



MnCHOICES Initial Assessment Review – Overview and Q&A

August 5, 2025

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3. When to conduct an Initial Assessment Review (IAR)
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New and updated training resources

New resources:

- [CBSM – IAR](#)
- [PartnerLink – IAR: Detailed guidance](#)

CBSM updates:

- [Assessment applicability and timelines](#)
- [Eligibility updates for home and community-based services](#)
- [MnCHOICES](#)

DD Screening Document

Codebook and LTC updates:

- [Nursing facility scenarios](#)
- [DD screening document fields](#)
- [DD Screening Document DHS-3067 \(PDF\)](#)
- [LTC Screening Document – AC, BI, CAC, CADI, ECS, EW, MHM, MSC+, MSHO, DHS-3427 \(PDF\)](#)

More updated training resources

Trainlink course MNCH301/301a,
MnCHOICES Assessment updates:

- Module 2, Initiate assessment
- Module 9, Functional assessment –
Self Determination

MnCHOICES Help Center updates:

- Practice Guide: MnCHOICES
assessment form v. 5
- Practice Guide: MnCHOICES support
plan form v. 5
- Smart Guide: Transfer Guidance for
MSHO/MSC+ Care Coordinators.

Effective July 1, 2025, the Minnesota Legislature extended the validity of a MnCHOICES assessment from 60 days to 365 days to establish program eligibility. DHS developed the IAR to implement this change.

More information:

- [April 1, 2025 eList announcement](#)
- [CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

- [256B.0911 LONG-TERM CARE CONSULTATION SERVICES](#)
- Subd. 20.**MnCHOICES assessments; duration of validity:**
 - (a) **An assessment that is completed as part of an eligibility determination for multiple programs for the alternative care, elderly waiver, developmental disabilities, community access for disability inclusion, community alternative care, and brain injury waiver programs under chapter 256S and sections [256B.0913](#), [256B.092](#), and [256B.49](#) is valid to establish service eligibility for no more than 365 days after the date of the assessment.**

Interpretation

- Focus on establishing program eligibility
- Applies to period between initial assessment and when someone starts a waiver, Alternative Care (AC) or Essential Community Supports (ECS) or Community First Services and Supports (CFSS).
- Note: Initial assessments are in-person assessment for a person who is not currently receiving services through a waiver or other program.
 - A person must never have been on a program or is re-accessing a program.
 - Required by DHS for someone accessing a waiver when they are already on CFSS.

Page posted: 5/27/25	Page reviewed:	Page updated:
Legal authority	Minn. Stat. §256B.0911	
Definitions	<p>Initial assessment: An assessment completed for a person who is not currently receiving services through a waiver or other program. For more information, refer to CBSM – Assessment applicability and timelines.</p> <p>Initial assessment review (IAR): An activity that takes place after an initial assessment when there has been a delay in opening to a waiver, Alternative Care (AC), Essential Community Supports (ECS) or Community First Services and Supports (CFSS). An IAR can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open a person to a program within 365 days of their initial assessment.• Be a remote activity.• Document a person's new changes and update their initial assessment results.	

Resource:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Can the Eligibility Update function be "grandfathered in" to allow for the option to use that function for assessments completed before July 1?

After careful consideration, the Eligibility Update was removed from statute.

Lead Agencies can request the use of an EU for limited circumstances:

- People who are receiving customized living services and have requested EW funding to help pay for those services.
- Lead agencies must use the MnCHOICES Help Desk Form to request DHS assistance if an eligibility update is needed after 07/01/2025.

Resources:

- [MnCHOICES initial assessment validity extension eList announcement](#)
- [CBSM - Eligibility update for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

What is an Initial Assessment Review (IAR)?

An IAR is a remote activity that follows an initial assessment and is used to open a person to a waiver, AC, ECS or CFSS when external criteria was not met initially.

Resource:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

An IAR:

- Can be used within 365 days of the initial in-person assessment.
- Allows assessors to open a person to a waiver, CFSS, AC, or ECS program when the person was not able to open in a timely manner after their initial assessment.

When is an IAR used?

