



# The Life Skills Assessment

What skills are needed to be an independent, successful adult in today's world?

TransCen, Inc.'s Life Skills Assessment is a simple, one-page survey that measures an individual's ability to function safely and effectively in our world. The tool uses a 5-point rating scale to evaluate an individual's level of independence and support needs across a number of life domains (i.e., home, community, social competencies). Transition teachers and service providers can use this tool to set meaningful goals, customize support plans and put people with I/DD on a pathway to independence.

The Life Skills Assessment can be used to:

- Identify the skills a person needs to learn to successfully participate in our society;
- Gauge the level of support an individual requires at home and in community-based settings (mitigate risks);
- Set meaningful goals and track annual progress;
- Determine when training/support services are no longer necessary and can begin to fade.

## A Great Tool for Your Intake Toolbox

During an intake or discovery process, the Life Skills Assessment can provide essential information for service planning. Providers can use it as survey tool to gather information from individuals and their support network. Using this tool, the team can create a snapshot of the person's current strengths and abilities and pinpoint where training and supports may be needed. Because a person's score is based on a rater's perceptions, it can be helpful to have the individual and multiple people who know that person involved in the process. This results in a more valid measure of the individual's current skills and training needs. Providers can then use this information to develop a customized, person-centered service plan.

## Setting Meaningful Goals

What is “meaningful” is different for everyone. Providing meaningful, person-centered services requires that we ask the individual being served “What is important to you?” and “What do you need to learn?”. The Life Skills Assessment looks at the critical skills needed in adulthood in today’s world. It pinpoints what a person can and cannot do, identifying where support and/or training may be needed. Goals and service plans should focus on areas or domains where the individual needs assistance and support (i.e. the 1’s, 2’s and 3’s, not the 4’s and 5’s). Addressing deficits in these areas will increase the person’s self-sufficiency and level of independence.

### Meaningful

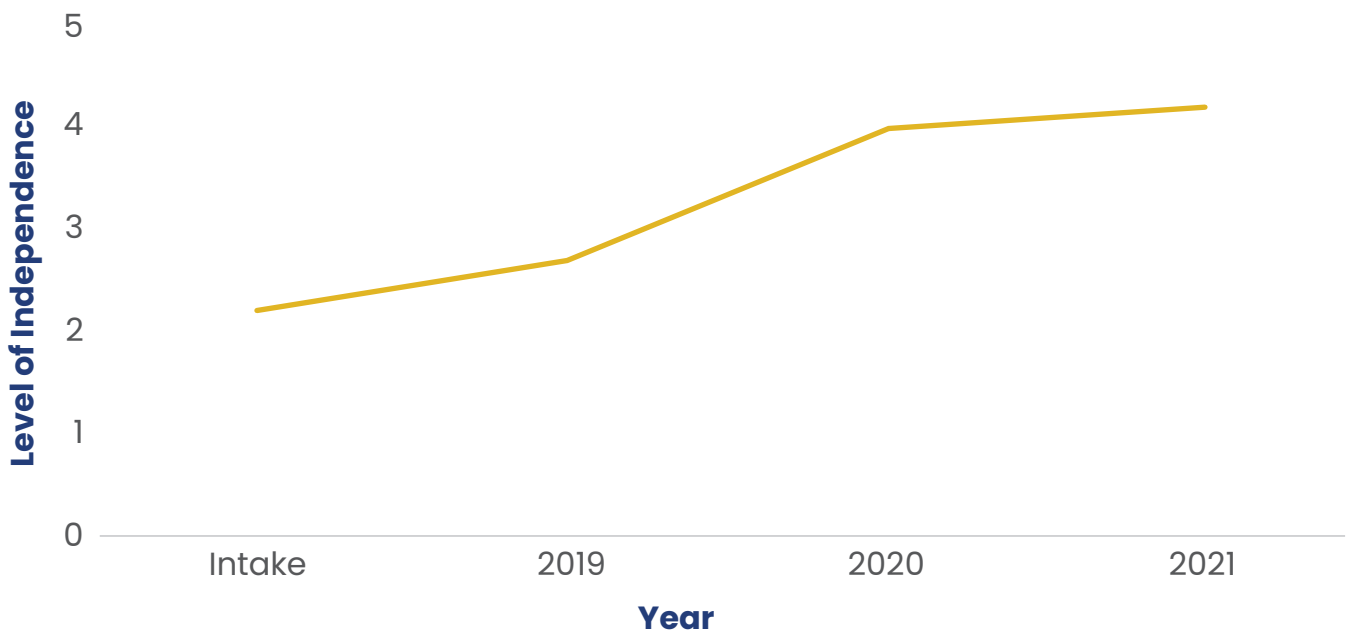
[mean•ing•ful] (adj.)

