

VERMONT COURT HEARING SDM® GUIDE

Purpose of This Document: This guide, organized by key hearings and judicial decisions, provides judicial officers with concise information and key questions they can use in considering and clarifying Vermont DCF Family Services Division (FSD) recommendations regarding children under its jurisdiction based on information that FSD staff should have from the relevant Structured Decision Making® (SDM) assessments.

COURT ORDER/HEARING	INFORMATION NEEDED	SDM ASSESSMENTS USED BY DCF FSD
<p>Petition; contents: 33 VSA § 5310</p> <p>Emergency care/conditional custody order: 33 VSA § 5305</p>	<p>What is the danger? How is child in need of care and supervision?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregiver behavior and impact on the child that met danger item threshold (concrete behavioral description, not labels/jargon). <p>VT SDM Policy & Procedures Manual VT SDM Danger Indicators</p>	<p>Safety assessment finding is <i>unsafe</i>.</p>
<p>Temporary care hearing: 33 VSA § 5307</p> <p>Temporary care order: 33 V.S.A. § 5308</p>	<p>What is the danger? How is child in need of care and supervision?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific caregiver behavior and impact on the child that met danger item threshold. What has been done/offered to mitigate the danger? Were reasonable efforts made to safety plan and prevent removal? 	<p>Safety assessment finding is <i>unsafe</i>.</p> <p>SDM safety plan ruled out or put in place?</p>
<p>Disposition case plan: 33 V.S.A. § 5316</p> <p>Disposition hearing: 33 VSA § 5317</p> <p>Disposition order: 33 V.S.A. § 5318</p> <p>Parent-child contact and contact with siblings and relatives: 33 V.S.A. § 5319</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the dangers that need to be addressed in the case plan? What actions of protection are present? What strengths can be built upon? What is the risk level for this household? How does that inform FSD involvement or service intensity? What are the behavior change goals for these caregivers? In what timeframes? How will child's needs be met while in care? What is the plan for family time (parent-child and sibling contact) and is it being followed? What kinds of actions, services, and supports are needed to support reunification? 	<p>No SDM tool in Vermont informs case planning.</p> <p>Risk assessment finding due at end of child safety intervention (CSI) to inform agency involvement and service intensity.</p> <p>Case plan goal should be identified and most often will be reunification.</p>
<p>Post-disposition review: 33 VSA § 5320</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress made toward case plan goals for behavior changes. Any new dangers discovered? Safety and support network development. Review of parent child contact (frequency and quality for each caregiver). 	<p>No SDM tool is required at this point in time; however, risk reassessment is done every 90 days for conditional custody order (CCO) cases, which informs continued service intensity.</p>
<p>Permanency hearing: 33 VSA § 5321</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has risk reduced; is family time acceptable; and are reunification efforts continuing or is return home now safe for the child? What is the reunification assessment recommendation? Does FSD agree with the recommendation? Why or why not? 	<p>Reunification assessment completed at least every six months (return home, continue services, or change goal).</p>