DSHS WASHINGTON STATE Department of Social and Health Services

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

Information about the ABAS for Respondents

What is the ABAS?

The Adaptive Behavior Assessment System is a tool that helps verify whether a person can be enrolled in the Developmental Disabilities Administration. The ABAS is used to verify if a person has substantial limitations as defined in rule (Chapter 388-823 WAC).

What will the DDA Intake and Eligibility staff review with the respondent?

DDA Intake staff will review this information with the respondent(s) before they start to answer the questions in the ABAS. This is to make sure that there is a clear and strong understanding of how to answer the questions.

Can the applicant be the respondent?

Yes, the adult applicant can be a respondent. If they are not able or do not want to, then another will be found.

Who qualifies to be a respondent?

There are many people who qualify. They include parents, family members, tribal staff, teachers, day program staff, supervisors, counselors, or others who are familiar with the daily activities and support needs of the person being assessed. The respondent must have enough recent and regular contact with the applicant to observe the adaptive skills measured by the ABAS.

The department determines whom to use as a respondent and may use more than one to ensure that information is complete and accurate. DDA will not ask for more respondents based solely on a General Adaptive Composite score above 69. If there is no one who meets the definition of respondent, the ABAS cannot be given. Without a respondent, DDA cannot determine eligibility under any conditions requiring an adaptive assessment.

When will the ABAS be given?

The department will provide and arrange for the ABAS if there is not an adaptive assessment from the past 36 months. It can only be given by DDA if there is a qualifying diagnosis on record, and the only required information is the adaptive assessment.

What is the respondent required to do?

To record a person's skills when completing the ABAS, the respondent needs to think about the person's skills as if they had no support. The respondent will answer each question with one of four responses that best identifies the person's abilities. All items must be answered. If you are unable to answer, then DDA cannot consider you a qualified respondent.

The ABAS allows you to mark "Guessed" next to items. Marking four or more items as guessed in any section is an invalid score. DDA intake staff will reach out to clarify your responses. If you still answer "Guessed," DDA cannot consider you a respondent for the applicant. This may result in finding a new respondent or a denial in enrollment, if a new respondent cannot be found.

The following is a summary of these responses:

0 – Is not able to do this behavior. The person has not acquired the needed skills or is too young to have developed the skills. This includes:

- The person has not been taught to perform the behavior
- Has some limitation that prevents performing the behavior
- Is “too young” to perform the activity

1 – Never (or almost never) when needed. The person has the skills but rarely use them when needed. This includes:

- Never or almost never does it when needed
- Never of almost never does it without being reminded
- Another person does it for the individual instead of the individual doing it, or
- The individual refuses to perform the behavior

2 – Sometimes when needed. The person has more developed skills but uses them only sometimes when needed. For example, a child who has learned to wait their turn in classroom activities but sometimes cuts in front of others would be rated a 2 on this item. This also includes:

- The skill is still new or emerging so is not fully independent with the skill
- Does the skill only sometimes, when needed
- Does the skill only sometimes without help, but sometimes needs help
- Does the skill only sometimes on their own, but sometimes needs help

3 – Always (or almost always) when needed. The person has the skills and always or almost always uses them without reminders. This includes:

- Does it most or all the time without help or being reminded
- Displayed the behavior at a younger age but has now outgrown it
- Has achieved mastery over all elements of the item.

Reminder: To rate an item as 2 or 3 the person **must** display all aspects of the behavior **independently, on their own, without being reminded or helped**; or that behavior has been mastered in the past but is no longer needed. **Frequently asked questions**:

Question: What if they can perform the activity, but rely on an assistive device (such as wheelchair) or a service animal to perform it?

Answer: Because such supports are designed to enable independent behavior, rate the individual based on his or her performance using the assistive device or services animal.

Question: What if the person does not perform this activity by himself or herself, but needs help or assistance from another person?

Answer: Unless specifically noted otherwise in an item, the focus is on independent behavior – meaning that the individual performs the activity or behavior without assistance or help. Thus score the item as **0** if they need help or assistance from another person to complete the item.

Question: What if the person performs some parts of the item well, but not other parts?

Answer: Please rate the applicant based on their abilities to perform the entire behavior independently. If an item has more than one aspect of the behavior, rate the applicant based on the LOWEST element of the behavior being rated.

Example: "Tells parents, friends, or others about his or her favorite activities." If the applicant is highly capable of telling parents (3) but less capable of telling friends or others about their favorite activities (1) the item would be scored as a 1.

How is the ABAS scored?

The ABAS responses are reviewed by the Intake and Eligibility Case Manager. They are then scored by a computer program which calculates the standard score for each of the adaptive skills sections, taking the applicant's age into account. These scores together produce a GAC standard score used for eligibility determination.

How does the ABAS impact the eligibility decision?

When an ABAS is used as evidence of substantial limitations to be eligible for DDA, the qualifying GAC standard score must be 69 or lower. Scores above 69 will result in a decision of ineligible.