

# Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents (SIPA)



Health Net Federal Services, LLC (HNFS) offers the following information about Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents (SIPA) requirements to assist applied behavior analysis (ABA) providers with using the assessment while providing ABA treatment under the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD).

## What is the SIPA?

The SIPA is the upward age extension of the Parenting Stress Index, Fourth Edition Short Form (PSI-4-SF). This assessment tool has a respondent-based rating scale for screening and evaluating stress in parent/caregiver and adolescent interactions, including the various effects an individual personalities and difficult circumstances have on stress.

## Why is the SIPA used?

TRICARE has selected the SIPA because it is a valid and reliable measure of internal stress and dynamics within a family system specific to raising adolescents. The demands of raising or caring for a family member diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may increase stress levels. SIPA scores are not part of measuring treatment progress over time; however, providers can use these scores to identify available resources and enhance the overall support provided to families of beneficiaries diagnosed with ASD.

## What are the age requirements?

SIPA scores must be submitted for beneficiaries ages 11 years through 19 years and 11 months as part of ABA treatment requests under the ACD. **Please note:** The SIPA and PSI-4-SF have overlapping age ranges. The PSI-4-SF is appropriate for beneficiaries ages 12 years and 11 months and younger. At the time of authorization/reauthorization:

- For beneficiaries ages 11-12 years, either the SIPA or PSI-4-SF will be accepted.
- For beneficiaries ages 13 years and older, the SIPA will be accepted.

## What are the submission requirements?

The SIPA is a comprehensive system with a variety of scores. ABA providers must submit baseline SIPAs before beneficiaries start ABA treatment under the ACD and every six months after that. Providers must submit the score summary, which includes these domains and subscale scores:

- Adolescent Domain (AD)
  - Moodiness/Emotional Lability (MEL)
  - Social Isolation/Withdrawal (ISO)
  - Delinquency/Antisocial (DEL)
  - Failure to Achieve or Persevere (ACH)
- Parent Domain (PD)
  - Life Restrictions (LR)
  - Relationship with Spouse/Partner (REL)
  - Social Alienation (SOC)
  - Incompetence/Guilt (INC)
  - Adolescent-Parent Relationship Domain (APRD)
  - Index of Total Parenting Stress (TS)
  - Life Stressors (LS)

The ABA provider must include the full publisher print report or hand-scored protocol and summary score sheet(s). Providers must submit the name of the respondent and relationship to the beneficiary. The measure must be completed within the last 90 days of the measure due date. Embedding scores in the treatment plan or other clinical documents will not meet submission requirements.

## How is the SIPA scored?

ABA providers use the domains listed in the previous section to convert raw scores based on responses to individual questions into percentile rank scores. These raw scores also can be converted into T-scores; however, reporting the percentile ranked scores is required. The SIPA manual states that all clinical interpretations and validity studies are based on percentile scores, which should be the primary source for interpretation. Percentile scores range from 1% to more than 99% (>99%).

Percentile scoring:

- Less than 85% = Within normal limits
- Between 85%-89% = Borderline
- Between 90%-94% = Clinically significant
- Greater than or equal to 95% = Clinically severe

## How are SIPA scores used by ABA providers under the Autism Care Demonstration?

While the treating provider may not be the same provider who completes the SIPA, it is necessary for treating ABA providers to review and fully understand the scores. However, the scores do not factor into coverage determination and do not diagnose dysfunctional family dynamics or parent/caregiver mental health.

ABA providers can use SIPA scores to identify whether additional family support would result in increased parent/caregiver engagement, decreased familial stress, and/or improved access to services for the beneficiary. The SIPA also may be used to set priorities for parent/caregiver training, as some areas of beneficiary programming may address root causes of challenges within the parent/caregiver and adolescent relationship. HNFS encourages providers to discuss whether altering training schedules, changing topics of training within the scope of ABA or incorporating other remedies may address any stress associated with ABA treatment and parent/caregiver training.

A stress index scores in the SIPA may prompt HNFS to evaluate additional services or supports that may benefit the family.

## When do SIPA scores indicate the need for a treatment plan or training modification?

HNFS' ABA supervisors are encouraged to carefully review the SIPA scores at each six-month reassessment to evaluate resources available to support a family's specific needs. Please refer to the "How is the SIPA scored?" section above for scoring details.

For additional information about TRICARE's ABA benefit, please visit [www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD-provider](http://www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD-provider).