An IAR is used when the person:

- Applies for and awaits determination of disability status (i.e., Social Security or State Medical Review Team [SMRT]).
- Applies for and awaits determination for Medical Assistance (MA).
- Submits [Application for MA-LTC eligibility, DHS-3531 \(PDF\)](#).
- Completes tasks required for AC or ECS financial eligibility.
- Applies for and awaits the results of the DD diagnostic determination process.
- Experiences a delay in proposed discharge date from an institutional stay.
- Decides not to go onto a program.

More Initial Assessment Review info

- Modeled after eligibility update
- Way to document changes when and if a person experiences changes after an initial assessment.
- Used as a conversation about next steps.
- Functions to establish a new date from which the support plan must be completed (60 days).
- Way to send updated assessment summary to the person and enter a new screening document into MMIS while preserving the documents already sent or entered.

When not to use an IAR

An IAR cannot be used:

- For a person who is actively open to a waiver, AC or ECS.
- If the previous assessment was a reassessment.
- To reopen a person to a program if the person who has exited a waiver, SC or ECS.

Example:

Jane had an initial assessment on 7/1/2025 and opened to the CADI waiver. Jane then entered a nursing facility for over 121 days. Jane is not eligible to use an IAR to re-open to the CADI waiver.

Resource:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Does the same assessor who completed the initial assessment also completes the IAR unless that assessor is no longer available? And if not, do they need to enter a document change (AT 05) in MMIS before entering their LTC SD?

- It is best practice that the Certified Assessor who completed the initial assessment also complete the Initial Assessment Review. However, we understand this is not always possible or this not work with the lead agencies workflow.
- If a different assessor from the same lead agency completes the Initial Assessment Review, a document change (LTC- AT05 or DD – AT03) will not need to be completed.
- **Note:** The person completing any assessment must be a Certified Assessor.

Timelines

Completing an IAR

The lead agency must complete an IAR within 365 days of the initial assessment. If the person's eligibility is not determined within 365 days from the activity/action date of the IAR, the person must have a new in-person assessment to access programs and services.

The lead agency should not complete an IAR until all external factors are in place and the person is ready to open to a program. The lead agency must prioritize completing the IAR within 20 business days of being notified that the person can open to a program.

Resource:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Will the IAR time tracking be part of the new assessment or separately regarding how much time it takes to complete an assessment?

The assessment time fields will display for each assessment regardless of type.

The time spent completing the Initial Assessment Review should be tracked separately from the Initial Assessment.

MnCHOICES assessment time tracking procedure v3

After every assessment, a lead agency must track the time spent on the assessment interview, as well as intake and post-interview activities. Tracking starts on the date the lead agency received the referral or recommendation according to [Minn. Stat. §256B.0911](#).

In the MnCHOICES assessment, a user will enter the time needed to complete a given activity in the assessment time area in the assessment details part in the activity information section.

Resource:

MnCHOICES Help Center: MnCHOICES assessment time tracking

Do I have to conduct an IAR?

An IAR is only used to open a person to a program within 365 days from the Initial Assessment if eligibility could not be established within the first 60 days.

The person must be functionally eligible for the program they're requesting to access.

Resources:

- [PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)
- [CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Examples:

- If eligibility for a program was unable to be established within 60 days, then an IAR must be used to open the person to a program after eligibility criteria has been met and within 365 days.
- If external criteria is not met within 365 days or the person chooses not to open for any reason (chooses or is institutionalized long-term), an IAR would not be completed.

Functional Criteria

The MnCHOICES assessment determines needs in areas like:

- Activities of daily living.
- Memory, using information, daily decision-making or behavioral needs that require intervention.
- Formal clinical monitoring at least once a day.

The MnCHOICES assessment does not determine criteria like:

- Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility.
- Certification of a disability.
- Diagnoses provided by a medical or mental health provider.

Functional criteria is determined by the MnCHOICES assessment that applies to level of care and/or program eligibility.

Example:

A person meets functional criteria for the Brain Injury (BI) Waiver, but their SMRT determination is pending. This is an external factor.

Resource:

[PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

Functional Criteria, con't

If no functional criteria for institutional level of care and program were met:

An IAR cannot be used to open a person to a program following an initial assessment. A person whose needs or circumstances change to meet LOC or program criteria must have a new initial assessment.

