



Supports Coordinators' Guide to the Communication Assessment and Reassessment

October 2019

Introduction

The Individual Support Plan (ISP) contains information about an individual's needs, desires, and outcomes. The ISP identifies what is important to individuals to enable them to lead their lives as they desire by providing supports for them to grow and develop, make their own decisions, achieve their personal desires, develop relationships, face challenges, and enjoy life as full participating members of their communities. This information is then used to link, arrange, and obtain needed medical, social, habilitation, education, or other community services necessary for individuals to achieve their outcomes and lead Everyday Lives.

The Harry M. Settlement Agreement requires that all Harry M. class members have communication assessments and if recommended, reassessments. The results are documented in the Communication Assessment Report (CAR) and Communication Reassessment Report (CRR). The CAR and CRR are professional assessments completed by qualified communication assessors. The findings are the most accurate analysis of the individual's communication abilities and needs. Assessment findings supersede previous information related to communication in the individual's current ISP.

This guide will review:

- The assessment and reassessment process;
- Guidance on capturing the results of the CAR in the ISP;
- Guidance on capturing the results of the CRR in the ISP;
- Refusal of recommendations;
- Paying for communication assistance during ISP team meetings; and
- Contact information.

Assessment and Reassessment Process

Assessment

1. Once a D/deaf individual in the Consolidated waiver is identified, the Supports Coordinator (SC) is to check the "Harry M. Litigation" checkbox in the demographics screen in HCSIS. This indicator alerts the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) of the potential class member. The SC is required to complete the Harry M. training found on MyODP.org.

Note: The term "D/deaf" captures both Deaf individuals who are members of the Deaf Community and Deaf Culture and deaf individuals who have a hearing loss.

2. If ODP determines that the individual is a class member, per the Agreement, ODP will notify the assessor agency, SC, Supports Coordination Organization (SCO), Administrative Entity (AE), and ODP regional lead. The assessor agency will then

contact the SC to schedule the assessment. If ODP determines that the individual is not a class member, ODP will contact the SC to uncheck the “Harry M. Litigation” checkbox.

If the individual meets the definition of a class member, per the Settlement Agreement, then he/she is a class member however, class members have the right to decline an assessment. To decline an assessment, the class member must have access to information in order to make an informed choice.

If the class member declines:

- the “Declaration of Non-Participation” form (provided by the assessor agency) must be completed by the class member/guardian, sent to the assessor agency, and documented in a service note;
- the Harry M. indicator remains checked;
- the SC will remind the class member that he/she has the right to receive a communication assessment and will offer the opportunity for an assessment at least annually at the ISP meeting;
- the SC will document in a service note each offer and individual’s response whether to have an assessment done; and
- the SC will include the phrase “[Class Member Name] is a Harry M. class member, but declined to receive a Communication Assessment on [date]” in the “Communication” section of the ISP.

Things to consider when scheduling the assessment:

- What is the individual’s best time of day?
 - What are the best locations to hold the assessment meeting? Be aware that assessors will need to see the individual’s communication in varying settings, as communication varies. Also, consider that distractions may impact his/her communication.
 - What team members need to be in attendance? Consider who knows the individual the best and who has the best communication with the individual. Also, consider that too many people may be distracting.
3. Once a date and time are chosen, the assessor agency sends a confirmation email to the SC. The SC is then responsible to share the information with the rest of the team. With the confirmation email, the assessor agency also sends a checklist of requested documents. The SC is responsible to provide the documentation requested within the timeline provided.
 4. The assessment is held.
 5. The assessor drafts the assessment report and it is sent to ODP’s Deaf Services Coordinator (DSC) for approval.

6. Once approved, the DSC will send the report to the class member, the assigned SC, SCO, the Administrative Entity (AE) of registration, and the appropriate ODP Regional Office.

Note: The entire CAR must be retained in the individual's case records, maintained by the AE and SCO, and be accessible during all ISP team meetings.

7. Once the SC receives the report, the SC is responsible to ensure that the rest of the individual's support team receives a copy of the report.
8. Within 60 days of receipt of the report, the SC will facilitate an ISP team meeting to:
 - Review and analyze the results of the report,
 - Discuss the recommendations set forth in the report,
 - Develop an action plan to implement each recommendation, and
 - Revise the ISP to capture the results of the CAR with specificity (see *Guidance on capturing the results of the Communication Assessment Report in the ISP* section).

Note: The SC should document these activities in a service note.

The recommendations should continue to be reviewed at ISP meetings and progress should be measured and evaluated by his team on an on-going basis.

The implementation and continuation of the recommendations is critical for the improvement of the individual's communication and their overall quality of life. Communication is fluid and ever changing. The support team members are responsible to continually monitor the class member's communication and seek additional support as communication needs change over time.

Reassessment

9. The CAR for each class member will include whether or not a reassessment report is needed and, if needed, when it should be completed. ODP, with the assessor agency's assistance, will monitor reassessment dates.
10. Thirty days before the reassessment due date, the assessor agency will reach out to the SC to schedule the reassessment.

