Follow Along Program Update: FAQ for Local Public Health

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS

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If you have questions related to the Follow Along Program, email health.cyshn@state.mn.us with "local public health" in the subject line.

Data system

When is the current FAP software through Avenu going away?

MDH's contract with Avenu to provide technical support for the FAP software will expire after March 1, 2027.

When is the anticipated transition to using ASQ® Online?

If you are currently implementing ASQ® Online, please continue. We hope to have all agencies using ASQ® Online by the end of 2026. Agencies will be onboarded in a cohort model. Cohorts are listed at the end of this document.

Will ASQ® Online replace the current Avenu FAP software completely?

Yes. ASQ® Online system features include child and caregiver profile data management, storage of screening data, automated scoring of numerical value questions, automated questionnaire interval selection, automated age adjustment for prematurity, individual child reports, program reports, questionnaire printing, custom tasks for screening reminders and follow-up, documentation of follow-up, customizable letters, customizable Family Access webpage for caregivers to submit screening, ability to email screening reminders, ability to display anticipatory guidance electronically, and more. The ASQ® Online Features (https://agesandstages.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ASQ-Online-Features.pdf) document provides a complete list of features and tools to support case management.

Is ASQ® Online secure?

The ASQ® Online Technical Information, Security Features, and HIPPA and FERPA Compliance (https://agesandstages.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ASQ-Online-tech-specs-compliance_2024-1.pdf) document provides the technical details for system requirements, security features, and compliance information for ASQ® Online.

Will we be using MEDSS?

Based on feedback from LPH, MDH has decided to shift the focus away from building out MEDSS. MDH will pursue interoperability options between ASQ® Online and other platforms, particularly agencies' local EHRs. We will determine if MEDSS is needed in the future depending on how well ASQ® Online is meeting Follow Along Program needs after all agencies have been onboarded.

Was there any thought given to incorporating the electronic ASQ®s into the current EHR systems and MDH could pull data from there, similar to FHV/IHVE?

Yes. MDH continually explores how to make the data systems simpler as we understand the difficulties of working in multiple systems. It is important to develop the data system first and then consider the inoperability of that system second, which means LPH may be working in multiple systems during this transition.

We know that not having interoperability to your systems is a frustration and a limitation. We will be prioritizing using our resources to offer ASQ® Online onboarding and technical support as we work towards interoperability.

Will we be documenting Follow Along information in multiple data systems?

LPH may be working in multiple systems during this transition.

Paper screening

If families are completing the ASQ® by paper, do you have any additional information or consent forms for local public health agencies to have families fill out?

Paper screening will continue to be available. Paper screens will need to be manually entered into ASQ® Online by local public health. MDH requires local public health to provide caregivers with the Follow Along Program Tennessen warning prior to entering any child or caregiver data into ASQ® Online. The Tennessen warning does not require a signature from the caregiver.

Local public health must follow their county policies for collecting, storing, and sharing client information outside of ASQ® Online.

If local public health will no longer be able to order paper screens through MDH, how will paper screens be handled?

Paper screens and learning activities can be printed directly through ASQ® Online. MDH will not be storing and printing ASQ® screens in the future as we begin directing resources to electronic screening. You will be notified when we begin to phase out the ability to order paper screens from MDH, likely in 2027.

Transitioning clients

How will families who are currently enrolled in Follow Along Program know that their data will be stored in ASQ® Online?

When families complete their screening, local public health must provide them with a Tennessen warning notice (https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childrenyouth/cyshn/cyshntennessen.pdf) that explains how their data is used and stored and that by submitting their child's data, they agree.

The state is unable to contact families that are in the current Avenu FAP software, because demographic and contact information for families currently enrolled with local public health is not the state's data. MDH will provide general messages about the program changes that local public health can use to inform clients. MDH will also provide guidance on how local public health can transition current Follow Along Program participants into ASQ® Online. However, it is ultimately up to each agency's discretion on how/if they move families over from the Avenu FAP software to ASQ® Online.

Will MDH help provide a letter template for families about the changes to the Follow-Along Program?

Yes. MDH has developed a template with general messages about the program changes that local public health can use to inform clients. Staff implementing the Follow Along Program will be able to edit the template to communicate about their specific circumstances. The template is sent with the cohort materials.

LPH may also use the ASQ® Online Security (https://agesandstages.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/ASQ-Online-Data-Privacy-Security-Family-Handout.pdf) handout to inform families about the privacy and security of ASQ® Online.

Will the historical data from Avenu be transferred into ASQ® Online?

ASQ® Online does not have one-to-one matches with all the available data in the existing FAP software, and therefore only some client data can be transferred from the FAP software into ASQ® Online. However, since this data is owned by local agencies, MDH is working with Avenu to develop a query that can be run within the FAP software by each agency for two data extracts.

- **Full data set:** This extract will include all information for active and inactive clients in the existing FAP software and does not necessarily align with ASQ® Online data fields. It may be used or saved at each agency's discretion. This extract should not be imported into ASQ® Online and is not subject to MDH's retention policy.
- **ASQ® Online data set:** This extract aligns with the ASQ® Online import templates and only includes information that can be housed in ASQ® Online. Agencies will be able to export their active and inactive clients from the existing FAP software into a template to import to ASQ® Online. Any information included in ASQ® Online will be subject to MDH's retention policy, which may differ from the local public health agency's retention policy.

