COMMON CORE 3.0

Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tools for Case Planning / Assessment Tips

1. **Standardized Assessment Tools (Structured Decision Making)**	Assessment is one of the most important case management activities you will complete as a Child Welfare Professional. In every interaction you are assessing for Risk and Safety. Along with your clinical assessments, you will also complete standardized assessments throughout the life of a referral and/or case. For case planning and case plan updates there are three primary standardized assessment tools you will use.
	Structured Decision Making (SDM) Assessment Tools:
	➢ *SDM Risk Reassessment*
	➢ *SDM Reunification Reassessment Tool*
	➢ *SDM Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA)*
	➢ Additionally, the *SDM Safety Assessment tool* may be used when there is a new allegation made requiring a new investigation. It is important to review the original SDM Safety Assessment tool during the case planning process to ensure case plan objectives and goals directly correspond to original safety threats.
	These assessments guide your decisions about family progress and help you consider all the relevant factors to guide your next steps in the case plan update, reduce bias in decision making and provide for more consistent decision making across jurisdictions.
2. **SDM Risk Re-Assessment**	The purpose of the risk reassessment is to help assess whether risk has been reduced sufficiently to allow a case to be closed, or whether the risk level remains high and services should continue. This is accomplished through evaluating whether behaviors and actions of the family has changed as a result of the case plan. The family risk reassessment combines items from the original risk assessment with additional items that evaluate a family's progress toward case plan goals. Unlike the initial risk assessment, which contains separate indices for risk of neglect and risk of abuse, the risk reassessment is comprised of a single index.
3. **SDM Risk Re-Assessment**	A SDM Risk Reassessment must be completed by the case-carrying social worker on all open cases in which all children remain in the home, or cases in which all children have been returned home and family maintenance services will be provided. The Risk Reassessment must be completed Prior to each required review, which occurs at least once every six months, and any recommendation to close the case or continue services. All cases should be completed sooner if there are new circumstances or new information that would affect risk. The risk reassessment guides the decision to keep a case open or close a case.

4. SDM Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) Tool	The purpose of the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment is to assess the strengths and needs of each individual in the household (caregivers and children). This is an effective engagement tool that can be completed with the family and used to inform the case plan update. It is important to complete the FSNA tool at the beginning of a case and prior to each case plan update to ensure a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of the child and family's current strengths and needs, cultural factors to consider, etc. This information will assist you as you make recommendations for updated or revised services, referrals and community supports. Review the SDM Family Strengths & Needs Assessment Tool with the family ➤ Use the family team and support network by having regular follow up team meetings ➤ Always be planning with closure in mind-who will support and help sustain the family/youth when CWS close? Key Question for Social Workers: Are the family's current case plan safety goals, service objectives and action steps aligned with their current strengths and needs identified on the FSNA tool?
5. SDM Safety Assessment Tool	The SDM Safety Assessment tool may be used when there is a new safety threat or child abuse/neglect allegation that requires an investigation. The SDM Safety Assessment is used during the course of the investigation to determine level of safety for the child. This tool is usually completed by the Social Worker completing the investigation. For more information about the use of Structured Decision Making tools, please refer to the Common Core 3.0 courses entitled "Overview of Assessment Procedures " and "SDM Skills lab" as part of the Assessment Block as well as Case Planning courses in the Case Planning and Service Delivery Block. For the link to the Structure Decision Making Policy & Procedures Manual, please refer to the handout "Monitoring & Adapting Resources."
6. Ongoing Assessment Tasks	In addition to Structured Decision Making, the following additional Assessment tasks should be completed on an ongoing basis throughout the life of your work with a family and/or youth. It is important for Social Workers to understand how important it is, in the phases of case planning, to learn about the family – who they are and why they are involved with the child welfare system.

	1. Use **contacts** and parent/sibling **visitation** to assess for progress and good fit. Ensure actions and interactions are **documented**. 2. Build their strengths into a case plan that the family will find relevant and that will address their specific needs with **tasks, services and prompts for behavioral change**. 3. **Plan** ahead - prepare before meeting with the family and think about key issues ahead of time. Consider how your own feelings about the family might help or hinder the planning process to: 1. Identify what can be done to reduce possible negative effects and assess if the feelings are based on the family's situation or their own beliefs. 2. Try to identify any cultural issues that may influence the work with the family and plan specific steps to actively address them. Why is all this important? Families who are actively engaged in the case planning process have better outcomes than families who have a case plan designed for them without their input. Empowering people is preferable to controlling them. Family members should be the primary decision makers for their family in case planning (while not compromising the bottom line - safety).
7. Updating the Plan: Engaging the Family/youth in the Process	Update the case plan with the family. Ask for their feedback on their progress and include it in the progress notes. **Engaging the family/youth in the process** • Update the case plan with the family/youth • Find out what's working for them • Find out what's not working • Be open to considering new ideas Make sure they know in advance what your progress notes will say. Nothing in the update should come as a surprise to the family. In addition to gathering progress information from the family, engage them in a conversation about the services and whether the services are meeting their needs. Be open to collaborate with the family in this regard and empower them to really consider the benefits of services and the gaps the services are leaving open while you also express your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the current services. Work together to find additional or alternate services to fill the gaps.

	Review the SDM Family Strengths & Needs Assessment tool with the family to discuss their changing needs and how this may impact their case plan service objectives and ability to be successful. Ensure that any identified cultural factors for the family are addressed and included in the case plan.
	Conducting a follow-up meeting with the multi-disciplinary or family group conferencing team that assisted in the development of the initial case plan can be very useful to engage the family in the case plan update. Remember to always be considering and discussing with the family or youth who will support them when child welfare closes their case and all the professionals are out of their lives you must continuously focus on building natural support systems. Engage the support network in the case planning process as often as possible. Assign roles to the support network to assist the family with being successful in their case plan goals and service objectives.