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- October 2 & 3, 2002
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- Radisson Metro

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**Mark Your Calendar:**
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**County Board Honors Social Workers**

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In nominating the three workers, Santa Cruz administrator Ann Pomper stated that Kelli, Deborah and Abby “have made a difference through their leadership, skill, and dedication to improving social work practices with the implementation of SDM.”

The nomination continues, “Implementing the use of the [SDM] system for all child welfare workers in Santa Cruz County local law enforcement agencies and the Court. These workers took their time, above and beyond their regular caseloads, to implement Structured Decision Making. Because the implementation was worker driven, it was highly successful.”

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Supervisory SDM Qualitative Case Reading Will Maximize SDM Implementation

Introduction
Successfully managing day to day child welfare operations is a tough and complex job. To be successful, each manager, supervisor and worker must focus on the needs of the children and families while balancing a varied and seemingly competitive set of implementation issues. How can agency managers and staff be sure, related to their professional practice goals, that they are doing the right things, and equally important, doing the right things, and making SDM the right things right? Structured Decision Making (SDM) is designed to help answer these critical questions. SDM is a case management system that helps guide worker decisions and informs supervisor’s practice at critical points in child welfare cases. Worker’s scoring of SDM tools, combined with narrative documentation supportive of the tool scores, reveals that the “right things” are “done right.” During case reading, supervisors can monitor for quality SDM practice thereby making SDM the agency’s standard of practice for workers.

Unit Case Reading
A supervisory SDM case reading can help ensure that workers are doing the right things right. Such a reading consists of each unit supervisor randomly selecting a small number of cases from every worker’s caseload each quarter. Selected cases are read using a case reading tool to evaluate:

1. The presence of required SDM tools: Does the case record contain the expected SDM tools?
2. Accurate completion: Is the tool completed completely and properly, according to any scoring criteria and/or logic?
3. Presence of worker narrative/documentation to support scoring on each tool: Does the narrative correspond to the SDM assessment?
4. Appropriate case action: Does the action taken fall within SDM guidelines, or is there a reasonable explanation for an alternative action?

A successful and strong SDM implementation must be dynamic and responsive to current practice needs.

Follow-up for Improved Performance
The supervisor should always address any problems identified in reviewed cases with the worker, and expect correction. Individual worker problems can be addressed during individual conferences or discussions; whereas common problems that appear with multiple workers could serve as an agenda item at a unit meeting, or could be the subject of a written information release to all units.

As first line supervisors review case records and meet with workers to strengthen the SDM item is being misunderstood, the definitions are unclear, or the item needs to be changed. A successful and strong SDM implementation must be dynamic and responsive to current practice needs. This requires the involvement of every first line supervisor.

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New SDM Jurisdictions
This tool will assist intake staff make the critical decision about whether a referral meets the state’s criteria as an allegation of maltreatment. The “screen in” tool is one of the newest additions to the SDM model.

Vermont also recently began utilization of the SDM model. The first orientation session and design activities were initiated in April. In addition to the existing SDM tools, Vermont will work with CRC staff to design structured tools to assist workers with decisions related to placement of children in out-of-home settings.

Structured Decision Making Systems

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See us at: www.nccd-crc.org
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If your jurisdiction does not currently use systematic case reviews for SDM implementation evaluation, contact CRC to discuss whether this method would be useful. A workshop on supervisory case reading will be included in the 2002 National SDM conference (see related article, this issue).

New SDM Jurisdictions

Two CPS agencies recently adopted CRC’s Structured Decision Making (SDM) model. CRC began work in Missouri in January 2002. Missouri will be the sixth site to utilize a structured “screen in” tool.

Supervisory SDM continued

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Fifth Annual National SDM Conference to Feature Strategic Planning

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June 2002

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Family and Children’s Services required these front line social workers to learn details of the SDM methodology. After learning the tools, forms and documentation themselves, the workers trained others to use the tools and, persuaded co-workers that the tools and required documentation really make a difference for kids at risk. Kelli, Deborah, and Abby methodically implemented SDM and then became “lead experts” for Santa Cruz County, trained social workers and supervisors in this and other counties, and trained community partners – local law enforcement agencies and the Court. These workers took their time, above and beyond their regular caseloads, to implement Structured Decision Making. Because the implementation was worker driven, it was highly successful.”