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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.

Two Important New Books
- Race Matters in Child Welfare: Overrepresentation of African American Children in the System
- Child Abuse and Culture: Working with Diverse Families

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

- Mary-Dale Bolson, New Mexico CYFD
- Pam Booza, 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
- John Keegan, New Hampshire DCYF
- Guillermo Henry, Riverside Co. CIC
- Tim Hetherington, Queensland, Australia
- Raelene Freitag, Ph.D.
- Bill Weston, Saginaw Co. FIA
- Pam Walker, CSULB CWTC
- Michael Walker, Los Angeles Co. DCFS
- Natalie Walker, CSEBM CWTC
- Glenn Wallace, Alameda Co. SSA
- Tim Hetherington, Queensland, Australia
- John Keegan, New Hampshire DCYF
- Bill Weston, Saginaw Co. FIA

SDM Implementation Process

- Use the tools to guide decisions
- Complete the tools
- Complete the tools accurately, supported by narrative evidence
- SDM Supervisory Case Reading

Supervisors and quality assurance staff are responsible for ensuring 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.

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.

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**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 is 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.

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...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.

...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.
March 2005, Issue 9

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