1.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO SERT

This manual serves three purposes:

1. It provides an overview of the "Serious Event Review Team" (SERT) system and its role in the Department of Human Services Seniors and People with Disabilities (SPD) strategy for managing quality in services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

2. It serves as a technical reference for SERT system users who:
   - Decide which incidents must be tracked through SERT processes; or
   - Enter and update information about these incidents in the statewide SERT database.

3. It offers guidance for system users who analyze serious event data for trends and patterns in order to make decisions and act to improve the health and welfare of individuals in developmental disability services.

The manual assumes most users are staff of Community Developmental Disability Programs (CDDPs). Instructions referencing CDDPs also apply to SPD Children's Residential Services and any other program that provides individual service coordination and, by rule or policy, is responsible for incident review and tracking through the SERT system.

Common abbreviations in this manual include:

CDDP: Community Developmental Disability Program, an entity responsible for planning and delivery of services for persons with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities in a specific geographic area of the state under a contract with DHS or a local mental health authority. This term is used interchangeably with "County" in this manual and replaces any reference to "CMHP"— Community Mental Health Program---in the online SERT screens.

CPMS: Client Process Monitoring System

CRS: Children's Residential Services (SPD)

DA: District Attorney

DD: Developmental Disability

DHS: Department of Human Services, an organizational unit within Oregon government responsible for health and human services

DOB: Date of Birth

ISP: Individual Support Plan, the written details of the supports, activities and resources required for an individual with developmental disabilities to achieve personal goals

OAR: Oregon Administrative Rule

OIT: Office of Investigations and Training (DHS)

PSI: Protective Services Investigation

SERT: Serious Event Review Team

SPD: Seniors and People with Disabilities, an organizational unit within DHS that focuses on the planning of services, policy development and regulation of programs for persons that have developmental disabilities

1.1 SERT Background

Oregon's developmental disability service providers have long been required to report unusual incidents involving service recipients. Providers submit these reports to CDDPs or other agencies responsible for individual service coordination. CDDPs also receive, review, and follow up reports of incidents involving individuals with developmental disabilities outside of provider settings---at home or in other community settings.
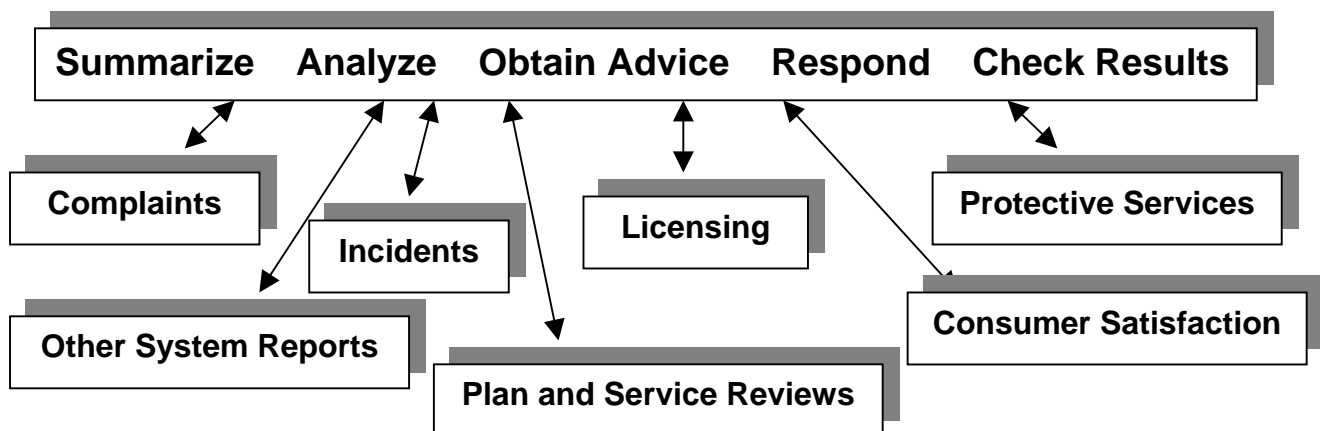
By early 2000, it was evident to SPD that aggregation of statewide information to identify and prevent system problems was growing more difficult and labor intensive as each CDDP developed procedures for incident reporting and response. SPD addressed this problem by developing a standardized statewide process for recording and tracking incidents using a web-based application. Additionally, from among all types of unusual incidents, SPD identified a few more critical than others to evaluating and predicting health and safety of individuals in DD services.

