

SDM NEWS

County Board Honors Social Workers

Three Santa Cruz County, California, social workers were honored recently for their contributions to the implementation of Structured Decision Making (SDM) there. Kelli Kopeck, Deborah Bresnick, and Abby Nelson received the 2001 County of Santa Cruz Employee Recognition Program - Award for Excellence. The award, given by the County Board, recognizes employees or a team of employees who solves an extraordinary problem for the County, successfully implements an innovative idea, does an outstanding act which brings recognition to the County from the public, and/or who performs his/her work in a manner which deserves special recognition.

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

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



Abby Nelson, Deborah Bresnick, and Kelli Kopeck of Santa Cruz County, CA, recently received the Award for Excellence from the County Board to recognize their contributions toward a highly successful launch of Structured Decision Making there.

themselves, the workers trained others to use the tools and techniques, 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 -

These workers took their time, above and beyond their regular caseloads, to implement Structured Decision Making.

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."

Mark Your Calendar:

The annual
SDM Conference

will take place on

October 2-3, 2002, in

Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Supervisory SDM Qualitative Case Reading Will Maximize SDM Implementation



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

critically role that each first line supervisor can fulfill in assuring quality child welfare practice. It combines the supervisory role of "monitoring" for correct worker practice with the supervisory role of "staff training" (individually or in unit meetings) when the supervisor follows up to check that worker assessments and service provision are in line with the agency's SDM design.

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 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

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 random case review gives measurable substance to the

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

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New SDM Jurisdictions

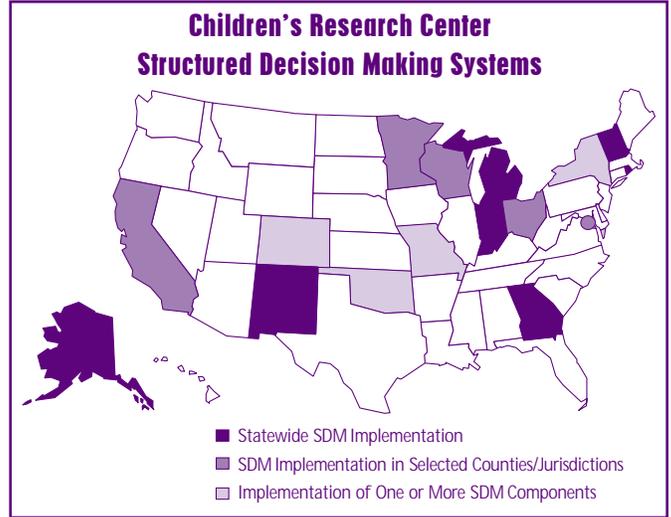


Two CPS agencies recently adopted CRC's Structured Decision Making (SDM) model. CRC began work in Missouri in January 2002. Missouri will be the sixth site to utilize a structured "screen in" tool.

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.



Supervisory SDM *continued*

case management implementation, system weaknesses may be discovered.



Where the SDM system does not seem to meet worker practice needs, the supervisor should consult with the program manager and/or designated SDM coordinator. Perhaps 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.

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).

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We're on the Web!
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www.nccd-crc.org

Fifth Annual National SDM Conference to Feature Strategic Planning

The new focus on outcome measures in child protective services (CPS) is creating awareness of the value of strategic planning for CPS agencies. Like the business world, agencies are now accountable for the "bottom line." Unlike the business world, the "bottom line" in CPS is not profit, but reduced harm to children. Can strategic planning models used to create successful businesses translate into models to create successful CPS agencies? Day one of this conference will include exploration of several existing strategic planning models that are being applied in CPS agencies. Peggy Brown of Washington will discuss using the Balanced Scorecard. Charles Jones of Michigan will describe their approach to strategic planning, which did not involve a specific model. Minnesota's strategic plan was based on the Logic Model and Rob Sawyer will describe their process. During the afternoon, participants will select one of the three approaches presented, and

spend time exploring the process in depth. The day will culminate with Elaine Squadrito of Rhode Island discussing the link between strategic planning and federal reviews.

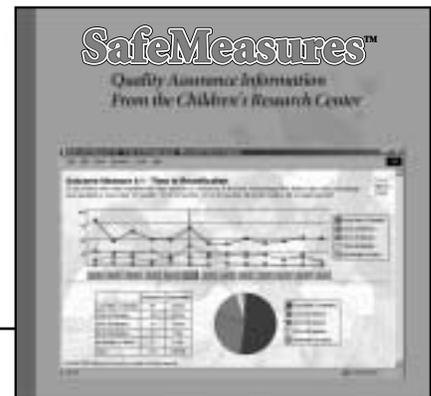
Day two will focus on issues and updates related to SDM implementation across the country. A highlight will be a presentation by the conference host, Minnesota, on their alternative response system. Other workshops will include supervisory case reading to strengthen SDM implementation, how SDM relates to federal reviews, applying leadership principles to SDM implementation, assessing risk in foster care, integrating SDM and case narrative, and a report on results of the Michigan foster care evaluation. The closing plenary session will feature Judy Rycus and Ron Hughes of Ohio's Institute for Human Services describing an approach to integrating SDM into a comprehensive competency-based training curriculum.

Featured speakers at this year's conference include Shay Bilchik, president of the Child Welfare League of America, and Barry Salovitz, of the Child Welfare Institute.

Particulars:
October 2 & 3, 2002
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Radisson Metro

Registration brochures were mailed in May, or visit the website at <http://www.nccd-crc.org>. Follow the link to CRC, and then to the 2002 conference.

SafeMeasures™, CRC's quality assurance product, will be available for demonstration at the conference.



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