Essential Community Supports

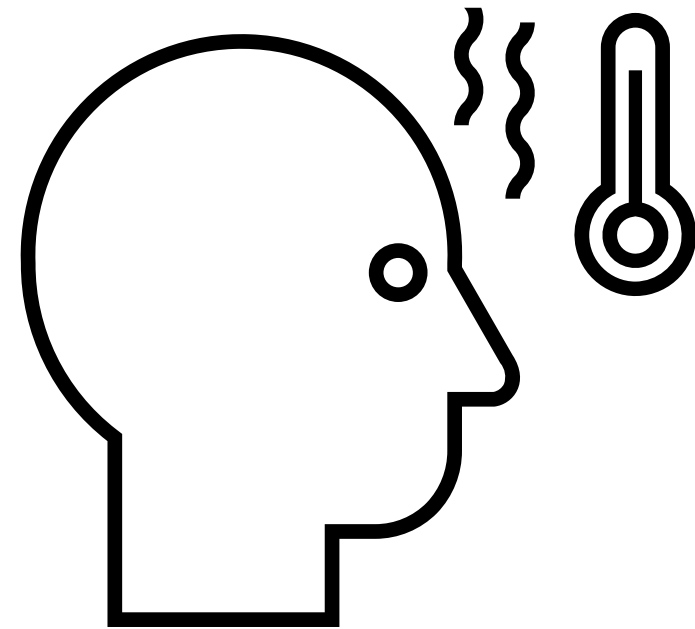
The Essential Community Supports (ECS) program requires that a person not meet level of care to access it. An IAR may still be used when a person 65 and older would like to access ECS but has pending financial eligibility criteria.

Resources:

- [CBSM – Essential Community Supports \(ECS\)](#)
- [PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

If someone has a change in condition after the initial assessment, when should I do a new initial assessment versus an initial assessment review? Is this different if the person is accessing CFSS?

- The Initial Assessment Review should be the assessment type used if there is a delay in opening after a person meets functional eligibility for a requested program in an initial assessment.
- An Initial Assessment Review can be used to capture changes when a person is requesting to access a waiver, AC, ECS or CFSS and has external criteria pending.
- An IAR is NOT used if a person is open to a program and then has a change in condition.



If a person on waiver is in a hospital or NF for more than 121 days, when they discharge could a IAR be done and go back on the waiver, if the previous assessment is good for 365?

No, an IAR can only be used after an initial assessment and if a person did not open to a program.

If a person was in a facility at the time of the initial assessment or entered a facility after an initial assessment, but before they opened to a program, then an IAR could be used.

Example: Casey had an initial assessment on 7/1/2025 to access CADI, but his SMRT was pending. He entered a hospital on 7/15/2025 and was there for 130 days. His SMRT was in place when he was ready to discharge. An IAR could be used to open Casey to CADI.

Limitations	<p>An IAR cannot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substitute for an in-person initial assessment. An IAR can only be completed after an in-person initial assessment or a previous IAR.• Be used for a person who is actively open to a waiver, AC or ECS.• Follow a reassessment.• Be used for a required annual reassessment to determine a person's ongoing program eligibility.• Be used to reopen a program for a person who has exited a waiver, AC or ECS.• Open a person to a program more than 60 days retroactively solely to bill for case management services.
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Resource:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

If the assessment is good for 365 days, can a person switch waivers anytime during that year? For example, if a client on DD waiver ends their habilitative service, can that client switch to CADI within that year without a new assessment?

- An IAR can only be used after an initial assessment when there was a delay in opening to a program.
- Once a person is open to a program, normal program policy applies.
- An IAR can not be used to switch waivers mid-year.

Resource:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Limitations	<p>An IAR cannot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substitute for an in-person initial assessment. An IAR can only be completed after an in-person initial assessment or a previous IAR.• Be used for a person who is actively open to a waiver, AC or ECS.• Follow a reassessment.• Be used for a required annual reassessment to determine a person's ongoing program eligibility.• Be used to reopen a program for a person who has exited a waiver, AC or ECS.• Open a person to a program more than 60 days retroactively solely to bill for case management services.
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How to process the 365-day validity when a person meets all the eligibility criteria near the end of the 365-day time

A new initial assessment is needed if a person can't open to a program within 365 days from the initial assessment.

If a person opened to a program on a different date than the activity date of the initial assessment, they have a limited waiver span.

