, respectful, and collaborative.
- Individuals and families are encouraged to share their perspectives, priorities, and concerns.
- Waiver services supplement—not replace—natural supports and other available resources.
- Medicaid State Plan services that meet the identified need must be explored before waiver-funded services are considered.
- Prioritization decisions are based on documented disability-related support needs, the stability of existing supports, and health and safety considerations—not caregiver payment status or financial circumstances.
- The process is applied consistently and fairly across the state.

Purpose of the SUN

The SUN is a structured tool built around a person-centered conversation that helps OIDD understand an individual's current circumstances and the supports available to meet their disability-related needs.

The tool gathers information on:

- Current disability-related support needs.
- Existing formal and informal supports.
- The sustainability of those supports.
- Health and safety considerations if supports are not provided or cannot continue.
- Known or reasonably anticipated changes that may affect the individual's support needs or current support system.

The SUN reflects an individual's circumstances at the time of the screening while recognizing that changes in health, caregiving, living arrangements, or other significant life events may affect future support needs.

The SUN is intended to:

- Identify disability-related support needs.
- Understand how current needs are being met.
- Identify unmet disability-related support needs.
- Consider whether those needs are appropriately met through natural supports, Medicaid State Plan services, community resources, educational or vocational services, or other available public and private resources before determining whether waiver-funded services may be necessary.
- Evaluate health and safety risks if supports do not occur or cannot continue.
- Determine the urgency of additional supports.
- Help prioritize waiver opportunities fairly and consistently.

Person-Centered Discussion

The SUN is conducted using a person-centered approach that recognizes each individual's strengths, preferences, goals, and unique life circumstances.

The discussion is intended to develop a clear understanding of the individual's current situation by listening to the individual and those who know them best. Whenever possible, the individual's own voice, preferences, and desired outcomes should guide the conversation.

If the individual requires assistance communicating or participating, information may also be gathered from parents, legal guardians, family members, caregivers, or others who know the individual well while ensuring the individual's interests remain central to the discussion.

During the conversation, the SUN screener may discuss:

- The individual's daily routines and support needs.
- Current disability-related challenges and support needs.
- Supports currently provided by family, friends, schools, employers, service providers, and community organizations.
- Supports that are working well.
- Areas where additional assistance may be needed.
- Health and safety concerns given current supports or if supports change.
- The stability of current supports.
- Known or reasonably anticipated changes that could affect the individual's support needs or ability to remain safely supported in the home and community.

Although the SUN uses person-centered principles, it is not a person-centered service planning meeting. Rather, it is a screening used to understand current support needs and determine the urgency of those needs for waiver prioritization.

Scope of the Screening

The SUN evaluates an individual's current circumstances and considers how the stability of existing supports may affect future needs.

The screening includes consideration of current supports, sustainability of supports, and health and safety, as follows.

Current Supports

Before waiver-funded services are considered, OIDD looks at whether disability-related support needs can be appropriately met through:

- Building independence for the person.
- Technology supports.
- Available and sustainable natural supports from family and friends.
- Typically occurring community-based supports/organizations.
- Schools or educational programs.
- Vocational or employment services.
- Medicaid State Plan services.
- Other available public or private resources.

The SUN gathers information on the adequacy of existing supports and identifies any unmet disability-related support needs. Waiver services are considered when disability-related needs cannot be safely or sustainably met through these resources alone and the supports identified could be met with waiver.

Sustainability of Supports

The SUN considers whether current supports are reasonably expected to continue.

Examples include:

- Aging caregivers.
- Declining caregiver health.
- Caregiver burnout.
- Loss of or transition from employment or school supports.
- Changes in eligibility to access other services.
- Other significant life changes that may affect support availability.

Health and Safety

The SUN evaluates whether the individual faces significant health or safety risks if current supports are unavailable or insufficient.

Examples include:

- Risk of neglect or abuse.
- Medical instability.
- Behavioral/mental health crises.
- Unsafe living conditions.
- Risk of institutionalization/loss of ability to remain in stable home situation.

