



Early in the People First Waiver design process, stakeholders embraced the principles of innovation and person-centeredness embodied in the proposed waiver. The design team that examined topics related to access and choice in the new service system quickly identified the need for the system to operate from a consistent foundation for each person. The team recognized that to ensure a more equitable, effective system, each person, regardless of the type of setting where he or she lives, must receive the same thorough assessment and person-centered planning process. A consistent and comprehensive way of learning about each individual would establish that needed foundation and support a more individualized and need-based approach to supporting people throughout New York in the best, most effective and responsive way.

In February 2012, OPWDD announced that after considering several alternative tools, it had selected the interRAI Assessment Suite to serve as the core of the needs assessment process within the People First Waiver. OPWDD based its decision on interRAI's inherent capability and flexibility to support the comprehensive assessment of individuals' needs as well as allow OPWDD to work effectively with other service systems to coordinate holistic care and supports. Additionally, the interRAI assessment suite will provide valid, consistent information to inform care planning and support greater equity of access throughout the service system.

This new assessment tool, now known as the **Coordinated Assessment System (CAS)**, will:

- Establish consistent practices in assessing individuals' interests and support needs across New York State;
- Ensure that the system provides supports and services based on people's needs rather than according to regional budget allocations;
- Initially be used for people newly entering the service system;
- Eventually be used as part of a plan for reassessing individuals who currently receive services as their needs change; and
- Be phased in over many years and carefully implemented to ensure that people's needs remain fully supported.

The case studies will gather information about the CAS as well as feedback related to the assessment process from families, individuals and service providers, and in this way demonstrate how well the CAS informs and supports the person-centered planning process. This information will be incorporated into adjustments to the CAS tool moving forward. OPWDD has hired a group of trained assessment specialists, largely drawn from a pool of seasoned employees with experience as Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs) to conduct the CAS assessments in the case studies. These assessment specialists will spend time visiting individuals and their families at home to gain an understanding of their lives and their goals for the future.