

DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
Administrative Memo #13-2011

To: Children and Family Services Specialists, Supervisors, Administrators,
and Service Area Administrators in the **Eastern and Southeast
Service Areas**

From: Vicki Maca, Families Matter Administrator, Division of Children and
Family Services

Approved by: Scot L. Adams, Ph.D. - Interim Director

Division of Children and Family Services ("CFS")
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Date: November 2, 2011

RE: Structured Decision Making

Effective: Immediately

Duration: Until Revised

Contact: Sara Goscha, Program Specialist, Children and Family
Services, Policy Section at (402)471-9333 or at
sara.goscha@nebraska.gov

Purpose:

This memo is to provide direction regarding the implementation of Nebraska's Structured Decision Making (SDM) process in the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas. The Eastern and Southeast Service Area Initial Assessment and Ongoing Case Management staff will no longer be subject to follow Administrative Memo #1-08 Nebraska Safety Intervention System.

Child and Family Services (CFS) staff shall begin using the SDM model after completing the training regarding the Nebraska SDM Initial Assessment Policy and Procedure Manual and the Nebraska SDM Ongoing Policy and Procedure Manual. The SDM Policy and Procedure manuals contain an attachment regarding policies contained in Administrative memo #1-08 not specific to NSIS that must continue to be followed. CFS staff in the ESA and SESA shall be subject to following the SDM Policy and Procedure manuals and the attachment during the case management process.

Background:

The Structured Decision Making model incorporates a set of evidence based assessment tools and decision guidelines to provide a high level of consistency in the decision making process for families in the child welfare system. The model also provides a method for targeting service resources to families who are most likely to abuse or neglect their children.

Required Action:

Initial Assessment:

Tools:

- ✓ Family Functioning Assessment
- ✓ Initial Safety Assessment (Abuse/Neglect/Dependency)
- ✓ Initial Risk Assessment (Abuse/Neglect)
- ✓ Prevention Assessment (Dependency)
- ✓ Safety and Suitability Assessment (Foster Homes)
- ✓ Safety Plan

Upon receipt of an accepted intake the assigned DHHS case manager shall complete the Family Functioning Assessment and the SDM Initial Assessment applicable to the accepted intake. The Initial Assessment shall be completed and documented within 30 days of the intake being received by DHHS and in accordance with Nebraska's SDM Policy and Procedure manuals.

Upon the completion of the Initial Assessment, the worker will arrive at a finding regarding maltreatment called the case status determination and a determination of whether the family should be referred to ongoing services shall be made.

If a family is referred to ongoing services; case management staff shall make efforts to engage the family and offer interventions prior to requesting the County Attorney to file a petition. However, if the family is unwilling to engage in interventions to mitigate the safety threat or risk factors, the case manager shall consult with their supervisor to determine whether a request to file should be completed. Administrative Review is required prior to requesting a filing with the County Attorney.

During the Initial Assessment, if a safety threat is identified or the family's risk level is high or very high risk, and the evidence leading to those decisions is based on one of the five situations listed below, a mandatory staffing with an Administrator is required to determine whether a request to file should be forwarded to the County Attorney's office. These include:

- Methamphetamine Use by Parent/Caretaker
- Domestic Violence
- Previous Termination of Parental Rights
- Serious Physical Abuse (i.e. head trauma, broken bones, multiple injuries)
- Sexual Abuse by a parent

These consultation points will be documented in the consultation narrative at the end of the initial assessment.

Ongoing Assessments:

Tools:

- ✓ Safety Assessment
- ✓ Family Strengths and Needs (All cases including OJS)
- ✓ Risk Re-Assessment (In-Home)
- ✓ Reunification Assessment (Out-of-Home)
- ✓ Prevention Assessment (3b)
- ✓ Safety and Suitability Assessment (Foster Home-concerns)
- ✓ Safety Plan

At the completion of the SDM Initial Assessment a decision whether to refer the family to ongoing services will be made. Once a family or child is referred for ongoing services, case management staff will use the Nebraska SDM Ongoing Policy and Procedure manual to assist in guiding their work with the child or family.

Safety is the responsibility of both Initial Assessment and Ongoing case management staff. If a safety threat is identified during a family's involvement with DHHS, it is the responsibility of the assigned case manager to implement a plan to manage the identified safety threat.

If subsequent maltreatment is suspected the DHHS Abuse/Neglect Hotline should be notified immediately to assess whether the allegations need to be assessed through the DHHS Initial Assessment unit.