Supports Budgets Development Overview

June 2025

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We believe that all people and their families have the right to live, love, work, play and pursue their life aspirations in their community.

Overarching project purpose/goal

Consistent with G.L. c. 19B, § 19, develop a supports budget framework for people receiving self-directed services in Massachusetts that provides budgets equivalent to those receiving traditional services.

Key characteristics of framework

- Fair, consistent, and efficient use of resources
- Data-driven, mixed-methods, and defensible means of determining budgets that also includes multiple avenues for people to seek support for unique needs not captured in framework
- Emphasizes community engagement
- Transparent
- Allows for some flexibility and change over time
- Responsive to policy intentions
- Improves ability to predict spending based on known needs

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Overview of support budget development tasks

- Community engagement throughout process
- Final report upon completion of tasks

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Data collection and analysis

- SIS-A data collection
- Population data analysis
  - Through March 2026

Level framework development

- Support needs data analysis
- Preliminary level framework determination
- Verification process development
  - Through June 2026

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Support budgets development

- Service use and spend data analysis
- Preliminary budgets determination
  - Through October 2026

Record review

In November 2026

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SIS-A data collection

Purpose: to have a representative sample of SIS-A assessments in both the self-direction and traditional populations for analysis

- Currently underway
- Sample contains people who self-direct and receive traditional services
- HSRI analyzes the data monthly to ensure quality and representativeness
- Sample set to be completed April 2026

Support needs data analysis

Purpose: to explore trends in support needs across the population, including comparing needs between SD and traditional samples as well as between MA and national SIS-A data

- Initial work done monthly in SIS-A assessment reports, but analyses will be in greater depth once samples are complete
- Can conduct more in-depth analysis once SD is complete, but final analyses will require traditional sample to be completed as well

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Preliminary level framework determination

Purpose: Determine the number of levels and criteria for assignment to each level using statistical testing and create level descriptions for each level

- Once we have completed in-depth descriptive analyses of the sample data, we will focus analysis on creating a statistically sound level framework
- Analyses will follow work we conducted nationally with nearly 200,000 SIS-A assessments and across 9 jurisdictions in the past 5 years
- We use a statistical modeling procedure called latent class analysis as the backbone of our work for levels related to general needs (i.e., not extraordinary needs), though we often supplement the analysis with other tests to support the findings that come of the initial analysis, including general linear modeling
- Additional analyses are conducted to identify criteria for levels for people with extraordinary needs, typically in medical and/or behavioral

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Preliminary level framework determination

Questions that the latent class analysis helps us answer include:

1. What is the most appropriate number of levels for a general support needs framework?
2. Which parts of the SIS-A should be used to assign people to levels?
3. What scores best create levels that include people who are similar to one another and different from people in other levels?

Preliminary level framework determination

- Creating criteria for levels for people with extraordinary medical and/or behavioral needs involves a series of analyses such as:
  - Descriptive understanding of the proportion of people with high scores in these sections of the SIS-A
  - Comparative analysis across states with similar SIS-A needs
- Since Section 1 of the SIS-A is not part of the standardized part of the assessment (Section 2: Support Need Index) and therefore has more room for interpretation and application of the data, we also will present findings to DDS to explore potential options for criteria for these levels

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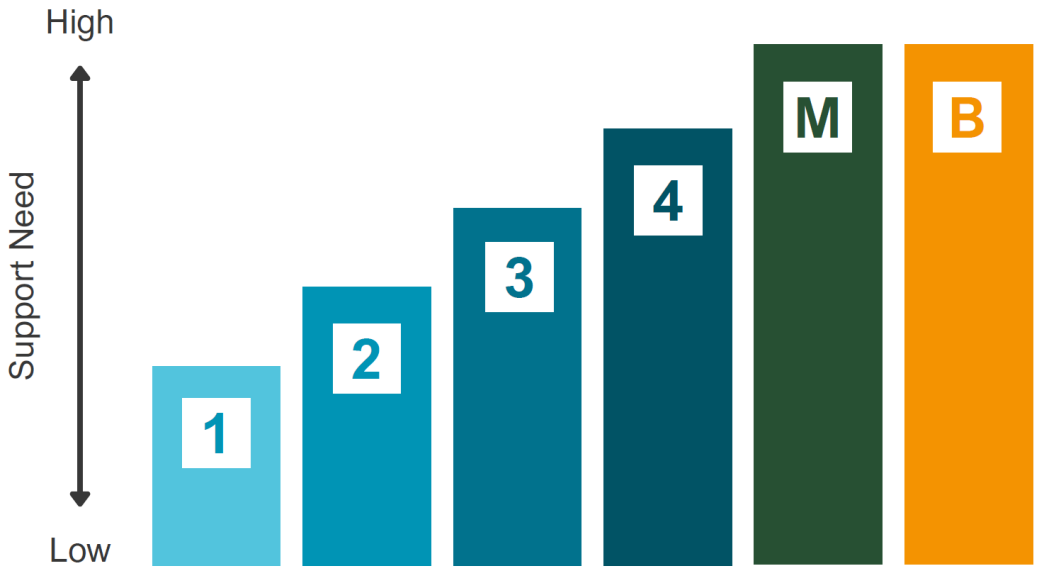
Example 6-level Support Level framework



