



Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS)

PUNS Overview:

[PUNS](#) is an acronym for Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services. The PUNS is used as a planning tool. This form gathers information about your current situation, your needs (current and future), and home and community-based supports (HCBS) you may need through Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs (ODP). PUNS form is also used to establish the priority of your need for services and how soon you will need services.

The PUNS form is completed by the Support Coordinator (SC), the person with an intellectual disability or autism and their family. The SC collects a standard set of data that also indicates the urgency of those needs. The PUNS also informs the Administrative Entity or County ID/D program and ODP of the number of people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism who are waiting for services and supports. The PUNS is an important tool used to assist an Administrative Entity in developing the county plan and annual budget that is submitted to ODP. Not all persons with disabilities receive the supports and services they need. Thus, Pennsylvania has a waiting list for HCBS.

The [PA Waiting List Campaign](#) is the entity in Pennsylvania that advocates for the long list of persons with intellectual disabilities and autism who are waiting to receive HCBS in order to live an *Everyday Life*. The *PA Waiting List Campaign* educates people with intellectual disabilities and autism, families, government officials, the public and the legislators about the impact of waiting for services on the health, safety and welfare of people with intellectual disabilities and autism. They have influenced positive system change since inception, as well as promoting and supporting self-advocates and families to work together with other stakeholders to achieve these goals.

In addition to identifying the urgency of need for services and supports, the PUNS

- identifies the types of services an individual is currently receiving and services and supports that are needed in the future.
- helps a family and the person with a disability understand what category of need that person fits into.

Based on your responses to the questions on the PUNS form, you will be placed in one of three categories that defines the urgency of your support needs.

1. **Emergency Need:** The Emergency need category on the PUNS is for people who need services right now. Services needed may be in the home or out of the home. For example: When there is a death or incapacity of the remaining caregiver and there is no other family member

available to provide support.

2. **Critical Need:** The Critical need category is for individuals who need support within the next two years. For example: When a person has a caregiver that is ill and who may be unable to continue providing support in the next few years, or a family crisis, such as an illness or divorce, reducing the capacity of a caregiver to provide care.

3. **Planning Need:** The Planning need category on the PUNS is for individuals who need services more than two years from now but within the next five years. For example: When a person has expressed a desire to move, the person is living in a large setting and needs community services, or the person is “aging out” of another system (e.g. public or private school, children & youth, etc.).

Important to Note:

- A face-to-face meeting to complete the PUNS is required, unless the person with a disability or family requests otherwise.
- You/your family should talk with your SC regularly to keep them updated in order to understand your changing situation and needs.
- The PUNS should accurately reflect your situation, so all the categories need to be discussed at the meeting.
- Your conversation with the SC should be focused on what you/your family needs, not wants, to protect your family member’s health and welfare.
- The PUNS must be reviewed and updated annually or whenever the person’s needs change.
- The PUNS must be updated when the service needs have been met. For example: once the individual graduates and the vocational/employment services have been delivered, the PUNS information would be updated to reflect that this need has been met.
 - If there are no other needs the PUNS will be made inactive, reflecting that the person is fully served.
- The PUNS is also for people who are currently waiting for new or additional services. This includes people enrolled in the Person/ Family Directed Supports Waiver (PFDS) and Community Living Waiver (CLW) but still have unmet needs.
- The PUNS is signed by the person, family, and any others who participated in the development of the form. This signature does not imply agreement, only that the signers participated in the development of the form.

The completed PUNS is then entered into the [Home and Community Services Information System \(HCSIS\)](#), the statewide computer system that stores information on individuals who are registered with ODP. HCSIS is a secured site to protect confidentiality. The SC has 10 working days to enter the PUNS into HCSIS and finalize the form. After the PUNS is entered and finalized, the SC has five working days to send it to the person and his/her family.

After the PUNS is entered into HCSIS, you/your family will receive a copy of the PUNS and a letter which explains next steps and what to do if there is a disagreement. This letter should

also include the rights of the individual and a disagreement form.

If you or your family and the SC disagree about the information on the PUNS form:

- Discuss the situation with your SC.
- Contact the SC supervisor if there is still an issue.
- If there is still disagreement, fill out the disagreement form at the bottom of the letter you received from the county to initiate the disagreement process.
- Mail or fax the disagreement form to the address provided.

Other useful resources

[PUNS Form](#)

[Waiting List Campaign](#)

[Home and Community Services Information System \(HCSIS\)](#)

Achieva disability advocates provide information, technical assistance and individual advocacy on issues that impact children and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism and their families. We also work with state and federal legislators and policy makers to ensure that the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities are protected and that they are afforded services to assist them to be included in their communities. We will provide guidance, information and technical assistance to the best of our ability. Achieva advocates are available to answer questions specific to your situation. Please contact us at 412.995.5000 x486, 888.272.7229 x 486 (Toll-Free) or log onto www.achieva.info/contact-advocacy.