

Recognizing and Assessing Cognitive Supports Needs

Long-Term Services and Supports Subcommittee Meeting

August 5, 2026

Presented by:

AmeriHealth Caritas/Keystone First
UPMC Community HealthChoices
Pa Health & Wellness



Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

➤ Recognizing and Assessing Cognitive Supports Needs

Cognitive challenges can occur with many different conditions and may not always be obvious. Service Coordinators (SCs) do not diagnose cognitive conditions. Instead, they identify support needs through a combination of the comprehensive assessment (interRAI v10), observations, interviews, and input from the Participant, caregivers, and providers.

- The assessment looks at how cognitive challenges affect daily life, including:
 - Communication, understanding information, and following conversations
 - Memory, attention, spatial awareness, and changes in thinking or mental functioning
 - Problem-solving, judgment, and decision-making
 - Managing daily tasks such as finances, medications, shopping, and transportation
 - Personal strengths, support needs, safety concerns, risks, and goals
- The assessment findings helps the SC work with the participant to create a plan that supports their independence, health, safety, and involvement in the community.
- Personal goals will align with the needs and abilities of participants for maximized independence. As a result, the care plan is tailored to the participant's individual needs rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Cognitive support needs are reviewed and updated whenever there are changes in health, caregiver support, or living arrangements.



➤ Recognizing Cognitive Supports Needs

How does your plan determine whether a cognitive impairment is present and whether it creates a need for Personal Assistance Services (PAS), including supervision?

Who is included in the determination?

Supports Determination Process

Is a diagnosis of Dementia (or another condition which affects cognition) necessary for cognition-based functional needs to be included in Personal Assistance Services determinations?

If yes, is a diagnosis of dementia from the Primary Care Physician sufficient or must it be from a neurologist?

➤ Supports Determination Process (cont.)

Is a cognitive functional assessment (or anything similar) required?

What does such a cognitive functional assessment consist of and who completes it?

➤ Supports Assessment

How does your plan determine the Personal Assistance Services needed to support an individual with a cognitive impairment?

How does your plan determine the time needed to address the participant's needs?

➤ Supports Assessment (cont.)

How are the International Resident Assessment Instrument (interRAI) items concerning cognition (Section C and E.3.1 on wandering) taken into consideration in determining Personal Assistance Services service needs?

How are these items considered if there is no doctor letter provided with a dementia diagnosis?

➤ Additional Questions