Disability-Related Support Needs

The SUN focuses on supports required because of an individual's intellectual or developmental disability.

For children, the SUN evaluates disability-related support needs that exceed the care, supervision, guidance, and assistance typically expected for children of the same age.

Examples include:

- Assistance with activities of daily living beyond age expectations.
- Continuous supervision related to disability and beyond age expectations.
- Medical or behavioral supports that in-home supporters need to provide at the direction of clinical professionals and in conjunction with other disability-related supports.

Routine parenting responsibilities and supports typically provided to all children of the same age as the individual being screened are not considered unmet disability-related support needs.

Medical and behavioral health interventions by clinical professionals are accessed through the State Plan for all individuals and are not considered an urgent need for the OIDD waiver.

Natural Supports

Natural supports are people in your life who help you, including:

- Parents
- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Faith communities
- Community organizations

These supports are an important part of many people's lives, and the SUN considers whether they are available and likely to continue over time. This consideration changes as an individual gets older but does not disappear as all individuals receive some natural supports from those with whom they have relationships. Developmental disabilities waiver services are intended to supplement these supports when disability-related needs cannot be safely or sustainably met through natural supports and other available resources.

Medicaid State Plan Services

Federal Medicaid requirements provide that medically necessary Medicaid State Plan services must be utilized before HCBS waiver services when appropriate.

Examples include:

- Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing (EPSDT) Personal Care Services (PCS)
- Long Term Personal Care Services (LTPCS)
- EPSDT-Extended Home Health (Skilled Nursing)
- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Behavioral Health Services
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Other medically necessary Medicaid benefits

If disability-related support needs remain after available Medicaid State Plan services have been explored, OIDD will determine whether waiver services may be appropriate. For youth under age 21, the state is required to provide all medically necessary services through the State Plan.

SUN screeners will assist individuals and families in identifying available Medicaid and community resources whenever appropriate.

Family Caregivers

Families are essential partners in supporting individuals with developmental disabilities.

Waiver services are designed to supplement—not replace—the ongoing support provided by families, friends, and communities.

Whether a family member:

- Is an unpaid caregiver;
- Is currently paid to provide services; or
- May become eligible to provide paid services

does not independently determine urgency.

Urgency determinations are based on the individual's disability-related support needs, the adequacy and sustainability of existing supports, and the presence of health or safety risks.

Determining Urgency

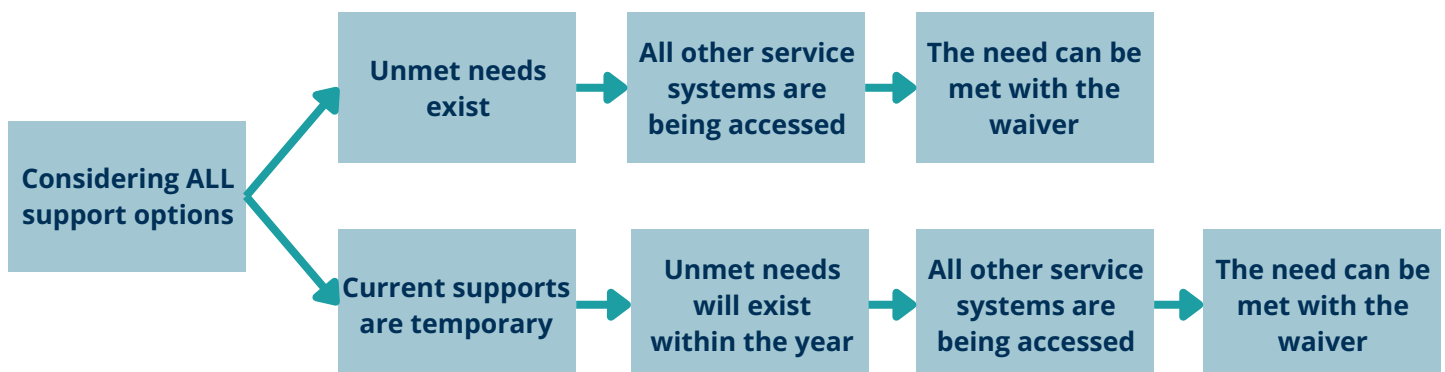
No single factor determines urgency. Diagnosis and severity of disability are not the primary consideration when determining urgency of need for waiver.

