



SDM[®] TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OVERVIEW FOR CALIFORNIA COUNTIES

The Structured Decision Making[®] (SDM) system is a suite of research- and evidence-based assessment tools used to help guide consistent and equitable decision making at key points in the child welfare system. Implementing these tools effectively requires using a continuous quality improvement (CQI) framework that supports regular review of data and practice to better understand and improve decision making at the individual, unit, and program level.

In support of this goal, California counties can access up to three days of CDSS-funded technical assistance each year, supporting SDM system use and fidelity of practice. Technical assistance (TA) opportunities are tailored to individual county needs and will be designed in partnership with your agency leadership.

Technical assistance activities may include, but are not limited to, the activities described below.

LEADERSHIP CONSULTATION SESSION: LOCAL DATA REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Evident Change will meet with your county leadership to review current SDM-related data in each program and discuss areas of strength and concern. Data will be shared to explore how local trends compare to statewide trends and how this work connects to your agency's desired outcomes or existing system improvement plan (SIP) goals. Evident Change will work with leadership and agency representatives to explore policy, practice, training, and other infrastructural factors that may be impacting desired outcomes, and can support county leadership in identifying areas for a targeted support plan and potential next steps.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Evident Change can support your agency in building internal capacity for ongoing CQI activities related to SDM system use and trends in local decision making in the following ways:

QUANTITATIVE DATA MANAGEMENT AND COACHING

Evident Change staff will work with a group of agency staff, supervisors, or managers to build skills related to using SafeMeasures® and SDM data to support improved practice across agency programs or units. Focus will include building staff familiarity and skills regarding how to use SafeMeasures; and support for quality assurance staff, program managers, and supervisors on how to use quantitative data to inform staff training and coaching.

QUALITATIVE DATA AND CASE READING SUPPORT

Evident Change will work with agency social workers, supervisors, managers, or quality assurance teams to assess the fidelity of local SDM practice. Focus will include training on the use of [California's SDM case reading or CQI tools](#) that support the structured review of completed SDM tools to identify ways to strengthen worker practice, while collecting aggregate data regarding SDM tool fidelity and practice trends. Qualitative case reading can focus on an individual program, SDM tool, or specific area of practice, such as safety planning.

SUPERVISOR OR MANAGER COACHING SESSIONS

Small group coaching sessions with supervisors and managers will explore ways for supervisors to use their role as behavioral influencers to strengthen their team's direct practice around SDM tool use and integration with Safety-Organized Practice (SOP). Coaching sessions discuss strategies for building supervisor skills, integrating SDM tools into case consultations, working with staff to improve skills related to fidelity of assessments, and strategies for building SDM-related quantitative and qualitative review into everyday practice.

POLICY REVIEW AND ALIGNMENT

Evident Change is available to support with targeted local policy reviews to identify areas where local policy may misalign or conflict with SDM policy, which may contribute to inconsistencies in staff practice and the fidelity of local implementation. Review would be followed with discussion and planning with agency leadership around supports and desired next steps.

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC TA SESSIONS FOR STAFF BY PROGRAM AREA

TA sessions with program staff can support skill building around the use of SDM tools in practice with practitioners of all levels of SDM system knowledge. TA sessions will elicit staff feedback on strengths and barriers to using the SDM tools with fidelity in practice and support direct skill building through practice opportunities. Themes about factors influencing SDM use will be synthesized and discussed with agency leadership to support system alignment and ongoing implementation support.¹

Have ideas about another type of technical assistance that could support your county? Let us know! Feel free to reach out to any of your California Practice Team with questions or ideas.

*Bill James, WJames@evidentchange.org; Claire Crowley, CCrowley@evidentchange.org;
Whitney Polk, wpolk@evidentchange.org*

¹ To support sustainable systems change, Evident Change recommends TA sessions for program staff happen in tandem with one or more of the TA activities focused on agency infrastructure and leadership described above.