TRAINER GUIDE

ADVANCED SDM® TRAINING: RIGOROUS AND FAMILY-CENTERED SAFETY PLANNING

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE ADVANCED SDM® TRAINING SERIES

This is one in a series of training modules designed to increase workers' skills in integrating the Structured Decision Making® (SDM) assessment tools into practice. The basic SDM system training focuses on policy: when to use which assessment, and how to accurately complete each assessment. Every child welfare worker should complete the mandated Statewide Common Core Curricula so that the entire SDM system is comprehensively understood.

These advanced SDM modules focus on assessment practice and decision making within specific child welfare programs, and child welfare workers may attend only those modules that apply to their current work assignments. Child welfare workers who transfer to a unit that uses different SDM assessments should be encouraged to attend an advanced training module designed for that unit.

The advanced SDM modules are skills-based. Even though they include some lecture time to introduce ideas for strategically integrating SDM assessments into practice, much of the learning is acquired through individual and group exercises, as well as group discussion.

Finally, some local county policies and/or practices may be unique and conflict with the concepts taught in this module. Child welfare workers should be encouraged to follow local policy, and trainers should follow up with local management on any areas raised as potential conflicts. Child welfare workers may be operating under "policy mythology," or the identified areas may warrant review by county leadership.

ABOUT THIS TRAINING

PURPOSE

To help child welfare workers build skills to develop rigorous and family-centered safety plans that are aligned with state and federal policy and expectations and allow a child to safely remain in the home whenever possible.

OBJECTIVES

- Review techniques for using the SDM safety assessment, in alignment with the Integrated Core Practice Model, to support decision making on immediate safety and safety planning.
- Build skills for family engagement that creates a shared understanding of identified safety threats and the safety planning process.
- Learn the essential elements of a safety plan for child protection and how they align with state and federal guidance, research, and best practice.
- Practice monitoring, adapting, and strengthening safety plans using continuous quality improvement (CQI) review tools.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

- All child welfare workers who engage in safety planning as part of a child protection investigation.
- Workers who are responsible for safety planning throughout the life of a child protection case, including safety planning to support a safe return home.

TRAINING FORMAT

This workshop is designed to be delivered in a half-day, three-hour format, either in person or virtually.

MODULE MATERIALS

Materials for each unit are can be found at the California SDM Training Materials website.

- **URL:** https://docs.evidentchange.org/California/
- **Password:** training

TRAINER MATERIALS

- PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes
- Rigorous and Family-Centered Safety Planning trainer guide (this document)

PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

- SDM safety assessment and policy and procedures manual
- Rigorous and Family-Centered Safety Planning participant guide

TRAINING OUTLINE AND AGENDA

SECTION 1: SAFETY PLAN FOUNDATIONS: WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN, AND WHAT ARE ITS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS?

Purpose: Provide an overview of the foundations of safety planning aligned with the SDM safety assessment. Establish foundational shared understanding of the core concepts and essential elements of rigorous and family-centered safety planning.

SECTION 2: SKILLS LAB AND DISCUSSION

Purpose: Build skills for reviewing, adapting, and strengthening safety plans. Support participants in applying the foundational principles discussed in Section 1 to their own work and discussing themes and questions for continued learning.

Note: Discussion during this section will guide the areas of focus for Section 3.

SECTION 3: DEEPENING PRACTICE INTEGRATION: STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A SAFETY PLAN

Purpose: Deepen participants' learning through review of areas lifted up by participants as challenges. Review integrated practices and tools that can be used to strengthen practice across the "Steps for Developing a Safety Plan." Use the Integrated Core Practice Model as the framework for practice skills, including helping family members identify safety and support network members, use of the Three Questions structure, three-column map, solution-focused questions, and harm and worry statements.

AGENDA[1]

Total Time: Three hours

Training Delivery Date: _____ **Trainers:**_____

Audience: _____

TIME	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS	NOTES/LEAD TRAINER
30 min.	Training purpose, agenda, and opening reflection	Slides 1–9	
30 min.	Section 1: Safety Plan Foundations: Assessing child safety and essential elements of a safety plan • Discuss what a safety plan is and what it controls. • Review the structure of the safety assessment and distinguish safety, risk, and needs. • Review the essential elements of a safety plan and how they align with state and local policy.	Slides 10–17 Resource: Essential Elements of a Well-Written Safety Plan	

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[1] You can find the fillable version of this agenda on the California curriculum site.

