SDM™ News

2004 SDM Conference: Looking Back at 2004, Ahead to 2006

Two hundred and nineteen supervisors and administrators from 15 U.S. states and Queensland, Australia, met in October for the 6th National SDM Conference. This year's theme was "Strengthening SDM Practice for Improved Outcomes." Attendance nearly doubled from previous years and resulted in many calls to the Queen Mary staff to seek bigger and bigger conference rooms as registrations flowed in.

Plenary sessions and workshops provided participants with ideas to move SDM implementation from "just another piece of paper" to dynamic and effective decision making at the case level, and integrated practice at the agency level. Equally important were the opportunities to meet peers from across the country and share insights and ideas. Thanks to all of the presenters for a series of well-received and informative sessions.

Since first convening in 1998, attendance has grown from about 30 to over 200, and from a handful of states to 15. More importantly, notions of what SDM is and how to make it work have become increasingly sophisticated. The expertise that comes from the field is extraordinary. This growing expertise in so many agencies will be shared again at **the next conference, October 4-5, 2006, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire**. Because we believe there are supervisors and administrators using SDM who have made important discoveries regarding ways to strengthen implementation, apply SDM in unique ways, and to find synergies between SDM and other programs, policies and practices, it is our wish to create a forum through which the insights of these leaders can be shared. This conference will use a request for submission approach for workshop sessions. Watch for this announcement in the coming months.

Check our website (www.nccd-crc.org) for more information about the 7th National SDM Conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Mary-Dale Bolson, Ph.D., Secretary, New Mexico CYFD addresses a full house at the 6th National SDM Conference in Long Beach, California. At the table are Dr. David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, Los Angeles County DCFS, and Chris Baird, Executive Vice President, Children's Research Center.

CRC wishes to thank . . .

CRC wishes to thank everyone who presented at the SDM Conference this past October. They are:

Mary-Dale Bolson, New Mexico CYFD
Pam Boozan, Orange Co. SSA
Scott Burdick, Orange Co. SSA
Mary Chaliman, Ingham Co. FIA
Paula Christian, Sacramento Co. DHHS
Sheila Duranleau, Vermont DCF
Tracey Feild, IHS Management
Ray Gallagher, Orange Co. SSA
Guillermo Henry, Riverside Co. CIC
Tim Hetherington, Queensland, Australia
John Keegan, New Hampshire DCYF
Mitch Mason, Los Angeles Co. DCFS

Carolyn McHenry, Hennepin Co. CFAS
Brian Meyer, Virginia Treatment Center for Children
Joi Russell, Los Angeles Co. DCFS
Judy Rycus, IHS
David Sanders, Los Angeles Co. DCFS
Dick SantaCruz, Los Angeles Co. DCFS
Kathryn Sapp, Missouri DFS
Joan Smith, Los Angeles Co. DCFS
Elaine Squadrito, Rhode Island DCYF
Michael Walker, Los Angeles Co. DCFS
Pamela Walker, CSULB CWTC
Glenn Wallace, Alameda Co. SSA
Bill Weston, Saginaw Co. FIA

CRC **Children's Research Center**

**Raelene Freitag, Ph.D.
Director**

**426 S. Yellowstone Drive, Suite #250
Madison, WI 53719**

**608.831.1180
www.nccd-crc.org**

SDM FAQ: What is Construct Validity?

At CRC's SDM conference last October, there was not enough time to answer each question during the Q/A session. As a result, this article is the first in a series that will answer the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about SDM.

Q. What is construct validity when you talk about the SDM tools?

A. In social science research, a construct is a trait, ability, or idea that you are trying to measure. In CPS, we are trying to measure the risk that a family will become involved in a CPS event. SDM risk assessments have repeatedly been shown to validly and reliably measure this risk. This means that the risk assessment has exhibited predictive validity.

Construct validity is the idea that we are measuring what we intended to measure. There is a growing body of evidence that SDM tools are related to one another and work together to assess aspects of a family that are related to risk. For example, cases assigned to a rapid response, based on the SDM response priority tool, tend to include families with safety issues much more often than cases assigned to a slower response. Families with safety issues have higher risk levels, and families with higher risk levels tend to exhibit more severe needs than lower risk families. These relationships support the construct validity among SDM tools.

If you have questions you would like answered in an upcoming issue of the SDM Newsletter, please submit them to Kristine Fisher at kfisher@mw.nccd-crc.org.

SDM Supervisory Case Reading

Supervisors and quality assurance staff are responsible for assuring that policies and procedures adopted by the agency are properly carried out and

Case reading assesses the completion of SDM assessment tools by

- *reviewing SDM assessment tools;*
- *reviewing recorded case narrative; and*
- *determining accuracy of tool completion through qualitative, comparative review.*

accurately applied. To assist staff in assessing the quality of SDM implementation, CRC has expanded its case reading protocols into a training module for supervisors and quality assurance staff.

Typically, a supervisor is required to "sign off" on case records at various points in time. The sign off asserts that the case was reviewed, procedures followed, all paperwork completed, etc. Given the volume of work for each worker, and the

number of workers supervised, it is not feasible to read every word of every case, let alone to conduct a detailed review of each assessment item, and then compare to definitions and documentation. Yet, without thorough review, mistakes and misunderstandings can happen. An effective solution is to conduct thorough reviews of a small random sample of records.

