



"We coordinate because babies can't wait!"

EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT TEAM PROGRAM FACT SHEET

WHAT IS THE ILLINOIS EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT TEAM PROGRAM?

The Illinois Early Childhood Court Team (ECCT) program is designed to support families that have infants or toddlers under the age of 4 and are currently involved in child welfare services in Illinois.

During this time infants and toddlers build the foundation for:

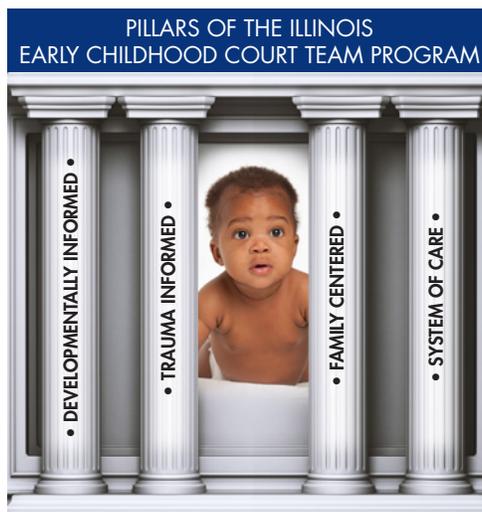
- Learning, being curious and exploring the world which builds self-esteem to foster success in school;
- Being able to experience, manage, and express their behavior, feelings and emotions. This enables children to handle stress and new challenges;
- Form close and strong relationships with adults and peers
- Healthy physical growth and development
- Develop language to communicate and interact with his or her world

Model Components & Beginning Implementation Considerations:

- Judicial Leadership
- Coordinators: Community Practice coordinators support the work of the court team model by facilitating coordination and collaboration.
- Child-focused Services
- Collaborative Court Teams
- Placement and Concurrent Planning
- Monthly Child and Family Meetings
- Parent-Child Contact (visitation)
- Continuum of Mental Health Services
- Rigorous Evaluation

Goals:

- Increase awareness among all those who work with infants and toddlers that experience abuse and neglect about the impact of trauma on very young children;
- Change local systems to improve outcomes and prevent future court involvement in the lives of very young children, by exposing and addressing the structural issues in the system that prevent families from succeeding. [Source: Zero to Three, 2014].
- Improve collaborative problem solving and case coordination to enhance safety, well-being and permanence for young children in Illinois.



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BENEFITS OF COURT TEAMS

Safe Babies Court Teams Project has been able to achieve positive outcomes for young children while effecting broader systems change. Major findings from ZERO TO THREE's Safe Babies Court Teams national evaluations by James Bell & Associates (2009) reflect the following:

Safety

99.05% of the 186 infant and toddler cases examined were protected from further maltreatment while under court supervision (JBA, 2009).

Permanency

Children monitored by the Safe Babies Court Teams Project reached permanency 3 times faster than the national comparison group (McCombs-Thornton, 2011). The primary permanency outcome was reunification [46.5%] (JBA, 2009). In that same evaluation, 30.6% were in guardianship with relatives. Slightly under 14% [13.6%] were adopted.

Well-Being

97% of the children and their families received needed services and had made substantial progress in identified intervention goals. Due to the rapid changes in development, intensive monitoring of the children was needed to identify emerging needs and occurred for families participating in court teams. (JBA, 2009).

IN THE ECCT PROGRAM:

- Parents will work with a specially trained team led by a caseworker that will assist them in accessing high quality services;
- Parents will also be assigned a community practice coordinator who will work with them and their caseworker to find resources to help parents strengthen their family;
- Parents will have frequent opportunities for family time, so that they may stay connected to their child;
- Parents will have frequent hearings with the Judge and the ECCT Team to review their progress and discuss concerns that may hinder case progress;
- Parents will have monthly child and family team meetings to identify their needs, improve communication between the team members, and support their progress in achieving permanency;
- Parents will work with attorneys that will protect them and their children, while keeping in mind that the first 1,000 days of their child's life, is the most critical window of time to support the development a healthy brain.

A PARENT THAT PARTICIPATES IN THE ECCT PROGRAM CAN EXPECT:

- More opportunities to be involved, increase family time, and to support their relationship with the child;
- Coordination and a team approach to address the goals that are outlined in their service plan with dignity which enhances the likelihood for success;
- High quality services to give them the best support and opportunities for success;
- Frequent communication and transparency;
- Every effort to include people that they identify as a support, who will help them to deal with the stresses that can come from working with courts and systems;
- Understanding and support for the things in their lives that brought them to the ECCT program;
- Frequent meetings in and out of the courtroom that help support their progress and address issues that may come up, so the team can strengthen and support the family;
- Concurrent planning to make every effort to give children a forever home.

