

Why We Should Consider the SOC as a Comprehensive Classification of Services

January 1, 2025

The **2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system** was established “to classify workers and jobs into occupational categories” for statistical purposes. While its primary goal is to support data collection, analysis, and dissemination, the SOC also serves as a robust framework for defining and understanding the nature of services provided across various industries, making it a comprehensive classification of services.

SOC as a Framework for Services

At its core, the SOC defines work and jobs by specifying the tasks performed within each occupation. These definitions implicitly describe the **services** provided, including:

1. **The worker:** The individual responsible for delivering the service.
2. **The recipient:** The person or group receiving the service, explicitly or implicitly mentioned in the occupation definition.

For instance, a definition for an occupation such as "Healthcare Support Workers" clearly outlines both the nature of the service and its intended recipients. By detailing occupations, the SOC inherently provides **definitions of services**, enabling it to be a practical tool for classifying not just jobs, but the services they encompass.

Inclusion and Equity in SOC Definitions

The **Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (OMB)** maintains the SOC to ensure that definitions of services are broad, flexible, and applicable to all populations, including individuals with **intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)**.

The principle of **inclusion**, which aims to ensure equitable services for individuals with IDD alongside others, is foundational to the SOC. Support services for individuals with IDD are generally included in existing SOC-defined services. However, when new occupations (or services) emerge, their classification within the SOC must be carefully considered to avoid gaps in coverage.

Nationwide Implementation of the SOC

The implementation of the SOC is inevitably spread nationwide through **all governmental, legislative, juridical, and business entities**. The SOC provides a standardized language for describing occupations, ensuring consistency across federal, state, and local levels. This wide adoption reinforces its role as the cornerstone of occupational classification and service definition, making it essential for aligning labor practices, policies, and services throughout the United States.

The Need for Support Service Standards

While the SOC provides broad definitions of services, it does not specify how these services should address the unique needs of individuals with IDD or the direct support workers who assist them. This lack of detail highlights the necessity for **support service standards**, which:

1. **Clarify and specify** how SOC-defined services should meet the needs of individuals with IDD.
2. Provide practical guidance for service providers and workers to deliver effective, inclusive support.

These standards should first be developed at the **provider level**, where practical experience can be gathered and refined. Once tested and validated, this knowledge should be elevated to the level of the **support service industry** and then elevated to the level of **regulations**, ensuring consistency and quality across all providers.

AMSI's Role in Advancing Standards

The **American Support Standards Institute (AMSI)** is committed to bridging this gap by creating and supporting the development of support service standards aligned with the SOC framework. AMSI's primary objective is to ensure that:

- **Support services are practical and inclusive**, addressing the diverse needs of individuals with IDD.
- Standards are developed collaboratively and universally recognized within the support service industry.

By focusing on these goals, AMSI aims to enhance the quality of services, foster inclusion, and ensure that the SOC framework is effectively applied to address the needs of all populations.

Conclusion

The SOC is not just a tool for statistical classification but also a comprehensive framework for understanding and organizing the services that shape our economy. Its nationwide implementation across all governmental, legislative, juridical, and business entities underscores its role as a unifying standard. By aligning support service standards with the SOC, we can create a system that is not only inclusive and equitable but also universally recognized for its practical application. Through initiatives like AMSI, we can ensure that the needs of individuals with IDD and their direct support workers are addressed, setting a foundation for a more inclusive and supportive society.