The framework we recommend may have a different number of levels or be different in other ways than this example!

Level	Level description	SNI score	Medical score	Behavioral score
1	Low general support needs	Up to 82	any	any
2	Moderate general support needs	83-97	any	any
3	High general support needs	98-113	any	any
4	Very high general support needs	114 and higher	any	any
M	Extraordinary medical needs	any	9 or higher	any
B	Extraordinary behavioral needs	any	any	11 or higher

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Preliminary level framework determination

- In addition to developing the number of levels and criteria for level assignment, we will create “level descriptions”
- Level descriptions are narrative, plain language descriptions of the typical needs of a person in each level, and will exemplify the range in needs within each level
- Level descriptions are developed based on analysis of the characteristics of people in each level
- Descriptions may be as succinct or thorough as needed once DDS determines what is most useful

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Verification process development

Purpose: To develop a process addressing potential gaps in SIS-A results and avoid people being underserved and/or seeking exceptions in larger numbers, as well as apply information from the Supplemental Supports and Caregiver Context Assessment to the framework

- Supplemental Questions in the SIS-A, as well as the Supplemental Supports and Caregiver Context Assessment, may be used to identify people who do not automatically meet the threshold for membership in levels dedicated to those with extraordinary need
  - E.g., if someone has very extraordinary medical needs in just one item of the SIS-A, they will not score automatically into Level M, but may flag due to responses in the SQ for additional review
- Once flagged, a group of state staff conduct “Verification,” a process of systematically reviewing flagged people to determine whether they should be assigned to one of the levels dedicated to those with extraordinary need

