

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Provider Onsite Assessments

Q: Why is SCDHHS conducting provider onsite assessments?

A: In 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published regulations better defining where home and community-based services (i.e. waiver programs) could be provided and how programs in these types of settings should be operated – the Home and Community-Based Settings (HCBS) Rule. The purpose of HCB services is to maximize the opportunities for individuals to receive services in integrated settings and realize the benefits of community living, including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings. All states are required to review and analyze the settings in which HCBS are delivered to determine whether these settings already meet the HCBS requirements or if a compliance action plan needs to be developed so that this setting can be truly home and community-based and not institutional. SCDHHS is conducting these onsite assessments as one part of their efforts to comply with the federal HCBS rule.

Q: What settings will be assessed?

A: The following residential settings will be assessed:

- Community Residential Care Facilities (CRCF's)
- Community Training Home I (CTH I)
- Community Training Home II (CTH II)
- Supervised Living Programs II (SLP II)
- Supported Living Programs I (SLP I)
- Other provider owned or operated residential settings where waiver participants live and/or receive waiver services

The following day program facilities will be assessed (as defined and licensed by SCDDSN):

- Adult Activity Centers
- Work Activity Centers
- Sheltered Workshops
- Unclassified Programs

Q: Who will be conducting the onsite assessment?

A: SCDHHS has contracted with Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG), a nationally recognized public sector consulting firm, to conduct the onsite assessments with all residential and non-residential settings. A PCG Community Site Surveyor can always be identified as they will be wearing a PCG employee badge.

Q: When will the onsite assessments be conducted?

A: PCG will begin conducting assessments in February and will complete all assigned assessments by November 2017. Non-residential assessments will be scheduled and conducted within normal operational hours. Residential assessments may be scheduled throughout the day with the possibility of some late afternoon/early evening hours if that is more convenient for the waiver participant(s) to be interviewed by the reviewer if the waiver participant(s) is/are willing.

Q: How will the onsite assessments be scheduled?

A: Onsite assessments will be scheduled in collaboration with all residential and non-residential settings. All assessments are scheduled according to the priority designation of the setting, licensing schedule, geographical location, and existing schedule for the Community Site Surveyor within that area. The PCG scheduling team will contact the setting using phone numbers and email addresses on file with either SCDHHS or South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN). It is important to SCDHHS and SCDDSN that all providers of residential and non-residential homes, cooperate with the PCG scheduling team and not refuse the assessment.

Q: How long will the onsite assessment take?

A: Each onsite assessment should take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. The actual time it takes to complete the assessment depends on factors such as the number of waiver participants, the size of the setting, the services provided, and the preparation completed by the provider.

Q: How do providers or residential and non-residential sites prepare for the assessment?

A: The assessments are designed to observe typical daily operations within the setting to evaluate the current level of compliance with the HCBS standards.

Checklist for Providers prior to HCBS Settings Reviews

- Copies of waiver participants Individual Service Plans should be available for review on site; this can include the Day Services Plan or Residential Services Plan
- Staff should be available to answer questions from the reviewer(s)
- Waiver participants have been asked if they want to meet the reviewer(s) and if they would answer a few questions from the reviewer(s)
- A copy of the lease or residential agreement signed by waiver participants must be available for review (CTH I settings must have the residential agreement available for review)
- Policies and procedures *need not* be available on site for review
- Please provide a copy of the FAQ's to the direct support staff

To better prepare, it is recommended that all providers review and complete the South Carolina Assessment at <https://msp.scdhhs.gov/hcbs/site-page/pcg-hcbs-site-visits>. This document details the areas for evaluation by the Community Site Surveyor.

Q: What should we consider when asking waiver participants to talk with a site surveyor?

A: As part of the HCBS Site Visits conducted by PCG, SCDHHS has instructed site surveyors to interview willing waiver participants to get direct feedback from them on the setting(s) they use and the programs in which they participate.

Advocating for oneself is a learning experience that ultimately leads to further community inclusion. Self-advocacy fosters self-worth and promotes personal empowerment. For individuals who don't often get to share their experiences in a way that will so directly impact them, this is a one-time opportunity for them to be heard in this unique way

We want waiver participants to share their thoughts and experiences with us; however, it should be on their terms and not at the convenience of the provider or the site surveyor. Here are some helpful tips and reminders for providers:

1. The interview is **optional** for any waiver participant and they should be asked if they want to participate. It is not a problem if they do not want to participate, however advocating for oneself is an important lesson for us all to learn.
2. If a waiver participant *does* want to participate in an interview, the interview should work with their schedule and preferences. They do not need to miss work. The PCG scheduling staff will coordinate with providers and the site surveyors to arrange a reasonable time for the waiver participant.
 - a. For waiver participants who will be interviewed about their residential setting, they can remain at their home for the interview, or if they work at a Day Program/Workshop and are comfortable being interviewed there in a private space, then that can be arranged.
 - b. For waiver participants who will be interviewed about their Day Program/Workshop, the interview can take place in a private space while at the setting.

At **no time** should a waiver participant be told they **must** be interviewed or that they have to miss work to participate in an interview.

Q: Can providers refuse the onsite assessment?

A: No; any provider who refuses to allow an assessment of a residential or non-residential setting will risk losing their contract to provide these services for HCBS waiver participants in that specific setting. PCG will refer non-compliance back to SCDHHS and SCDDSN and appropriate action will be taken to ensure all HCB waiver participants are only receiving services in settings that comply with the HCBS Settings rule.

Q: Will residential and non-residential settings be notified of the results of their onsite assessment?

A: Yes, residential and non-residential settings will be made aware of the subsequent compliance determination. SCDHHS will work with residential and non-residential settings found non-compliant to develop a plan for remediation.

For any further questions regarding the HCBS provider assessment, please call the dedicated PCG Call Center for the SC HCBS Site Assessments at: 1- 844-880-8710 or SCHCBSOnsiteAssessments@pcgus.com