

SDM[®] Strengths and Needs Assessment FAQ

Project Overview

Minnesota APS and Evident Change formed workgroups to update the SDM strengths and needs assessment (SNA) in 2024. The updated SNA integrates structural improvements Evident Change has made since the original assessment's development. Other updates include alignment with Minnesota APS policy, increasing its usefulness for stopping, preventing, and reducing risk for maltreatment by assessing factors that contribute to maltreatment and ensuring the adult's voice is reflected in assessment and service planning.

The SNA includes both an assessment and Adult Protection Service Plan.

The SNA helps identify critical service needs and guides APS intervention planning using a strengths-based, adult-centered approach. It serves to:

- Objectively assess and document the adult's (and primary support's, if applicable) strengths and needs to inform service planning aimed at reducing and preventing maltreatment.
- Support consideration of the adult's culture, community, and personal choices.
- Provide a consistent reference for workers and supervisors in service planning.
- Guide service referrals based on identified needs.
- Ensure consistent APS practices statewide.

FAQ

1. Is the SNA/service plan required for all APS assessments?

The SNA, which includes completing the adult protection service plan, is required to be completed on all adults accepted for APS assessment, excluding adults accepted for EPS response only or when the final determination is "No determination – not a vulnerable adult" at first contact, or "investigation not possible" due to the adult being deceased or unable to be located despite diligent efforts.

2. What if I am unable to conduct a face-to-face visit or engage the adult in assessment?

The SNA is completed based on the adult's current situation, including all the information that APS has about the adult, contact with the adult, their support system, and other appropriate collaterals. Barriers to completing the SNA should be discussed with your supervisor to identify solutions to the barriers. Additionally, DHS Adult Protection Resource Specialist (APRS) staff are available for case consults to assist in identifying solutions to barriers.

3. Is a service plan required if the adult is assessed as having no needs, i.e. all responses are "a."?

If the adult is assessed as having no needs, a service plan is not required.

4. I do not see an assessment of vulnerable adult status under the "assessment" definition. Is this no longer needed?

Assessment of vulnerable adult status is part of the SDM intake assessment and is not repeated in the SNA. Workers can use the vulnerable adult status portion of the intake assessment to guide confirmation of vulnerable adult status.

5. Do I need to complete the assessment and service plan within a certain number of days of the initial face-to-face visit?

The assessment is completed no sooner than the first face-to-face contact with the adult, in combination with collateral contacts necessary to complete the tool and prior to the creation of the service plan. Pages 26-27 of the [SDM SNA Policy & Procedures Manual \(PDF\)](#) provides guidance.

6. What if someone has a guardian who meets their needs, but without them those needs would not be met? How do those get scored on the SNA?

You would score this based on the status of the need being met (regardless of if this need is met by the adult or their guardian). If the need is met, you would score that item as an "a" but if there is a moderate/severe need, the item would be scored as "b" or "c".

7. Are we still doing a case closure communication with SNA assessment information?

No. DHS is currently reviewing the policy and form to ensure alignment with updated SDM assessment and service planning tools. Agencies may choose to use their own case closure letter in the interim.

8. Is the eDocs safety plan still needed at this point in time?

No. The safety plan has been removed from eDocs. Safety interventions to address immediate danger factors are documented within the tool. These may also be reflected on the adult protection service plan when additional planning is needed for a priority need.

9. Is a service plan needed if the adult is receiving targeted case management or waiver case management services?

Yes. The adult protection service plan supports APS engagement with the adult and meeting APS' duties to stop or reduce risk and prevent maltreatment recurrence. The APS service plan documents interventions recommended/implemented by adult protection. Coordination with the

adult's case manager may be necessary to implement APS interventions and is reflected on the adult protection service plan.

10. When was this implemented in SSIS?

The updated SNA, including the adult protection service plan, was launched in the SSIS 25.3 statewide release on 8/20/25.

11. How do I access resources regarding how to use the SNA in SSIS?

County [SSIS Worker Mentors \(PDF\)](#) received guidance on the updated SNA in SSIS during the August [SSIS Coffee Talk: SSIS Statewide Release v25.3](#) (37:25 minute mark); the [PPT](#) provided to mentors included visuals and guidance on the SNA in SSIS. In addition, the [SSIS Adult Protection User Guide \(PDF\)](#) is being revised to include the updated SNA. Updates to SSIS resource materials and trainings are communicated through the SSIS Update publication. Click [here](#) to subscribe.

12. Is there on-demand policy training for the SNA available?

Yes. MN APS SDM Strengths and Needs Assessment Training eLearning courses – one for APS staff, one for APS supervisors – are available on iSpring, the MN Adult Protection Learning Management System (LMS).

Complete the following steps to access the MN Adult Protection eLearning materials:

1. Register for iSpring by selecting the [iSpring registration link](#) and filling out the sign-up form.
2. Select the “Course Catalog” tab to view the available courses.
3. Select the MN APS SDM Strengths and Needs Assessment Training folder, choose either the APS worker or APS supervisor course, and select “Add to My Courses” to enroll.
4. The “My Courses” tab will list all enrolled courses.
5. Select a course to begin!

Already registered for iSpring? Select the [iSpring login link](#) to access MN Adult Protection trainings.

Questions? Please contact the DHS Adult Protection Unit at (651) 431-2609 or dhs.adultprotection@state.mn.us. Thank you!