TIME	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS	NOTES/LEAD TRAINER

30 min.	Section 2: Skills Lab and Discussion
	
	• Discuss how safety plans should evolve and key opportunities to support strengthening.
	• Engage participants in skills lab activity to review an example safety plan. Participants can choose one of the following activities to support applying the principles discussed and the transfer of learning.
	   » Using the Safety Plan Checklist, practice reviewing a safety plan and identifying opportunities to strengthen it.
	      ▪ Option 1 (preferred): Ask participants to review a recent safety plan that was created with a family.
	      ▪ Option 2: Practice strengthening the safety plan created for the Johnson family (example in participant guide).
	• Meet as a large group to discuss areas most identified for growth during the skills lab.
		Slides 18 - 21
		
		Resources:
		• Safety Plan Checklist
		• Strengthening Safety Plan Activity (Johnson family example)	

15 min.	BREAK		
Section 3: Deepening Practice Integration: Steps for Developing a Safety Plan *Trainers should use areas identified during discussion in Section 2 to guide which of the following sections to review in more depth with participants.* *See specific slides and resources listed below.*			
60 min.	**Steps 1–3: Getting Started in a Crisis: Collaboration With Family** • Steps for immediate safety planning • Getting started in a crisis • Gems of clarity: harm and worry statements Familiarize the family with the task: Review strategies for getting the family acquainted with the safety planning process.	Slides 23–30 Resources • Explaining the SDM Safety Assessment Process to Families • Steps for Safety Planning	

TIME	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS	NOTES/LEAD TRAINER
	Step 4: Identify and Involve the Network • What is a safety and support network? • Activity: Favorite network questions	Slides 31–34 Resources • Circles of Safety and Support • Support Network Grid	
	Step 5: Building Rigorous Action Steps • Eliciting family knowledge and know-how: solution-focused questions • Skills Lab 2: Developing rigorous action steps Optional Activity • Solution-Focused Questions handout • Safety Plan Versus Case Plan handout	Slide 35–42 Resources • Safety Intervention Ideas • Safety Plan Versus Case Plan • Solution-Focused Questions	
	Steps 6–7: Reach Agreement and Develop a Plan for Monitoring • Timelines and plan for monitoring • Signatures • Documentation and warm handoffs	Slides 43–45	
15 min.	**Next Steps and Evaluation** • As participants to reflect on day and identify next steps • Share training evaluation	Slides 46–48	

STRENGTHENING SAFETY PLAN ACTIVITY: JOHNSON FAMILY ANSWER KEY

Review the changes made to the example safety plans, based on the use of the CQI tools such as the Essential Elements checklist. In debrief and discussion, trainers may want to consider eliciting the following learning points.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT (As written in the Johnson family example)	OPTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING (Participant's own example)
Identification of SDM Safety Threat The example does not clearly identify which safety threat was identified, and it broadly describes the second safety threat as "domestic violence between the mother and stepfather in the home in front of the children." Without specifically identifying which safety threat was marked, the family/worker/reviewer would not know if this is related to physical or emotional harm.	
Clear, Specific Harm and Worry Statements The example does not include harm and worry statements that follow the suggested structure. Statements include jargon such as "excessive discipline" and "domestic violence" and do not use behavior-specific descriptions.	
Immediate Action Steps All the action items fall on Aunt Sandy. Could more action steps be identified for parents, children, or other network members?	
Involvement of Network What other network members could be identified to support specific actions on the safety plan? Whom do the children identify as safe supports? Additional family, community members, or service providers?	
Plan Monitoring and Time Limit No date for review was indicated.	
Signatures	

TRAINING EVALUATION FORM

Note: Any trainer using this curriculum as a part of ongoing efforts through a Regional Training Academy (or another setting in which there is a county- or organization-specific training evaluation form) should defer to that process.

If no other training evaluation is in place, please use the following survey link for training evaluation: https://surveys.evidentchange.org/s3/CDSS-Safety-Planning-Training-Evaluation

1. Date of training:
2. Delivery setting:
    - Virtual
    - In person
3. Names of trainers:
4. This session increased my understanding of safety planning in practice.
    a. Not at all
    b. A little
    c. Somewhat
    d. A lot
5. What about this session was most helpful/worked well?
6. What would you suggest to be done differently in future sessions?
7. During the training, what questions or requests for continued support came up for you? In what way can your local county team, CDSS, or Evident Change support next steps?