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PRESS RELEASE

**L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services to Co-Host National
Structured Decision Making™ Conference on October 13th and 14th**

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will co-host a national conference on Structured Decision Making™ (SDM) sponsored by The Children's Research Center on **Wednesday, October 13, 2004** and **Thursday, October 14, 2004**. The 6th National Structured Decision Making Conference, held on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, will draw child welfare experts from across the country to discuss improving safety and outcomes for children by strengthening the use of Structured Decision Making, a risk-assessment tool used by child welfare agencies.

Workshops will be geared toward administrators and child welfare directors, as well as supervisors who work directly with line social workers. All of the workshops will improve the understanding of the use of SDM as a simple, objective and reliable tool for social workers which helps them to make the best possible decisions for individual cases and provide managers with information for improved planning and resource allocation. As the largest child welfare agency in the country, DCFS is a national leader in the implementation of SDM. Last year, the program was introduced to all of the DCFS regional offices and staff has been specially trained in its use.

SDM can improve assessments of family situations to better determine how the children in the home need to be protected. Other benefits include increasing consistency in case assessment and case management, enabling staff to make the best use of available resources and provide management with data needed for program administration, planning, evaluation and budgeting.

"I am very proud of the work we've done with SDM. This important decision-making tool strengthens and supports many of the social work practices currently being used by the Department," said DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders.

Featured speakers at the conference include Dr. David Sanders and Tim Hetherington, a child welfare expert from Queensland, Australia. Several DCFS managers will lead workshops ranging from "Innovations Using SDM" to how SDM is used to make critical first decisions when an initial report of abuse or neglect comes in to the agency.

The Children's Research Center, based in Madison, Wis., sponsors the 6th National Structured Decision Making Conference. The Children's Research Center is a division of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. For more information on the conference or SDM, log on to www.nccd-crc.org.

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