The SUN focuses on all of the following:

- Current disability-related support needs.
- The individual's perspective and current circumstances.
- Availability of natural, community, technology supports.
- Availability of Medicaid State Plan and other services.
- Sustainability of existing supports.
- Known or reasonably anticipated changes affecting support needs.
- Potential consequences [health and safety risks] if additional supports are unavailable.

Each determination is based on the individual's unique circumstances at the time of the screening considering current supports and their sustainability, other available supports not yet being accessed, whether the need can be met with the waiver, and the health and safety risk if it is not met.

A SUN score of "3" or "4" can be determined only if one of the following paths is confirmed:



What the SUN Is

The SUN is:

- A person-centered conversation.
- An opportunity for individuals and families to describe their circumstances and goals.
- A review of available supports.
- A tool used to prioritize waiver opportunities.
- A way to identify additional Medicaid or community resources.
- Structured screening to determine disability specific need for waiver LTSS supports.

What the SUN Is Not

The SUN is not:

- A guarantee of waiver services.
- A person-centered service planning meeting.
- A medical or clinical evaluation.
- A funding authorization.

Individuals whose needs are not determined to be urgent will remain on the OIDD Registry and may request a new SUN screening if their circumstances change. Additionally, individuals will be re-screened at regular intervals based on their assigned urgency category to ensure their needs are re-evaluated over time.

Reconsideration and Appeal Process

If an individual disagrees with the SUN determination, they should notify the screener before the screening is finalized.

Step 1 - Independent Reconsideration

An OIDD representative who was not involved in the original screening will review the concerns and determine whether additional review or a new screening is appropriate.

Step 2 - Review Outcome

Following reconsideration:

- A new SUN screening may be conducted; or
- The original determination may be affirmed.

Step 3 - Fair Hearing

If the individual continues to disagree following reconsideration, they may request a Fair Hearing through the Division of Administrative Law (DAL). OIDD will provide information regarding appeal rights and the hearing process.

Roles and Responsibilities

OIDD

- Administer the SUN consistently statewide.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training.
- Apply urgency criteria fairly and objectively.
- Maintain documentation supporting decisions.
- Inform individuals of reconsideration and appeal rights.

SUN Screeners

- Conduct respectful, person-centered discussions.
- Gather complete and objective information.
- Explain the SUN process.
- Identify unmet disability-related support needs.
- Connect individuals and families with Medicaid and community resources.
- Ensure individuals understand their rights throughout the process.

Individuals and Families

- Participate actively in the discussion.
- Share information about current supports and disability-related needs.
- Notify OIDD when circumstances change.
- Ask questions and communicate concerns throughout the screening process.

OIDD Commitment

OIDD is committed to administering the SUN process in a manner that is fair, transparent, consistent, and person-centered.

We strive to:

- Listen to individuals and families.
- Recognize each person's unique strengths and circumstances.
- Identify unmet disability-related support needs.
- Connect individuals with appropriate Medicaid and community resources.
- Prioritize waiver opportunities based on documented need and urgency.
- Ensure every individual is treated with dignity, respect, and equity throughout the process.
- Promote the responsible stewardship and long-term sustainability of Medicaid waiver resources by ensuring waiver opportunities are prioritized fairly, consistently, and based on documented disability-related need and urgency.

Questions or Additional Information

If you have questions about the SUN process or need assistance accessing Medicaid or community-based services, please contact your Local Governing Entity (LGE).

Individuals and families are encouraged to notify OIDD whenever their circumstances change, as significant changes in support needs, caregiving arrangements, health status, or living situation may warrant a new Screening for Urgency of Need.