Class members have the right to decline a reassessment. To decline a reassessment, the class member must have access to information in order to make an informed choice. If the class member declines:

- the "Declaration of Non-Participation" form must be completed by the class member/guardian and sent to the assessor agency;
- the Harry M. indicator remains checked;
- the information from the CAR will remain in the ISP;

- the SC will remind the class member that he/she has the right to receive a communication reassessment and will offer the opportunity for a reassessment at least annually at the ISP meeting;
- the SC will document in a service note each offer and individual's response whether to have a reassessment done; and
- the SC will include the phrase "[Class Member Name] is a Harry M. class member, but declined to receive a Communication Reassessment on [date]" in the "Communication" section of the ISP.
 - Note: The CAR information should remain in the ISP.

Things to consider when scheduling the reassessment:

- What is the individual's best time of day?
- What are the best locations to hold the reassessment meeting? Be aware that assessors will need to see the individual's communication in varying settings as communication varies. Also, consider that distractions may impact his/her communication.
- What team members need to be in attendance? Consider who knows the individual the best and who has the best communication with the individual. Also consider that too many people may be distracting

11. The same steps occur as described in #3 – 7 above.

12. Within 60 days of receipt of the report, the SC will facilitate an ISP team meeting to:

- Review and analyze the results of the report (requiring a deeper discussion of possible causes of the individual's improvement or decline in communication or access to communication),
- Discuss the recommendations set forth in the report,
- Develop an action plan to implement each recommendation, and
- Revise the ISP to capture the results of the CRR with specificity.

Note: The SC should document the activities listed in a service note.

The recommendations should continue to be reviewed at ISP meetings and progress should be measured and evaluated by his team on an on-going basis.

The implementation and continuation of the recommendations is critical for the improvement of the individual's communication and their overall quality of life. Communication is fluid and ever changing. The support team members are responsible to continually monitor the class member's communication and seek additional support as communication needs change over time.

Guidance on capturing the results of the Communication Assessment Report in the ISP

1. Demographics

Ensure that the demographics screen in HCSIS is accurate. This includes:

- “Primary Language” should be listed as “Sign.”
 - Note: “Sign” includes any form of signed communication. This includes American Sign Language (ASL), Sign Language from other countries, Signed Exact English, a mixture of ASL and signed English, tactile sign, and visual gestural communication.
- “Primary Language” in the home should be completed to reflect the language most frequently spoken in the individual's home. This may or may not match the individual's primary language.
- “Is an Interpreter Needed?” should be answered yes or no depending on the CAR results.

2. Diagnosis

The diagnosis screen should include an “Additional Diagnosis” of a “Sensory” category to show that the individual is Deaf/Hard of Hearing. If the individual is Deaf-Blind, this should be reflected in this section.

3. Other Non-Medical Evaluation

Document the CAR under the Other Non-Medical Evaluation screen. This should read as:

| | |
|--|---|
| Evaluation Area: | Other |
| If Evaluation Area is “Other”, Please Specify: | Communication Assessment Report |
| Name/Type of Evaluation: | Communication |
| Date of Evaluation (MM/DD/YYYY): | xx/xx/xxxx |
| In Need of Enhanced Communication Services?: | Select "Yes" or "No" from the drop-down list to identify whether or not the individual is in need of enhanced communication services (i.e. sign language, etc.) based on the results of the CAR. This field is mandatory for the CAR/CRR. |
| Evaluator Name (Last Name, First Name): | xxxx |
| Evaluator Agency: | xxxx |

4. Communication

The communication screen should include:

- “Primary Mode of Communication” should match the CAR
- “Communication Details” should include:
 - Details on the assessor’s determination of the class member’s mode of communication
 - Any information to describe current skills and needs related to expressive/receptive communication
 - Recommendations
 - Note: The Communication Details section has a character limit of 4,000. If all information does not fit into this section, please add further information under the “Know and Do” screen. Please also document in this section that more information is found under “Know and Do” so the reader is aware.

5. Sensory Concerns

Sensory concerns related to communication are documented in the “Sensory Concerns” screen.

6. Health and Safety focus areas

Any assistive technology or home modifications recommended should be placed in the appropriate “Health and Safety” focus areas.

- Note: If an assistive technology evaluation is recommended, the SC will use best efforts to assure that it is provided within thirty (30) days from receipt of the CAR. The SC should document these activities in a service note.
7. Revise and update any information relating to communication from the current ISP that is no longer accurate, as a result of the CAR.
- An example may be if the current ISP indicates that an individual reads lips, but the CAR found that the individual cannot read lips, then lip-reading should be removed from the ISP.

Guidance on capturing the results of the Communication Reassessment Report in the ISP

1. Demographics

Ensure that the demographics screen in HCSIS is accurate. This includes:

- “Primary Language” should be listed as “Sign.”
 - Note: “Sign” includes any form of signed communication. This includes American Sign Language (ASL), Sign Language from other countries,

Signed Exact English, a mixture of ASL and signed English, tactile sign, and visual gestural communication.

