SINGLE ASSESSMENT:
What It Is and When to Use It

WHAT IS THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT?

The Single Assessment (SA) for medium- or high-intensity services is a standardized process used to determine whether a child under age 21 who is MaineCare-eligible and has a behavioral health disability needs medium- or high-intensity behavioral health services—and, if so, which services are clinically appropriate.

The SA is used when a child's behaviors and functional needs indicate risk of out-of-home placement or the need for intensive, coordinated services.

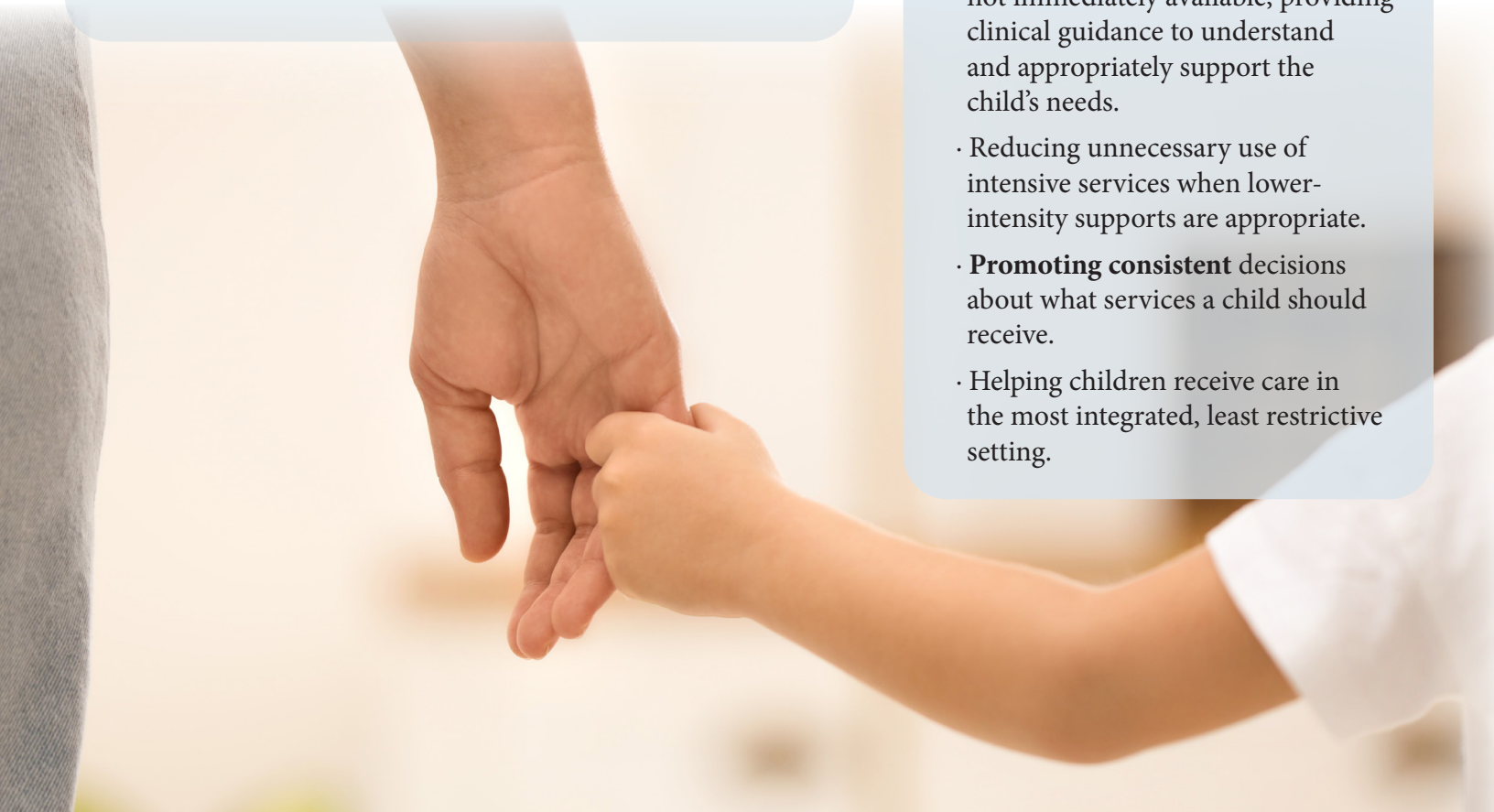
WHY THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT EXISTS

- Children have different levels of behavioral health need, and not all require high intensity services.
- The SA helps ensure children receive services in the most integrated, least restrictive setting.
- Supports consistent, appropriate service referrals statewide.

HOW THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT HELPS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Single Assessment supports better outcomes by:

- Matching services to a child's individual needs, rather than a one-size-fits all approach.
- **Identifying the right level of support**, and—when services are not immediately available, providing clinical guidance to understand and appropriately support the child's needs.
- Reducing unnecessary use of intensive services when lower-intensity supports are appropriate.
- **Promoting consistent** decisions about what services a child should receive.
- Helping children receive care in the most integrated, least restrictive setting.



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WHEN TO USE THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT:

DO NOT USE THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT WHEN...

- A child's needs can be met through low-intensity or routine behavioral health services
- Concerns are mild or moderate and functioning is largely intact
- Lower-intensity services are appropriate to meet the child's needs
- There is no indication that intensive services are needed
- A single outpatient or time-limited service is sufficient
- Justice involvement is isolated or situational without ongoing behavioral health need

USE THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT WHEN...

- A child's behaviors indicate a possible need for **medium- or high-intensity behavioral health services**
- There is **significant functional impairment** across settings (home, school, community)
- Behaviors are **acute, severe, or escalating**, indicating possible need for intensive services—even if lower-intensity services have not yet been tried
- There is a **risk of out-of-home placement**
- Multiple services or intensive care coordination may be required
- **Justice involvement is part of a broader pattern** of behavioral health need over time