Incidents in this subset became the "serious events" subject to standardized web-based reporting and the focus of regular analysis by state and local review teams. The resulting Serious Event Review Team (SERT) system now provides:

- Centralized reporting of serious events, including initial allegations of abuse;
- A linked, computerized method in which to report serious events;
- A standardized format for tracking and documenting CDDP and SPD actions and outcomes;
- A longitudinal database from which to analyze state and local trends; and
- Integration and review of serious events and significant licensing issues at both state and local levels.

SPD and CDDPs use SERT information to improve overall service quality as well as to respond promptly and effectively to specific individual problems.   SERT also helps fulfill DHS' obligation to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)---a federal agency funding the majority of SPD's community services for people with developmental disabilities through its Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver program---to have a quality management strategy for assuring service participants are healthy and safe.

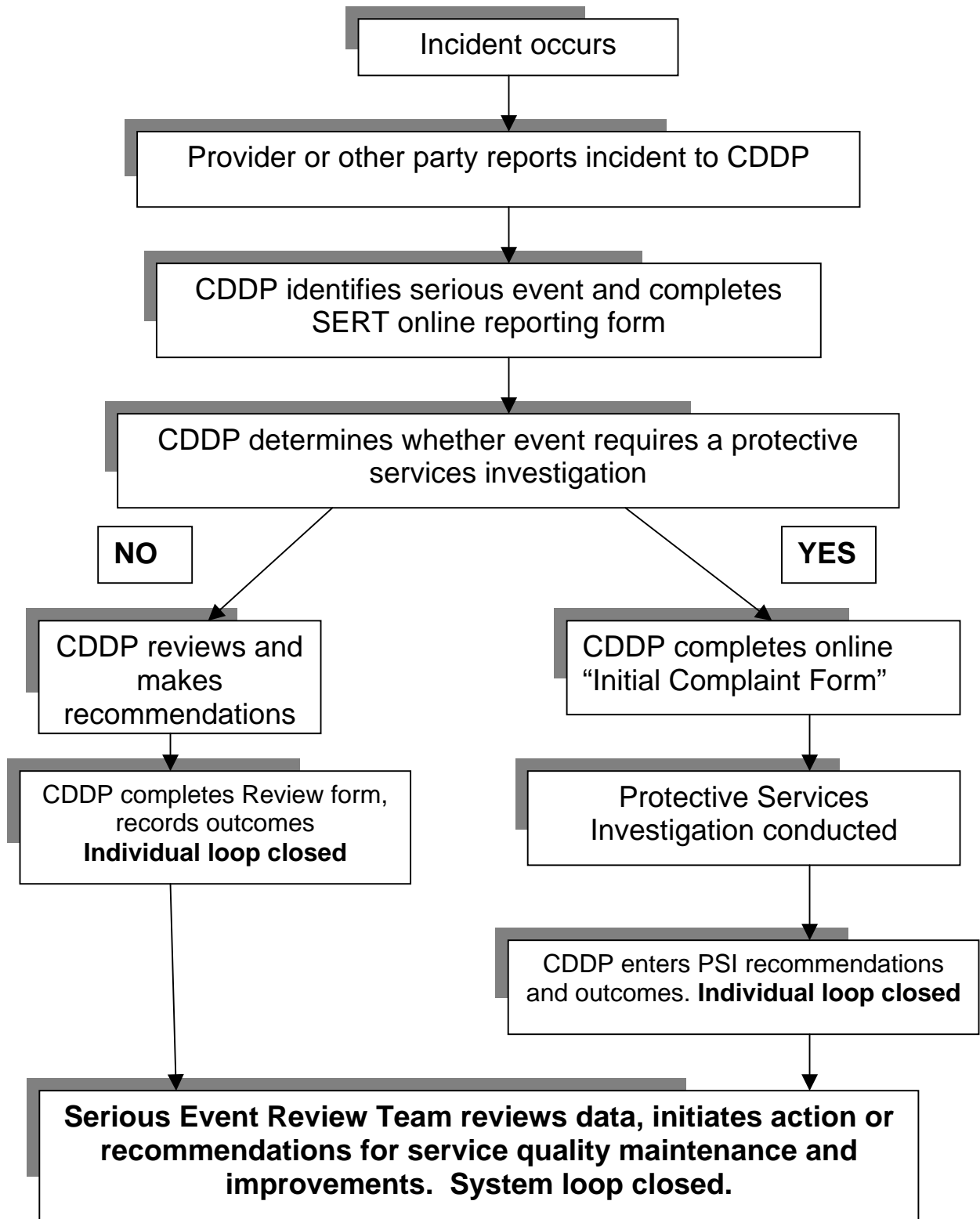**Figure 1.1**: **SPD Quality Management Activities**