The SDM implementation process (below) illustrates the bottom-up nature of the model. The first level is learning which tools to complete when. This typically occurs in the first three to six months of implementation. If practice never moves beyond this stage, SDM becomes nothing more than a documentation system, and its capacity to reduce subsequent maltreatment and expedite permanency for children will be greatly reduced. To work
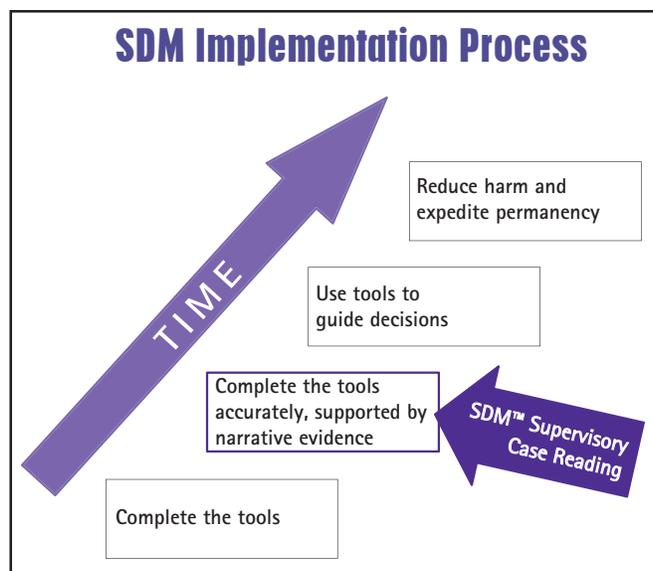
progressively toward SDM's goals, it is necessary to systematically evaluate the reliability and quality of tool completion. It is at this level that SDM case reading can be most beneficial to agency efforts for quality improvement.

Jurisdictions that have integrated routine case review as part of ongoing SDM implementation include Michigan, New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Riverside County, California.

For more information on SDM supervisory case reading training, contact your CRC project manager or email Kathy Park at kpark@mw.nccd-crc.org.

SDM Implementation Process

TIME

Reduce harm and expedite permanency

Use tools to guide decisions

Complete the tools accurately, supported by narrative evidence

SDM™ Supervisory Case Reading

Complete the tools

Share Your SDM Stories

If you have a story you would like to have published in SDM News, please submit a draft article to: Julie Peterson, Publications Manager, via mail, fax, or email (jptrsn@mw.nccd-crc.org). Please include your name, title, agency, and how long you have been using SDM (to be included in the article). Include your address, phone, and email so that we can contact you regarding your submission. All submissions will be acknowledged; however, we cannot guarantee publication of every article submitted. Please submit articles by April 15, 2005, to be considered for the next issue.
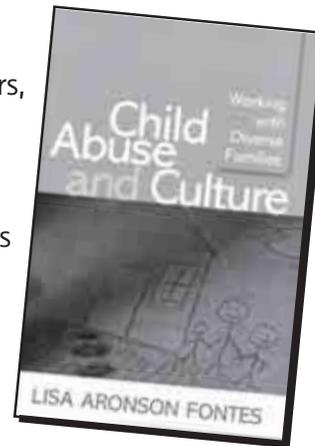
Two Important New Books

Race Matters in Child Welfare: Overrepresentation of African American Children in the System, by Mark F. Testa, Dennette Derezotes, John Poertner. Child Welfare League of America. This book conveys research that explains why African Americans are over-represented in child welfare cases in the United States, and what can be done about it. It has chapters from the very best researchers in this area. http://cwla.org/pubs/pubdetails.asp?PUBID=8749

Child Abuse and Culture: Working with Diverse Families by Lisa Aronson Fontes. New York: Guilford.
This book is geared to social workers, researchers, clinicians, medical personnel, law enforcement, and others who work on a daily basis with families affected by child maltreatment. It contains chapters on working with immigrants, interpreters, sexual abuse, physical abuse and discipline, prevention, assessment, interviewing, parenting groups, and others.

Order by April 15 to receive 15% off. http://www.guilford.com Search by author name, and use promotional code 5T to receive the discount.

Children's Research Center's Listserve, SDMTalk

You are invited to join the Children's Research Center's listserve, **SDMTalk**. This unmoderated listserve is an electronic forum for you to discuss SDM in child protective services with others who currently use SDM.   Whether you are thinking about SDM, implementing SDM, or have been using SDM to structure case management decisions, SDMTalk is an easy and efficient way for you to learn more.

To subscribe to this free list, go to the following website: http://mailman.listserve.com/listmanager/listinfo/sdmtalk. Provide all of the information requested, and click once on 'Subscribe.' You will receive a welcome message, which will confirm your subscription and provide instructions regarding how to use SDMTalk.

Subscribe today to join other managers, supervisors, and caseworkers as they discuss SDM.

If you have any questions regarding SDMTalk, please contact Kristine Fisher at kfisher@mw.nccd-crc.org.

CRC

CHILDREN'S RESEARCH CENTER
426 S. Yellowstone Dr., Ste 250
Madison, WI 53719