

**Safe Exchange and Supervised Visitation Program
Evaluation Design
Report Summary**

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Administrative Office of the Courts
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Overview

The purpose of the Safe Exchange and Supervised Visitation Program (SESV) program is to provide services to families in court-referred cases of domestic matters and domestic violence when, in the opinion of the Court, the best interests of the child are served if confrontation or contact between the parents is to be avoided during exchanges of custody or if contact between a parent and a child should be supervised. Protecting the child and victimized parent while preserving access is vital to the SESV program. Currently, twelve local programs deliver visitation and exchange services in eight judicial districts.

In February 2013, the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) contracted with Apex education to develop an evaluation design for the SESV program. The Apex team conducted interviews with three SESV sites to gain a better understanding of programmatic and evaluation needs and concerns and to assist in the development of the evaluation design. Based on discussions with AOC staff and with SESV court and provider staff, a logic model was developed depicting the SESV program. What follows is the proposed evaluation design based on the findings.

Proposed Evaluation Design

Rationale

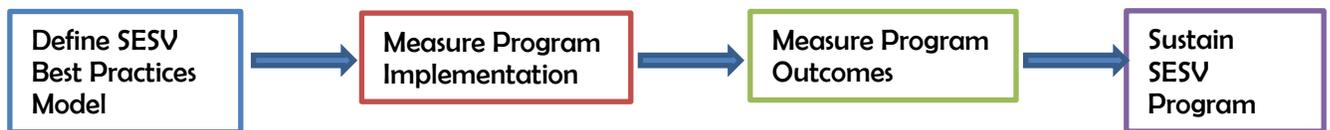
It is important to note that a program needs to have an agreed-upon design or model that lays out its goals and objectives, as well as their relationship to program activities. Without these elements, the program cannot be effectively assessed. A program model must be in place so that what is actually happening in the program can be compared to what the program was designed to achieve.

Based on interviews with AOC staff and a sample of SESV providers and District Court stakeholders, it became clear that the SESV program is not being implemented consistently across providers. Operational differences across providers included: how stakeholders perceive success; how providers and courts communicate with one another; how providers train their staff; and how client compliance is monitored. Although all stakeholders interviewed agreed that the program was a very valuable resource to their courts and community, there did not appear to be consensus on the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes of the SESV program and some of the stakeholders requested more guidance in program planning and opportunities to share practices with one another. Interview notes can be found in Appendix A.

In order to implement an evaluation strategy that has the greatest chances of being feasible and useful, there must be a shared understanding of the program and its essential components among program members and key stakeholders. This shared 'mental model' helps clearly define the vision and mission of the program and creates commonality of effort and purpose. Therefore, if the SESV providers are conducting a number of useful activities, but those activities are not clearly linked to common goals and objectives, then the first step in implementing an effective evaluation is to work with program providers to develop and more clearly define program best practices. This does not mean that every site must do everything

exactly the same way and standardized their implementation of the program; rather, to the extent that Districts agree to common measures of success, practices, and data forms, the easier it will be for AOC to provide oversight, technical assistance, and sustain best practices over time.

Based on the findings, the proposed evaluation design includes a multi-year program planning and evaluation effort with three distinct phases. These phases build upon one another, starting with program development in the first phase that allows a process and outcome evaluation in the following phases. Since the evaluation design, questions, methods, and activities for phase II and phase III are dependent on the findings of phase I, the evaluation design for these phases is generally defined, allowing for flexibility and greater usefulness. For phase I, more detailed information is provided in addition to possible evaluation questions to explore during this phase. It is estimate that each phase is approximately 12 months in duration. Ultimately, the evaluation is designed to more clearly define the SESV program in New Mexico which, in turn, allows for an effective evaluation that can provide evidence of effectiveness of the program and detailed information on the return on investment. This process will assist AOC in demonstrating the need, worth, and success of the SEV program and sustain best practices in the long-term.



Evaluation Phases

Phase I: Program planning and development: building a best practices program model through consensus

Building a best practices model will allow AOC to accurately assess the effectiveness of the SESV program and its return on investment. Consistent program goals, objectives, and components provide a blueprint of the program and convey the mission, goals, and objectives of the program being evaluated. Based on the review of existing program documentation and interviews with AOC and select stakeholders, a draft logic model was developed under the current contract. This logic model provides a map for phase I and shows the fundamental purpose of the SESV initiative, illustrates how the program activities lead to the expected short-term and long-term outcomes, and depicts the actions/causes expected to lead to the desired results. It can be found in Appendix B.