- “Primary Language” in the home should be completed to reflect the language most frequently spoken in the individual's home. This may or may not match the individual's primary language.
- “Is an Interpreter Needed?” should be answered yes or no depending on the CRR results.

2. Diagnosis

The diagnosis screen should include an “Additional Diagnosis” of a “Sensory” category to show that the individual is Deaf/Hard of Hearing. If the individual is Deaf-Blind, this should be reflected in this section.

3. Other Non-Medical Evaluation

Document the CRR under the Other Non-Medical Evaluation screen. This should read as:

| | |
|--|--|
| Evaluation Area: | Other |
| If Evaluation Area is “Other”, Please Specify: | Communication Reassessment Report |
| Name/Type of Evaluation: | Communication |
| Date of Evaluation (MM/DD/YYYY): | xx/xx/xxxx |
| In Need of Enhanced Communication Services?: | <i>Select "Yes" or "No" from the drop-down list to identify whether or not the individual is in need of enhanced communication services (i.e. sign language, etc.) based on the results of the CRR. This field is mandatory for the CAR/CRR.</i> |
| Evaluator Name (Last Name, First Name): | xxxx |
| Evaluator Agency: | xxxx |

4. Communication

The communication screen should include:

- “Primary Mode of Communication” should match the CRR
- “Communication Details” should include:
 - Details on the assessor's determination of the class member's mode of communication
 - Any information to describe current skills and needs related to expressive/receptive communication
 - Recommendations

- Note: The Communication Details section has a character limit of 4,000. If all information does not fit into this section, please add further information under the “Know and Do” screen. Please also document in this section that more information is found under “Know and Do” so the reader is aware.

5. Sensory Concerns

Sensory concerns related to communication are documented in the “Sensory Concerns” screen.

6. Health and Safety focus areas

Any assistive technology or home modifications recommended should be placed in the appropriate “Health and Safety” focus areas.

- Note: If an assistive technology evaluation is recommended, the SC will use best efforts to assure that it is provided within thirty (30) days from receipt of the CRR. The SC should document these activities in a service note.

7. Revise and update any information relating to communication from the current ISP that is no longer accurate, as a result of the CRR, including previous CAR information.

Refusal of Recommendations

The recommendations in the CAR/CRR give class members an equal opportunity to participate in and to benefit from their services. By providing them with the recommendations in the CAR/CRR, class members are assured the same opportunity to communicate their wants, needs, and desires as that of the general population.

Recommendations must be provided to class members.

At the same time, one of ODP’s guiding principles is to promote a person’s individual choice in managing his/her Everyday Life. ODP also respects and understands that individuals must have access to appropriate information in order to make an informed choice. Individuals who have rarely or never been provided exposure to sign language, interpreters, visual environments, etc. will need encouragement to understand the benefit of the recommendations. Initial resistance to recommendations is to be expected.

Only a class member or a class member’s guardian can refuse recommendations. Refusal of one or more recommendations will be honored, provided that:

1. The benefits of the recommendation(s) have been explained to the class member, and

2. The class member is offered the opportunity and encouraged to be gradually introduced to the recommendation(s), such as through progressive exposure to interpreter services, participation in deaf social groups, or other recommendations for gradual exposure, and
3. Both 1 and 2 above were presented to the class member in the class member's preferred mode of communication, and
4. If, after performing all of the above, the class member expresses refusal the recommendation(s) through actions, expressions, and other types of communication.

If a class member refuses one or more of the recommendations in the CAR/CRR, it must be clearly documented in the ISP:

1. The recommendations that were refused,
2. A description of how the benefits of the recommendations were explained to the class member consistent with the class member's preferred modes of communication,
3. A description of how the class member was offered the opportunity and encouraged to be gradually introduced to the recommendations consistent with the class member's preferred mode of communication, and
4. How the class member's refusal of the accommodations was determined.

Recommendations that were refused during the ISP meeting should continue to be offered to the class member at monitoring visits and subsequent team meetings. Efforts to obtain, offer, or provide the recommendations in the CAR/CRR should be reflected in the SC's service notes.

Additionally, the team may not propose alternatives to the recommendations in the CAR/CRR or encourage class members to accept alternatives in lieu of the recommendations in the CAR/CRR. Because the CAR/CRR is a professional assessment completed by a qualified communication assessor, whose findings are the most accurate analysis of the individual's communication needs, proposing alternatives could be detrimental to the class member.

Paying for Communication Assistance during ISP Team Meetings

AEs should use Waiver Administration funds for interpreters and may authorize the Assistive Technology service for Waiver-eligible communication devices. The county may also authorize base funds if desired or when necessary to cover a service that is not eligible for waiver funding.

Contact

Questions about this document or requests for assistance in adding CAR/CRR recommendations to a class member's ISP should be directed to the ODP Deaf

Services Mailbox at RA-ODPDeafServices@pa.gov or to the appropriate ODP Regional Office.