

MEMORANDUM

To: California Structured Decision Making® Core Team members Kelly Winston, Amanda Andrews, Amelia Perez-Gutierrez, and Chris Holm, California Department of Social Services
From: Peggy Cordero, NCCD Children's Research Center
Subject: Summary of Updates to the California SDM 3.0 Policy and Procedures Manual
Date: December 8, 2017

The purpose of this memo is to provide a summary of updates made in December 2017 to the California SDM® 3.0 Policy and Procedures Manual following review by the California Department of Social Services and California SDM Core Team members.

In addition to the specific updates outlined below, the manual was updated to use the term "select" instead of "mark" throughout the manual.

CALIFORNIA SDM® OVERVIEW (page 3)

Modify "when" to complete initial safety assessment from "ALWAYS: prior to completing first face-to-face" to "ALWAYS: Process completed during first face-to-face contact with at least one victim child in the household."

This modification was suggested to clear up some confusion about the original language; some interpreted it as meaning that the safety assessment should be completed before the first face-to-face contact rather than during it.

SDM® HOTLINE TOOLS

- Page 5: In Section A, Screening Criteria, delete all sub-items under Neglect, General neglect, Failure to protect. NCCD's internal review team recommends deleting these sexual exploitation sub-items from collection, as there have been no data requests for this information. This modification only affects the paper and WebSDM section of the tool; the definitions remain the same on pages 17 and 18.

- Pages 5 and 6: CDSS has advised that all CSEC-related referrals that meet criteria for response (either under general neglect, failure to protect, or sexual exploitation) should be assessed for response priority in the same manner as other referrals of abuse/neglect, according to Division 31 regulations. Therefore, references in the tool in these sections related to “notify worker for immediate response and notify licensing” and “provide immediate placement support” have been deleted. WebSDM logic will require completion of the decision tree for the appropriate screening criteria.
- Page 6: Under Sexual Abuse, sub-items Family Sexual Exploitation and Commercial Sexual Exploitation have been combined into a single sub-item, Sexual Exploitation, to align with the tool’s definition section.
- Page 8: Delete Field Update section (reflects changes already in place in the new version of WebSDM). This logic would be replaced with policy and procedure guidance to supervisors for documenting this difference in response decision in CWS/CMS response decision (see below).
- Page 21: Delete “record” from Threat of sexual abuse sub-item. New language states, “Known or highly suspected sexual abuse perpetrator lives with child. An individual with a known or suspected criminal history of sex crime, regardless of whether they have been arrested or convicted, lives in the same residence as the child.”
- Page 36, item 1: Replace “secondary referrals” with “duplicate or secondary referral.” This modification brings consistency to language in the preliminary screening definitions of a duplicate referral that states: “(this is commonly known as a secondary referral)” on page 10 with definition of secondary referral found on page 36.
- Page 37: Add the following language at the end of the Changing decisions section:

“If a field supervisor determines, based on new or additional information received prior to initial in-person response (but after the screening, response priority, or path decision has been made), that a screening, response priority, or path decision will be changed, the field supervisor should document the change in screening, response priority, or path decision in the response decision section of the automated case management system.”

- This additional language provides guidance for how to document a change in response decision previously made as part of the hotline tool's "field update" section, which was eliminated during development of WebSDM. In prior versions of the application, field update functionality was rarely used.

SDM® SAFETY ASSESSMENT

- Page 44: Modify the bullet that reads:

"The child shows effects of maltreatment, such as serious emotional symptoms, lack of behavioral control, or serious physical symptoms. This may include situations where a child exhibits severe anxiety (e.g., nightmares, insomnia, exhibits fear) related to situations associated with domestic violence."

To:

"The child shows the effects of maltreatment such as serious physical symptoms, lack of behavioral control, or serious emotional symptoms."

The point is to distinguish between threat of maltreatment effects of not meeting basic needs and threat of emotional harm defined in Item 5.

- Page 46: Under item #5, modify the stem definition to read:

"Caregiver describes or speaks to the child in predominantly negative terms or acts toward or in the presence of the child in negative ways AND these actions result in severe psychological/emotional harm, leading to the child being a danger to self or others."

AND add bullet that reads:

"The caregiver engages in behaviors associated with domestic violence in the presence of the child. These incidents may occur on more than one occasion OR a single occasion that involved weapons; resulted in any injury to an adult; or resulted in arrest/court involvement, escalating patterns of control, and intimidation.

“Domestic violence perpetrators are parents or caregivers who engage in a pattern of coercive control against one or more intimate partners. This pattern of behaviors may continue after the end of the relationship or when the parents no longer live together. The alleged perpetrator’s actions often directly involve, target, and impact children in the household.”

SDM® FAMILY RISK ASSESSMENT

Changes below relate to pages 81 and 91, supplemental risk items 3 and 3a:

- Page 81, modify stem of item 3 to read: “Another non-related adult in the household provides unsupervised care to a child under the age of 3.”
- Page 81, modify stem of item 3a to read: “Is the other non-related adult in the household employed?”
- Page 91, modify stem definition of item 3 to read: “Identify whether another unrelated adult in the household (stepparent, significant other, or roommate) provides unsupervised child care to any child in the household who is under the age of 3.”
- Page 91, delete all references to “birth or adoptive parent” in the supplemental risk item 3 definition and sub-items a, b, and c.
- Page 91, modify stem definition of item 3a to read: “Identify whether the non-related adult in the household (stepparent, significant other, or roommate) is employed or not.”
- Page 91, delete all references to “birth or adoptive parent” in supplemental risk item 3a definition and sub-items a and b.

For both 3 and 3a, after internal NCCD consultation, it was determined that the definition of the supplemental item was meant to assess whether a non-related caregiver who provides unsupervised care of a child under 3 might be associated with an increased likelihood of future maltreatment.

- Page 94, section titled Disposition: Add "and obtain supervisory approval" at the end of the final sentence, which reads, "If the recommended response differs from the actual disposition, provide an explanation."
- Page 94: Delete examples of explanation. NCCD recommends deleting these examples to avoid the possibility of them being misinterpreted as policy guidance.

SDM® FSNA

- Page 95: Replace "Federally Recognized: Yes or No" with "Active Efforts May or do Apply: Yes or No"

Rationale is that this question is a prompt for practice rather than a data collection field associated with this assessment, and "active efforts" is more relevant.

- Page 101, CSN11:
 - » Modify "An exit plan meeting has been held" to "A 90-Day Transition Meeting has been held."
 - » Modify "An exit from foster care meeting has been held" to "An Emancipation Conference has been held." (Conforms to California language)
- Page 134, modify bullet that reads "An exit plan meeting has been held" to "A 90-Day Transition Meeting has been held." Modify bullet that reads "An exit from foster care meeting has been held" to "An Emancipation Conference has been held."

SDM® REUNIFICATION REASSESSMENT

Page 190, modify the first sentence in the Visitation Plan Evaluation section to read: "Complete the visitation plan evaluation for each child in the household based upon the participation of the caregiver demonstrating the least progress, using the definitions, and consider overrides for each child."

Workers have been struggling with understanding that household visitation is being assessed, not each caregiver to each child.