Resource:

[PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

Examples:

- An IAR is completed on Day 358, leaving 7 days before the expiration of 365 day. The span is valid for 7 days.
- An initial assessment was conducted on 07/01/2025. An IAR was completed on 12/15/2025 to open the person to the BI waiver. The waiver span would be 12/15/2025- 06/30/2026.

Completing IAR and annual reassessments on the same day

Q: “An IAR and an annual reassessment can be completed on the same day, if needed....” This seems to suggest the same person is conducting both the IAR and the annual assessment. Concerned our IA assessors will now be responsible for completing AA assessments. When the IAR and the reassessment are completed on the same day, will two assessment documents be filled out?

A: Having the same assessor complete the Initial Assessment Review and Reassessment is an option – not a requirement. This may not be an option in all scenarios.

Resource: [PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

Determining need for an IAR in the last 60 days

When the person needs an IAR

A user might need to use an IAR toward the end of the allowed 365-day validity policy (about the last 60 days). This most likely would be for people who are already receiving services and requiring program funding. Therefore, using the activity date of the initial assessment or when all criteria were in place, is needed.

When the person does not need an IAR

If external factors were not in place until the end of the allowed 365-day validity policy and the person did not have a need to use services immediately or before the date of the initial assessment review, then a new initial assessment would likely be completed. A new assessment would benefit the person more as the waiver span created by the IAR would be a maximum of 60 days.

When both an IAR and reassessment are needed

A user might need to use an IAR toward the end of the allowed 365-day validity policy. This might be the same time frame that a reassessment must be completed. A user may choose to use the same activity date from the IAR and reassessment if their lead agency is responsible for both and allowed by their lead agency.

Directions

When choosing to complete an IAR and reassessment on the same day, a certified assessor will need to create a MnCHOICES assessment form with assessment type = IAR. The IAR must be completed, an assessment summary must be completed and sent and the screening document must be entered into MMIS. Next, the certified assessor must create a MnCHOICES assessment form with activity type = Reassessment (RA). The assessment summary must be completed and sent and the screening document must be entered into MMIS.

How are we notified that a person is ready to open to a program/waiver?

- This process has not changed. The assessor must ensure that the person is aware of how to contact them or the lead agency.
- The lead agency (certified assessor, case aide, middle social worker, eligibility worker, etc.) will continue to use LTC: Communication of LTSS Eligibility DHS – 5181 to communicate.

Resource: [CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Expectations for follow-up	<p>The lead agency is not required to follow up with the person at a regularly scheduled frequency. The assessor must ensure the person is aware of next steps, including who to call or email with questions and their contact information. The assessor shares this information at the time of the initial assessment using all the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verbal discussion.• MnCHOICES Assessment Summary Worksheet, DHS 6791A (PDF).• Assessment summary. <p>The lead agency will continue to use LTC: Communication of LTSS Eligibility, DHS-5181 to communicate. The certified assessor uses the form to provide information to the eligibility worker about the results of the MnCHOICES assessment. The eligibility worker uses the form to inform the certified assessor immediately upon approval or denial of a person's request for MA payment of LTC services and to provide information about a spenddown or waiver obligation.</p>
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When should we close our initial assessments?

This guidance has not changed. When the assessment interview has been conducted, the screening document must be entered and the assessment summary sent as soon as possible after the initial assessment.

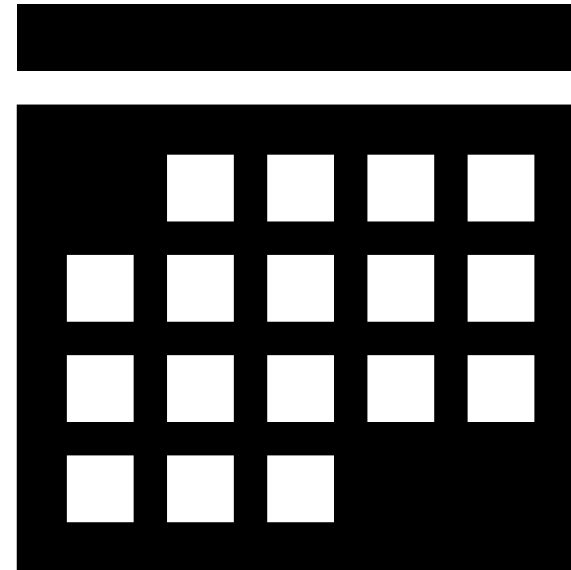
- If external criteria are still pending AND may be finalized within **60 days** of the initial assessment, the lead agency has up to 60 days to complete the assessment, enter the screening document and send the assessment summary.
- If external criteria are still pending AND lead agencies do not believe that eligibility can be determined within **60 days** of the initial assessment, the assessment status must be changed to Approved by MMIS, the screening document must be entered, and the assessment summary should be sent as soon as possible.