1.2 SERT Processes

SERT involves several processes. Some are directly related to operating SERT and are discussed in detail in sections of this manual. Other processes are only addressed in this manual to the extent they interface with SERT. (For example, the manual discusses entry of information related to protective services investigations, but does not provide detailed instruction about what constitutes abuse, how to conduct an investigation, or how to write a report. CDDPs must consult with trained local investigators and the Office of Investigations and Training (OIT) to remain current on abuse identification and associated procedures.) Together, these typical SERT processes serve to "close the loop" on individual serious events as well as on health and safety concerns about the settings in which those events occur:

- Receiving reports from service providers and community members (e.g., friends or neighbors of people with developmental disabilities).

- Evaluating each report to determine whether it meets the definition of a serious event. (Section 2)

- Determining whether a serious event requires a protective services response, including investigation. (Section 2)

- Conducting protective services investigations (PSIs). (PSIs may be conducted by CDDP investigative staff; OIT, local law enforcement, Medicaid Fraud Unit, or DHS Child Welfare, depending on age of the individual, type of incident, and services involved.)

- Entering and updating information about serious events, recommendations, and outcomes using the online database. (Section 3 and 4)

- Reviewing, analyzing, and following-up serious events and program licensing/certification issues in local meetings. (Section 5)

- Reporting analysis and follow-up to SPD.   Following each monthly meeting, CDDP SERT Teams send a report to the State SERT Team summarizing local review, analysis and follow-up. (Section 6)

Figure 1.2: Typical SERT Processes

Incident occurs

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Provider or other party reports incident to CDDP

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CDDP identifies serious event and completes SERT online reporting form

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CDDP determines whether event requires a protective services investigation

NO ↙　　　　↘ **YES**

NO:
CDDP reviews and makes recommendations

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CDDP completes Review form, records outcomes **Individual loop closed**

YES:
CDDP completes online "Initial Complaint Form"

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Protective Services Investigation conducted

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CDDP enters PSI recommendations and outcomes. **Individual loop closed**

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Serious Event Review Team reviews data, initiates action or recommendations for service quality maintenance and improvements. System loop closed.

1.3 SERT Roles and Responsibilities – CDDP

This list represents typical local assignment of the roles and responsibilities essential for SERT to operate effectively. Actual staff titles and assignments vary among CDDPs.   SPD Children's Residential Services (CRS) personnel generally assume these roles and responsibilities for serious events involving children in CRS homes and proctor care settings.

1.3.1 SERT Team Coordinator

- Coordinate monthly SERT review, ensuring the review addresses incident analysis, follow-up, and close-out activities as well as SPD licensing information
- Coordinate review and analysis of data for trends
- Submit Monthly CDDP SERT Review to SPD

1.3.2 Service Coordinator

- Receive incident reports from service providers and others
- Screen reports to determine whether criteria for serious events are met
- Make sure serious events involving individuals on caseload are entered into the web-based SERT database
- Make sure serious events are either reviewed and appropriately resolved or are moved forward into a PSI process
- Make sure individual is protected from harm while investigation is conducted
- Per local procedures, determine and document actions taken based on recommendations and outcomes of county reviews and protective services investigations