MDH will provide instructions to local public health on how to export the data from the FAP software and import into ASQ® Online. Local public health may contact Avenu for technical assistance. More information will be shared in the next couple of months.

ASQ® Online pilot

Did the pilot group notice an increase or decrease in time spent implementing online? What was the return response during the pilot? Did the pilot have live cases?

It would be difficult to compare an increase or decrease in time spent implementing online as we only had the pilot participants test out individual steps in the process. Examples include completing a screening, sending screening reminders, and making notes in the child profile.

We do not anticipate screening taking any additional time for families, as the questions are the same in the print version. It will take time for local public health to learn how to use ASQ® Online. However, we do not anticipate this change will significantly increase workload regarding the amount of time to implement.

We did not test actual parent data, so there was no response rate to record.

Will a pilot group go live prior to everyone using the new system?

We are not repeating the pilot we did in the fall, but we will engage with local public health in a phased approach to get feedback on the systems we are building.

Implementation

Who is responsible for sending out screening reminders?

LPH is responsible for sending screening reminders to families. ASQ® Online has the functionality to remind local public health when a child is due for screening and to generate reminder letters or emails to the family. Local public health can use a QR code to also remind families to screen. Families who wish to complete electronic screening can be texted by local public health with a link to the Family Access (screening) page following your agency procedures.

Who is responsible for following up on the results of screening?

LPH is responsible for following up with families about the results of the screening regardless of the score. Follow-up can be documented in ASQ® Online or LPH's local EHR for now. MDH is developing the specific reporting requirements for follow-up after January 1, 2027.

What is the estimated time it will take to learn ASQ® Online?

We will provide LPH with training materials, office hours, and 1:1 training as needed to help you learn ASQ® Online. The time it takes to train and use the system will vary by individual and their role. Program administrators will have more to learn in ASQ® Online than providers. We estimate it may take approximately eight hours for program administrators to learn how to use ASQ® Online and additional practice to feel comfortable working in the system.

Will MDH be working with Brookes Publishing or planning to work with Brookes Publishing to address cultural issues, like lack of proper translations? Some of our initial findings that came from community partners were about how the ASQ® is not culturally responsive.

The interagency developmental screening task force facilitates discussions about developmental and social emotional screening needs across the state and communicates with Brookes Publishing around this work. Working with priority populations is important to all early childhood programs in Minnesota.

As a reminder, the ASQ® (regardless of which program administers it) may not be suitable for all families and it is important to consider when a family may be better served by a direct referral to resources, such as Help Me Grow or other community resources.

Funding

Will you confirm that local public health agencies will not incur any expenses for using ASQ® Online? I believe MDH was covering costs.

MDH will continue to cover the costs for the ASQ® Online account and screenings. We will also provide ASQ® Online keycodes for any county that does not have them.

Do you anticipate continued Follow Along funding to local public health with this update?

Yes. We did get sustained funding as long as the legislature continues to give MDH funding for developmental screening. We have funding that is allocated in the statute that the commissioner is required to provide in local public health grants. It is the first time the program has had dedicated funding for developmental screening through the legislature.

You may have noticed in the last year, some of your funding increased and that was related to the Healthy Beginnings, Healthy Families Act (MN statutes § 145.9575)

We do not expect that we'll be able to make further funding increases to local public health, but we are in a position to maintain the level of funding local public health received beginning October 2024.

Cohorts

Which of the five cohorts is my county in?

The list below is tentative. We plan to confirm with contacts that this works with your schedule as we get closer to meeting. We plan to contact each cohort 4-6 weeks before meeting.

Cohort 1 (May)

- Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Big Stone, Swift, and Lac qui Parle
- Nobles
- Faribault and Martin
- Waseca
- Mower
- Le Sueur
- Pine
- Cottonwood and Jackson
- Scott
- Steele
- Wabasha
- Benton
- St. Louis and Lake
- Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock

Cohort 2 (July)

- Crow Wing
- Otter Tail and Wilkin
- Roseau
- Kandiyohi
- Morrison
- Norman and Mahnomen
- Dodge
- Nicollet
- Meeker
- Renville

Cohort 3 (August)

- Wadena
- Anoka
- Hubbard
- Cass
- Fillmore
- Freeborn
- Washington
- Brown
- Olmsted
- Pennington and Red Lake
- Kanabec
- Lake of the Woods
- Goodhue

Cohort 4 (September)

- Becker
- Cook
- Aitkin
- Wright
- Kittson and Marshall
- Clay
- McLeod
- Ramsey
- Clearwater
- Hennepin
- Mille Lacs
- Carver
- Houston
- Isanti
- Polk
- Douglas, Stevens, Pope, Grant and Traverse

Cohort 5 (November)

- Rice
- Todd
- Winona
- Koochiching
- Beltrami
- Chisago
- Watonwan
- Sherburne
- Carlton
- Bloomington, Edina, Richfield
- Itasca
- Sibley

Blue Earth and Stearns do not currently implement the Follow Along Program.

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