Review and synthesis of best and promising practices in SESV. A thorough research and review of the literature will help determine current and best practices occurring in other States. This includes a review of state programs as well as published research in the area of SESV. Specific activities would include an extensive literature search, data evaluation to determine which literature makes a significant contribution to the understanding of SESV, and analysis and interpretation of pertinent literature. Evaluation questions for this task include:

- ✚ What are the current best practices in this field?

- ✚ Which best practices are most relevant to the NM SESV program?

Facilitate meetings with SESV court staff and providers. Facilitated meetings will enable AOC to develop a best practices program model through consensus-building and stakeholder-driven strategic planning process. Ideally these meetings would occur at least on a quarterly basis and include both SESV Court and SESV provider key staff and stakeholders. The facilitator would work with stakeholders to create a common vision, goals, objectives, and outcomes for the project. The logic model, along with the results of the literature review can be used as a guide in the development of the SESV best practices model. Evaluation questions for this task include:

- ✚ What are the main goals and objectives of the NM SESV program?
- ✚ What are the activities that the SESV programs undertake to accomplish these goals?
- ✚ What are the critical components of the SESV program?
- ✚ What factors help or hinder the ability to accomplish these goals?
- ✚ How does the current implementation of the SESV program vary across sites?
- ✚ What are the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of the SESV program?

Revise logic model based on strategic planning results. The logic model is a living document and will become a common language and reference point for everyone involved in the SESV program and serve as the basis to determine whether planned actions are likely to lead to the desired results. The logic model can be used as a working document during the strategic planning meetings to help guide the refinement of the program model.

Revise and/or create standardized SESV program forms. For a program to be ready for evaluation, shared data collection tools are essential to ensure consistent measurement of core components of the model across all providers, regardless of their level of implementation. In Phase I, current forms and tools used by programs can be shared during the quarterly meetings and then revised as needed and adopted by all programs. Additionally, new forms, as needed, can be created during this phase for implementation in phase II. The evaluation team would guide these developments to ensure that their measurements are aligned with the program model.

Develop Best Practices Manual. This manual will complement the already-existing Court Standards and provide detailed implementation information including: core components of model, strategies for implementing these components, training and other resources to improve in each component, quality improvement processes, etc. Additionally, a fidelity tool will accompany this manual so that programs can assess where they are in the implementation of the model and continue to re-assess to determine improvement and growth over time.

Write Final Report. A final report will be prepared that will include Recommendations for process and outcome evaluation activities for Phase II and Phase III based on findings in Phase I.

Phase II: Process Evaluation

After Phase I, a process evaluation can be implemented in the second and third phases. The process evaluation will document and analyze the actual implementation of the SESV program across all sites. A thorough process evaluation should include:

- ✚ Description of each program's environment
- ✚ Description of the process used to implement the program
- ✚ Description of the program operations, including any changes in the program
- ✚ Identification and description of intervening events that may affect implementation
- ✚ Documentation such as meeting minutes, reports, and forms

Through the use of the fidelity tool, the evaluation during this phase should assess what model components are being implemented and whether expected output is produced. This, in turn, will assist AOC in providing focused technical assistance to programs to address any challenges they may be having in implementing the model. Additionally, it will provide a baseline of performance for each program so that improvement in implementing the program model can be tracked over time. To summarize, the key activities for this phase include:

- ✚ Fidelity assessment of model implementation at each site
- ✚ Interviews with sample of SESV clients
- ✚ Develop data collection instruments for phase III outcome evaluation
- ✚ Write report of findings that includes recommendations for Phase III evaluation activities

Phase III: Process and Outcome Evaluation

Phase III will continue to include a process evaluation and will be the commencement of the outcome evaluation. The outcome evaluation in Phase III involves developing and analyzing data to assess program impact and effectiveness. With the outcome evaluation, the logical sequence from program activities, to program processes, to program outcomes is made for the SESV program. As previously mentioned, this sort of analysis cannot be effectively attempted without the antecedent of program development and process evaluation. The design of the outcome evaluation will be based on findings in Phase I and Phase II and, therefore, be closely aligned to the best practices manual and program logic model. Key activities for this phase will likely include:

- ✚ Develop process and outcome evaluation plan, including key evaluation questions, evaluation design, and management plan
- ✚ Continue to develop and refine data collection instruments and protocol for data collection
- ✚ Implement evaluation measures at each site
- ✚ Write report of findings