

## Beware of the ABAS

Over the last couple of months, we have been noticing denials for adult DDS services on the basis of scores on the Adaptive Behavior Assessment System (ABAS). To be eligible for adult services, an applicant must have an IQ score of approximately 70 or below and deficits in adaptive behaviors. To determine whether an applicant has deficits in adaptive behavior, DDS reviews adaptive behavior assessments. Popular tools include the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale and ABAS.

DDS will usually administer its own ABAS to the applicant's mother or father as part of the eligibility process by asking a series of questions regarding skills, abilities and behavior of his or her son or daughter. If the score resulting from DDS's ABAS is over its guidelines for services, an applicant will be denied, e.g. a conclusion will be reached that the deficits in adaptive behavior are not sufficient to justify a finding of intellectual disability – even if the full scale IQ is 70 or below.

We are aware of cases where a parent was not advised that the questions being asked were part of an ABAS administration. Therefore, it is important to be clear about the information given to DDS representatives no matter how casual the conversation.

The ABAS is a subjective assessment. When test scores vary widely over time, further inquiry needs to be made as to whether administration errors were made, what the circumstances were when the information was provided, whether the information was accurately recorded, etc. In addition, adaptive behavior assessments, while useful, do not tell the whole story of a person's functioning.

In summary, if applying for DDS services be aware of the role the adaptive behavior assessments play. If eligibility is denied based on adaptive behavior, be aware that that you have a right to appeal.

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