1.3.3 Protective Service Investigator

- Receive notice of serious events involving allegations of abuse
- Make sure OIT is notified when PSIs are initiated, completed, or re-assigned to "county review" status
- Initiate investigation process
- Refer investigation to, or collaborate with, other investigative agencies as appropriate

- Notify local law enforcement if there is reason to believe the incident involved a crime
- Notify the local medical examiner in the event of death possibly caused by abuse
- Consult with OIT in cases involving potential conflict of interest or in complex cases requiring special assistance
- Provide information to OIT on request
- Enter outcome of the investigation into the SERT System or forward information to CDDP personnel responsible for entry into the system

1.3.4 Data Entry Support Staff

- Enter initial information about serious events into the web-based SERT database according to timelines specified in this manual
- Update and complete serious event information in the web-based database as follow-up activities and investigations are completed

Note: Data Entry Support Staff are encouraged to review SERT records for completeness and to remind Service Coordinators and Protective Service Investigators to provide updated information necessary to "close out" any incomplete reports.

1.4 SERT Roles and Responsibilities – SPD

1.4.1 Quality Assurance/SERT Coordinator

- Convene SPD SERT group
- Coordinate SPD review of, and response to, information from SERT about service quality throughout the state
- Monitor local SERT implementation
- Provide or coordinate training and technical assistance to improve local implementation of SERT

1.4.2 SERT Data/Technical Coordinator

- Develop inquiries and reports for SPD SERT meetings
- Maintain SERT web-based reporting system
- Provide technical assistance with login difficulties, error messages, and other SERT site issues

1.4.4 SPD Regional Coordinator

- Periodically review monthly reports CDDPs in region
- Inform SPD SERT of regional concerns, including trends noted across counties, providers, and services
- Participate in SPD SERT analysis of, and response to, serious events in region

1.4.5 SPD Licensing and Quality of Care

- Enter reports of significant licensing problems---including significant health, safety and rights concerns---into SERT
- Review provider plans of improvement and follow-up

1.4.6 SPD Medical Director

- Review death reports
- May initiate death reviews by SPD Central Office staff
- Work with OIT to investigate deaths related to medical problems

1.4.7 Children's Residential Services (CRS) SERT Coordinator

- Assure CRS staff complete initial and updated online SERT entries relating to children in SPD direct-contracted children's 24-Hour Residential and Proctor Care programs
- Coordinate review of serious events relating to children in SPD direct-contracted children's 24-Hour Residential and Proctor Care programs
- May participate in local SERT discussions of common provider and service issues

1.5 SERT Roles and Responsibilities – Other Agencies

1.5.1 Office of Investigations and Training (OIT)

- Oversee implementation of abuse reporting and protective services statute
- Conduct PSIs for certain programs (e.g. State Operated Program) and either assist with or conduct local PSIs as needed
- Provide investigation outcome information for CDDP SERT entry

- Provide training and technical assistance for CDDPs related to mandatory reporting and investigation
- Use **read-only access to SERT** to review CDDP entries
- Maintain a database which includes every allegation of abuse reported to OIT, including alleged victims, alleged perpetrators, and investigation outcomes
- Collaborate with SPD in: 1) aggregating and analyzing data related to serious events and PSIs and 2) quality assurance and improvement activities conducted in response to data reviews

1.5.2 DHS Child Welfare
- Responsible to receive and screen reports of suspected child abuse and to cross-report to law enforcement
- Responsible, with law enforcement, for investigating allegations of abuse involving children
- **Does not have access to SERT**. CDDP SERT entries note referral for investigation in cases where there is reason to suspect abuse or neglect of children with DD
- May collaborate with CDDP or OIT in response to/ investigation of allegations involving children with DD
- May inform CDDP about outcome and recommendations from protective services investigations involving children with DD

1.5.3 Local District Attorney (DA) or Law Enforcement Agency (LEA)

- Responsible for investigating criminal allegations
- **Does not have access to SERT**. CDDP SERT entries note referral for investigation in cases involving individuals with DD where there is reason to suspect a crime has occurred
- May collaborate with CDDP or OIT in response to/investigation of serious events where there is reason to suspect a crime has occurred
- May inform CDDP about outcome of criminal investigations