What is day one?

Q: What does DHS consider day one?

A: This has not changed as part of implementation. Like the EU, day one is the day of the assessment.



Activity codes and when to enter Screening Documents into MMIS

The activity type and action type for Initial Assessment Reviews is 14.

DHS strongly recommends that no more than fourteen (14) calendar days lapse between completion of any LTCC or case management activity and the submission of the date into MMIS. This may not always be possible.

Examples:

- Initial Assessment activity date = 07/01/2025. The screening document must be entered as soon as possible, which may be around 60 days later.
- Initial Assessment Review activity date = 10/01/2025. The screening document must be entered as soon as possible, likely earlier than 60 days.

Resources:

- [DHS - 4625 Instructions for Completing and Entering the LTCC Screening Document and Service Agreement into MMIS](#)
- [CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)
- [DHS - 3427 - LTC Screening Document – AC, BI, CAC, CADI, ECS, EW, MHM, MSC+, MSHO](#)
- [DHS - 3067 DD Screening Document](#)

Effective Date in MMIS

Q: For an IAR, can the effective date be at any point within 365 days without getting an edit in MMIS?

A: MMIS has been programmed to match policy. Policy dictates that an IAR can have an activity date up to 365 days from the initial assessment. The effective date must be within 60 days of the activity date and within 365 days of the initial assessment activity date.

Resources:

[CBSM - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

[PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

CFSS, IAR, and initial assessments

Q: Can the initial assessment that is being completed each year (after 7/1/25) for people on the CFSS program be used to open someone to a waiver program? Can an IAR be done on this assessment later when the person's financial eligibility is determined for a waiver program? Or for someone on CFSS who has had their initial assessment for the year, would they require another new initial assessment within the 365-day period once their financial eligibility is determined for a waiver program, if they are choosing?

A: A person who is wanting to access a waiver program must have an in-person, initial assessment.

- If the CFSS reassessment was completed in-person and the need for a waiver became evident, then the assessor should complete the MnCHOICES assessment as an initial assessment and an IAR could be used if the person had external factors pending.
- If the CFSS reassessment was completed remotely and the need for a waiver became evident, then the assessor must complete a new initial assessment in-person.

Q: When a person is already opened to CFSS and completes an IAR to open to a waiver, is a new CFSS Support Plan required?

A: No, a new support plan with a CFSS program type is not required. A new support plan with the waiver type is required.

Resource:

[PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

When a person is using CFSS before opening to a waiver

When a person has an initial assessment to access a waiver and would like to use CFSS before the waiver opens, an initial assessment review may be used to open the person to a waiver. Remember that the Type B service agreement must be closed before the screening document may be entered into MMIS and a **new support plan with the program type must be created.** The effective date of the waiver must be after the Type B service agreement closes.

New change: An IAR is needed to access CFSS if an MA application is pending past 60 days

Q: Does a person need an IAR to access CFSS if their MA application is pending past 60 days from the initial assessment? This would be a change as we did not do eligibility updates for people wanting to access PCA only so wanting clarification.

A: Yes! This is a new change. This ensures that MnCHOICES shows eligibility for the program and the person receives an updated assessment summary with their current eligibility results.

Resource:

[PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

CFSS

Defining initial assessment

An initial assessment is an assessment completed for a person who is not currently receiving services through a waiver or other program. Because of MMIS constraints, all CFSS assessments are coded as "initial assessments." However, for purposes of the Initial Assessment Review policy, annual assessments for people who have been receiving CFSS services are considered reassessments and cannot be followed by an IAR.

When a person is using CFSS before opening to a waiver

When a person has an initial assessment to access a waiver and would like to use CFSS before the waiver opens, an initial assessment review may be used to open the person to a waiver. Remember that the Type B service agreement must be closed before the screening document may be entered into MMIS and a new support plan with the program type must be created. The effective date of the waiver must be after the Type B service agreement closes.