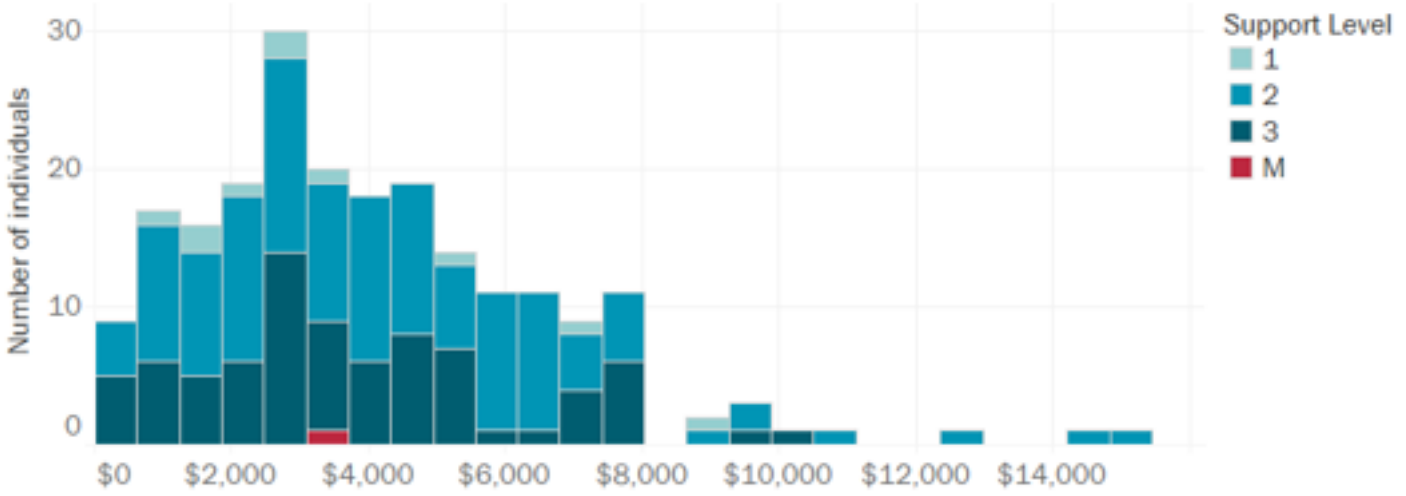
Service use and spend data analysis

Purpose: to explore spend and utilization of services by level in the SD and traditional samples to provide a starting point in constructing supports budgets

- Lead by Stephen Pawlowski (HMA)
- Will be used to understand trends in spend as well as compare spend and use between SD and traditional
- Exploration of trends in rates for SD will also be included as part of this analysis to best inform development of budgets

EXAMPLE: Day program spend by people receiving traditional services in group homes

	1	2	3	M	Total
N	10	124	79	1	214
AVERAGE SPEND	$3,608.54	$4,241.34	$3,785.79	$3,607.20	$4,040.64
25th PERCENTILE	$1,877.08	$2,371.40	$2,296.25	$3,607.20	$2,298.76
50th PERCENTILE	$2,857.37	$3,877.74	$3,443.54	$3,607.20	$3,553.76
75th PERCENTILE	$4,835.49	$5,863.37	$5,061.77	$3,607.20	$5,529.37



Preliminary budgets determination

Purpose: Create budgets for each support level in the level framework by living setting

- Conversations that dive into the service use and spend analyses by living setting, level, and other demographics lead by HMA and HSRI
- Develop model service mixes based on utilization by variables such as support level, living setting, age, etc. plus program design intentions
- Often an iterative process of exploring and presenting options for models and budgets, then revising and presenting again
- Likely process will involve understanding a model service mix for those receiving traditional services, then comparing it to SD spend to create an estimate for a model service mix for those in SD
  - Process will be guided by findings from analysis

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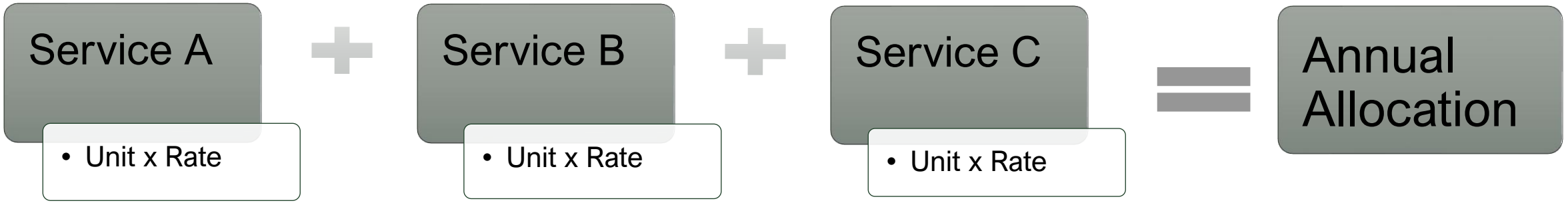
Preliminary budgets determination

A model service mix is an estimate of the types and amounts of services needed by individuals in each support level and living setting

Due to the nature of self-direction services, determinations of what units and rates to use in the model service mix will be based on historical utilization of those who receive SD today and their tradition service counterparts and may involve use of ranges or bands to capture varying service use and rates



