The Structured Decision Making® System 
for Adult Protective Services (APS) 

New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services 

Rachel Lakin  
APS Program Administrator
NH BEAS was looking for and is committed to:

- Consistency in practice, in decision-making
- Systematic approach to assessment
- Striving for best practice, and
- Establishing ways to quantitatively assess outcomes
Established grant funding for initiation and continuation of project

Developed instruments, definitions, policies and procedures based on state regulations, policies and best (better) practice

Based on partnerships among:
- Workgroup
- APS Staff
- Supervisors
- Administrators
- Consultants
Development and Implementation

- SDM® instruments implemented: October 2008
  - Intake Assessment (Word document)
  - Safety Assessment (Word document)
  - Risk Assessment – Data Collection (web-based)
  - Strengths and Needs Assessment and Re-Assessment (Word document)

- APS IT system schedule
  - Intake: 11/2009
  - Safety Assessment: 06/2010
  - Risk Assessment: 11/2012 (web-based until then)
  - Strengths and Needs Assessment/ReAssessment: 06/2011
Resistance to change; contributing factors:

- NH APS had few to none current, written policies
  - resulting in less accountability, more inconsistency
- NH APS had very limited funding for staff training
- NH APS had little staff turnover: many staff with many years of experience
- NH APS experienced administrative staff reduction and turnover
- NH APS did not welcome comparison to child protection
  - NH Child Protection system had implemented SDM® several years before, has more extensive IT system and well-established federally-funded training program
Included confidential staff and supervisor focus groups and surveys

Focus group and survey results indicated:
- More staff experience, less buy-in
- Lack of (some) supervisor buy-in
Change Management

**Action Steps** to effect positive change to ensure successful implementation with reliable outcomes

- Performance evaluations: staff and supervisors
- Increased engagement of supervisors
  - APS Supervisors became SDM® Workgroup
  - SDM® a standing agenda item on monthly meetings
- Monthly reports
- Meeting with supervisors to:
  - review APS and SDM® outcomes
  - identify policy mis-interpretation
  - Identify opportunities for practice improvement
Completion rates for all assessments are very high: 98–100%

Many supervisors have embraced the system and are willing to:
- model their understanding of the system and of the utility of each assessment
- strategize with their peers and administration on how to:
  - incorporate the SDM® outcomes into practice, while also
  - incorporating increased casework expectations, and doing so with
  - ongoing challenges of limited and, in some instances, reduced staffing, gaps in services

New staff have the advantage of being introduced to a system with SDM® incorporated into it; some new staff previously worked in NH’s child protection where SDM® is well integrated