

## LINKING THE SDM® SYSTEM TO INTEGRATED CORE PRACTICE MODEL BEHAVIORS AND PRACTICE PHASES

### PREVENTION

- To elicit balanced and rigorous information, use the Structured Decision Making® (SDM) hotline path decision tools along with solution-focused facilitation and interviewing skills framed by the Three Questions. In addition, use these to identify potential family network members from the reporting party at screening.
  - » **For screened-out reports without a child welfare response:** Link to local policies regarding referral to established primary prevention services in the community. Use aggregate data collection to identify needs in the community for primary prevention services.
  - » **For reports screened for in-person response:** Gather information to support design of family-centered strategies for response and engagement during initial investigation.
- Use SDM® safety and risk findings as a criteria component for referring families to a comprehensive prevention/protection intervention continuum at the end of the investigation.

### ENGAGEMENT, ASSESSMENT, AND TEAM PREPARATION

#### Engagement

- Share the process for making key decisions using the structure, common definitions and thresholds, and decision logic with families and their networks during periodic Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) and monthly engagements.
- Develop harm and danger/goal statements linked to SDM Safety and Risk assessments with family members and their network to support a shared understanding of the basis for agency involvement and the road map for decision making.
- Use SDM assessments to guide the collaborative conversation with families to gather, organize, and analyze information for decision making and planning.

## **Assessment**

- Link facilitated inquiry and exploration (during CFTM and other engagements) about households, family relationships, caregivers, and household cultural context to strong fidelity and accuracy in using the SDM decision-support assessments and collaborative planning that support strong connections between youth in care, family, and culture.
- Share and anchor findings of the SDM assessments for safety (child vulnerabilities, safety threats, caregiver complicating behaviors, actions of protection, and household strengths) and risk (dynamic caregiver and household risk factors) with families to frame the conversation about relevant strengths and needs for collaborative and behavior-specific case planning.
- Use SDM common structures, definitions, and thresholds at critical decision points in combination with a balanced and rigorous assessment through facilitated inquiry and mapping to support consistent, collaborative, and equitable decision making.

## **Teaming and Team Preparation**

- During early engagement with families, use safety-organized tools and network practice to support parents and children/youth in identifying and involving their support team.
- Link what is known about the family's informal support network to a balanced and rigorous Safety Assessment to consider options for immediate safety planning and ongoing support for youth in care and case planning practices.
- Orient the family's team to harm and danger/goal statements linked to SDM Safety and Risk assessments to support a shared understanding of the basis for agency involvement and a road map for decision making.
- During staff engagement activities, such as worker-supervisor or group consultation, use the relevant SDM assessment structure to guide strong critical thinking and decision making and to prepare workers to use solution-focused interviewing strategies in engaging children/youth and parents.

## **CASE PLANNING**

- Develop behavior-specific safety goal statements with the youth, family, and network as part of a CFTM focused on case planning that creates a vision for youth safety and care and caregiver functioning that resolve identified safety threats and address relevant needs. Use this statement to frame the discussion about underlying needs and strengths and case plan development.

- Be certain that parental case plan objectives describe the caregiver behaviors needed to resolve safety threats and stabilize household and caregiver risk factors. These objectives can be used as a road map and measuring stick for gathering information about progress to inform formal reassessment and decisions about transitions using the structure of the SDM reassessments.
- Use case planning meetings with families and network to design and implement a measurable and progressive visitation (family development time) practice that links to the SDM Reunification Assessment.

## **MONITORING AND ADAPTING**

- During the first month of a service period, orient parents, children/youth, and network to the elements and structure of the SDM reassessments for decision making during formal reassessment.
- Use the structure of the SDM reassessments for conversations (and documenting contacts) during every monthly contact with children/youth and parents. During these contacts, gather balanced and rigorous data about successes and barriers to demonstrating parent behaviors that create safety. Work together to make needed adjustments in service delivery and case plan activities. These contacts will provide behavior-specific information over time that informs the reassessment process.
- Use the framework of the family-centered visitation plan to engage parents, children/youth, and their network to work toward reunification. Use the structure and definitions of the visitation assessment section of the SDM Reunification Assessment to engage parents and their networks in planning for and debriefing family time activities. Gather and document information about progress in demonstrating safety during family time that can be used during the formal reassessment.
- Use the structure of the SDM Safety Assessment to review and discuss changes in household safety with parents as part of monthly engagement contacts.
- During staff supervision engagement activities, use the SDM® reassessment structure, definitions, and thresholds to support strong practice and critical thinking.

## TRANSITIONS

- **Safety planning:** Whenever possible, use the elements of the SDM® Safety Assessment and early network engagement to involve family in developing rigorous immediate safety plans to control identified safety threats while allowing children/youth to remain at home. Regularly review, strengthen, and update these plans as part of a CFTM focused on managing immediate child safety.
- **Reunification and closure transitions:** Use the elements and structure of the relevant SDM® reassessment, combined with reference to harm/danger statements, safety goals, and case plan objectives, to guide the CFTM conversation with families focused on reunification and case closure decision.
- **Network engagement in preparing for case closure and reunification:** Network members can partner with families to safety plan for transitions in the context of what is known about the history of safety threats and impact of caregiver complicating behaviors and risk factors on child safety.
- **Alternative permanency transitions:** Engage in difficult but important transparent conversations with children/youth, parents, and their team about reasons for alternative permanency planning based on current household safety and parent behaviors.