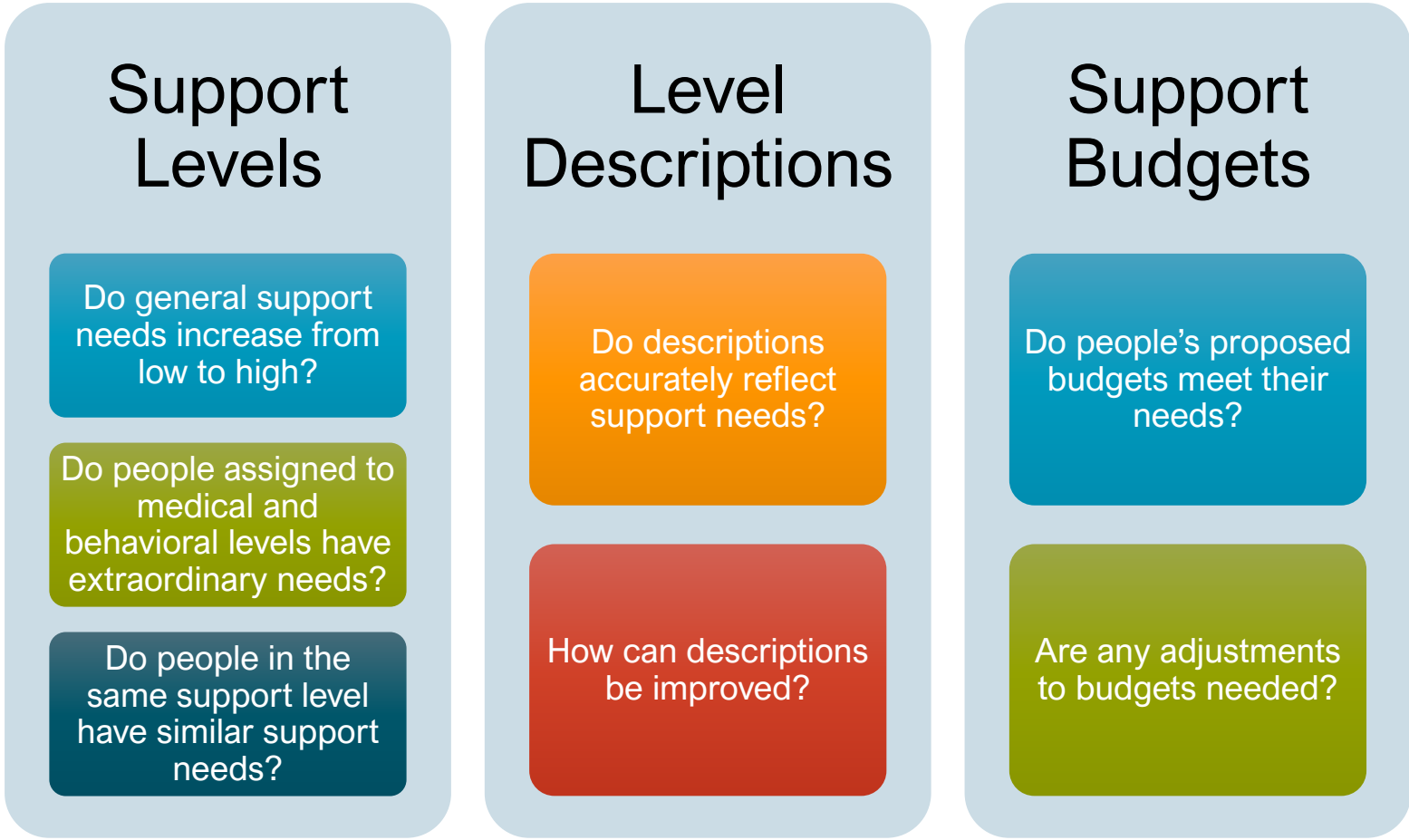
Preliminary budgets determination

- Consider policy goals around services and the fiscal impact of decisions
- Determine how to compare traditional and SD spend and utilization
- Decide which services/billing codes to include in model service mix
- Establish model unit assumptions for each service, as applicable
- Apply model rates
- Calculate budgets

Record review

Purpose: collect in-depth qualitative data to explore how well the supports budget framework works for a sample of people and adjust as necessary

- Select a sample of people's records to review for deeper exploration
- Review in-depth, detailed information about each person to understand their needs
- Classify needs independently of the support level and analyze



Community engagement

Purpose: increase transparency and receive feedback to improve the supports budget framework from those it will impact most

- We have engaged with SD advisory group in the past regarding this project
- Community engagement plan is in the works– we welcome your feedback!

Final report

- Will contain final recommended framework
- Will document the process of developing the recommended framework
- Will include recommendations around implementation as needed

Questions?

- What are you excited to hear about that we should be sure to come back to present on?
- Do you see any hurdles or challenges we should be thinking about as we start looking at the data and creating budgets?
- Do you have ideas for improving our process?
- How do you think we should hear from people who receive services and their families to make sure what we recommend works for them? Who should we talk to?

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