When a person is assessed for CFSS but has pending external factors

When a person has an initial assessment for CFSS but has pending external factors, then an IAR must be used to open the person to the program. The IAR SD must be entered into MMIS as no program.

If the person was initially found eligible for a waiver and chooses to access a waiver at a later date, then another IAR may be used to open the person to the waiver.

MCO responsibilities when opening EW for people who transfer from a county or tribal nation

If the member comes from the county to the MCO with a valid MnCHOICES assessment, does the MCO do a Functional Needs Update (FNU) to open the member to EW once the U code has been removed, or is it just a matter of entering the Screening Document?

- If the MCO is responsible for the Initial Assessment Review then they would just complete an IAR. An FNU is never used to open a person to EW.
- If the county or tribal nation completed an IAR to open the person to EW, then follow the Smart guide: Transfer guidance for MSHO/MSC+ care coordinators v2. Check scenarios 1 or 8.

Resource: [PartnerLink - Initial assessment review \(IAR\) for home and community-based services \(HCBS\)](#)

Who completes it	<p>The lead agency that completed the person's initial assessment also completes the IAR. This action supports the initial lead agency's role to help the person navigate the public program system and access services. This is true even when there has been a change in the person's county of residence (COR).</p> <p>Exceptions for Minnesota Senior Health Options (MSHO)/Minnesota Senior Care Plus (MSC+) managed care organizations (MCOs)</p> <p>The entity that completes the IAR depends on the person's MCO enrollment and the effective date of the EW or CFSS span:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program effective date on or after transition from MCO to fee-for-service: The county or tribal nation is responsible to complete the IAR.• Program effective date on or after the person transitions from fee-for-service to MCO: The MCO is responsible to complete the IAR.• Program effective date on or after the person transitions from one MCO to another MCO: The new MCO is responsible to complete the IAR. <p>For more information about transfer scenarios, refer to MnCHOICES Lead Agency Transfer and Communication Form, DHS-6037 (PDF).</p>
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Customized living tool and the EW support plan

Q1: Since MA/EW is not approved at time of assessment, how will this impact the Support Plan, if at all?

A1: The support plan does not pull the program type from the MnCHOICES assessment. Not having MA eligibility will not affect creating a support plan.

Q2: Could we just complete a Rate Plan, have it approved by the Customized Living, and once approved put it in the completed status, and upload it into attachments instead of completing a Support Plan?

A2: No. A rate plan cannot be created instead of a support plan. Creating a support plan instead of a rate plan will help with transparency for the provider and the person as any rate changes will be able to be captured on one support plan.

Q3: Is it possible to print a support plan when MA/EW is pending?

A3: Yes, it is possible to print a support plan when MA, EW, or other external criteria are pending.

Resources:

- [Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)
- MnCHOICES Help Center: Practice Guide – Support plan form

Tracking: Who is running the reports, DHS or the lead agency?

- DHS will still send the LTSS Recipient Report monthly which tracks initial assessments. This report is generated from MMIS.
- Additionally, DHS has created two ways for lead agencies to track Initial Assessment Reviews in the MnCHOICES application – Queries and Reports.
- Lead agencies are also able to use the “tasks” functionality for personal tracking.

Resource: [PartnerLink - Initial assessment review: Detailed guidance](#)

Tracking

Queries

A new query, “Initial assessment tracking,” will be available from the queries tab under MnCHOICES assessment.

Reports

A new report, “Assessments with pending criteria,” can be accessed by staff with certain roles via the reports tab. These roles include:

- Lead agency supervisor
- Delegate supervisor
- Contracted case management supervisor.

Tasks

A task can be created by clicking on the tasks icon in a person record and selecting the new task button. Once a task is created, it will display in the my dashboard section in the my tasks tile.

Example of a new task:

The screenshot shows a 'New Task' form with the following details:

- Subject:** Mn Application
- Data Range:** Start Date: 07/01/2025, End Date: 06/30/2025
- Status:** Schedule
- Priority:** Medium
- Description:** Bene Mn application is pending. Eligibility worker will send me the SSI as soon as possible.
- Assigned To:** User:ED276 -dHS SME

Questions?

Thank You!

Amy Alexander, Disability Services Division

Liz Sisk, Aging and Adult Services Division