**full of meaning, significance, purpose, or value; purposeful; significant: a meaningful wink; a meaningful choice.**

## Measuring Annual Progress

The Life Skills Assessment should be seen as a living document that can be used to measure an individual’s progress. At the bottom of the Life Skills Assessment tool is an average score. The initial assessment done at intake can serve as a baseline for measuring improvement. Each year, individuals can be “re-assessed” and their assessment scores can be graphed and shared with the individuals and their support networks during planning meetings.

Figure 1. Life Skills Assessment: John’s Annual Progress



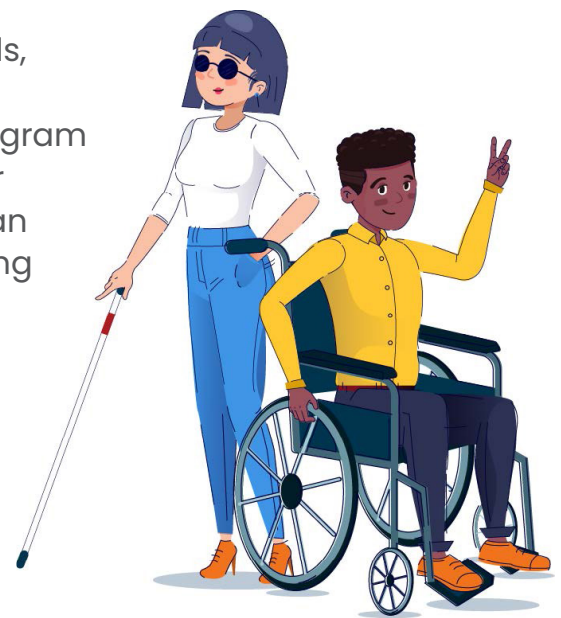
## Determining When to Fade Provider Services

The Life Skills Assessment can also be used to identify if the individual still requires training or support. As an individual gains skills and confidence (scoring 4's and 5's), the team should consider the idea of fading services and supports. The ultimate goal of community training services should be to increase a person's independence and social self-sufficiency. These services should be used to address social barriers and build meaningful community connections. As an individual gains confidence and skills in community settings, providers actively develop natural supports and look to fade paid supports and program services. The Life Skills Assessment can be used to determine when training and provider services may no longer be needed.

## Using a Life Skills Assessment when Serving Individuals with Significant Disabilities

For some individuals, independence may not be a realistic goal. Some individuals may require support their entire lives to safely access and live in the community. While the goal of the Life Skills Assessment tool presented here is independence, the tool can easily be adjusted (or recalibrated) for individuals with more significant support needs. For these individuals, the tool should focus on increasing self-reliance and could include activities such as: Personal care: eats and dresses independently, brushes hair/teeth, toileting. Choice making and communication: communicates effectively using alternative methods, makes decisions (what to eat for dinner, who to zoom call), expresses self in a socially acceptable ways. Social skills: greets people, self-regulates behavior, orders at a restaurant. (using an iPad or other method). Domestic skills: helps with chores (partial participation to water the garden, feed a pet). Community skills: transfers and/or drives wheelchair safely, uses an escalator/elevator, assists with grocery shopping (pushes the cart, locates items).

People with disabilities, regardless of their support needs, should be in control of their lives. Unfortunately, when supporting people with more significant disabilities, program staff often see their role as caretakers, not instructors or facilitators. Using an "adapted" Life Skills Assessment can shift this mindset and focus program services on building self-reliance, increasing community participation, and empowering all the people we serve to become more active members of our society.



This document was developed and designed by TransCen, Inc. For more information, please visit us at [TransCen.org](https://TransCen.org) or [inquiries@transcen.org](mailto:inquiries@transcen.org)