



# Building Strong Families and Healthy Communities: The Safe Babies Court Teams Project

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# Today's Facilitator



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# Webinar Overview



- **Developmental tasks of early childhood**
- **The impact of maltreatment on development**
- **How child welfare personnel, judges, lawyers, children's advocates, and service providers can work together**

# ZERO TO THREE's Mission



To help professionals, policy makers and parents promote the healthy development of infants and toddlers.

## Learning to be a parent

- Parents learn how to be parents from their own experience of childhood.
- In a 2010 ZERO TO THREE survey, over 80% of parents of infants and toddlers reported their parents as important influences on their parenting.



## Lack of accurate information

Popular misconceptions about early development:

- Their ability to experience sadness and fear
- When they can be affected by their parents' moods
- How early in life they are capable of feeling good or bad about themselves
- When it is appropriate to expect them to control their emotions

# 2010 ZERO TO THREE survey results



At what age are babies first able to experience sadness and fear?

This and other findings can be found at:

[http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/parenting-resources/keyfindings\\_hr.pdf](http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/parenting-resources/keyfindings_hr.pdf)

# 2010 ZERO TO THREE survey results

How old are babies when they can first be affected by their parents' moods?



# 2010 ZERO TO THREE survey results



At what age is it appropriate to expect young children to control their emotions?

# Early Experiences Matter



We are all a product of our earliest experiences.

## Caregiving:

♥ Nurturing

♥ Safe

♥ Predictable

# Factors Influencing Child Development



## ☐ Health

- Prenatal Care
- Maternal Health
- Child Health

## ☐ Relationships

- Child ↔ Parent
- Attachment

# Attachment: the key to the future

## Secure



## Insecure:

-  Anxious-ambivalent
-  Anxious-avoidant
-  Disorganized

# Brains Develop Early

- **Significant developmental processes occur before birth, when the quality of prenatal care, environmental influences, and maternal stress can impact the brain's development.**
- **After birth, during the first years of life, a baby's brain develops basic thinking and reasoning capacities, and the brain regions governing planning, self-control, and emotion actually develop rapidly.**
- **The pattern of brain development incorporates experiences – both the typical human experiences (such as sight, sound, language, and movement in gravity) and individual experiences (e.g., nurturing or in some cases abusive care) – each of which shape the brain's development by strengthening certain neural pathways, while allowing others to erode if not used...**
- **So the influence of early experiences present a double-edged sword-- Those early experiences can either help to create a sturdy foundation for later learning and behavior or delays in learning and be more difficult to rewire later in life.**
- **These neural connections formed in the earliest years of life lay important foundations for all of development – not just learning!**
- **The old debate over "nature vs. nurture" is now dead. We now know nature and nurture work hand in hand to guide future development.**
- **When early experiences fail to support an infant's desire to learn, grow, and succeed, a child's motivation diminishes and problems begin to emerge.**
- **And who is it that's most important in the lives of babies?**

# A Continuum of Trauma

Normative, Developmentally  
Appropriate Stress

**Emotionally  
Costly Stress**

**Traumatic Stress**



# PET Scan: Normal vs. Abused Brain

The effects of traumatic stress are literally incorporated into the brain's developing architecture. The PET scan (shown during the training) graphically compares the brain of a healthy child with that of a Romanian orphan who was institutionalized shortly after birth.

The healthy child's brain shows regions like the temporal lobes at the top where there is high activity in red. Positive Early childhood experiences wire the circuits in these areas.

The abused brain of the Romanian orphan shows very little red in the temporal lobes, demonstrating very low activity. These areas regulate emotions and receive input from the senses.

1. smaller brain volume,
2. larger fluid-filled cavities, and
3. smaller areas of connection

These striking differences manifest in other ways too—chronically elevated levels of stress hormones, lower levels of cortisol (mood enhancing neurotransmitter), and anatomical differences in brain structures related to memory and planning. Such children suffer emotional and cognitive problems. The severity of findings is correlated with the duration of the trauma.

## Do infants have “mental health”?

**Infant mental health = social-emotional development**

**Defined as the developing capacity of the child to:**

- Experience, regulate and express emotion
- Form close and secure relationships
- Explore the environment and learn

**Within the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.**

# Mental Health Warning Signs in Infants

## Re-experiencing trauma

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Unprovoked aggression
- Prolonged tantrums
- Staring into space

## Increased arousal

- Attention problems
- Hyper vigilance
- Sleeping problems

## Prolonged grief

- Crying, calling, searching
- Lethargy
- Disruption of biological rhythms
- Developmental regression
- Detachment
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anti-social behavior

## Numbing

- Social withdrawal
- Regression/Loss of milestones

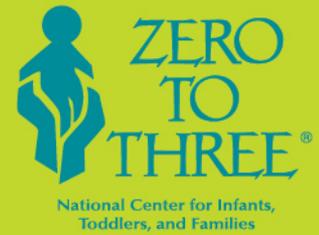
- **Maltreatment and exposure to violence affect:**
  - Brain development
  - The immune system
  - Emotional regulation
  - Attachment and other relationships
  - Ability to learn

# Trauma for infants and toddlers in foster care

- Difficult experiences precipitating placement
- Separation from parents, usually sudden and traumatic
- Placement with a series of caregivers
- Very little contact with parents after placement

**Frequently leads to temporary or permanent impairment in all areas of development**

# Early Experiences Matter



Parents were children once, too.

## Co-occurrence of:

- Child maltreatment
- Poverty
- Substance abuse
- Mental health disorder(s)
- Domestic violence
- Unresolved trauma
- Racial/ethnic prejudice
- Historical trauma



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Recurrent abuse (physical or emotional)
- Contact sexual abuse
- Neglect (emotional or physical)
- An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household
- An incarcerated household member
- A member of the household who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal
- Mother is treated violently
- One or no parents

**For more information, go to [www.acestudy.org](http://www.acestudy.org)**

# Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire



## While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? **Or** Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? **Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? **Or Ever** hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever**...Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? **Or** Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? **Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you **often or very often** feel that ...No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? **Or** Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? **Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you **often or very often** feel that ...You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? **Or** Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

7. Was your mother or stepmother: **Often or very often** pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? **Or Sometimes, often, or very often** kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? **Or Ever** repeatedly hit at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did a household member go to prison?

**Yes/No: If yes enter 1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Now add up your "Yes" answers:**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **This is your ACE Score.**

# Overview of ACE Study Findings

- Many people experience harsh events in their childhood.
- 63% of the people who participated in the study had experienced at least one category of childhood trauma.
- Over 20% experienced 3 or more categories of trauma which we call Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- 11% experienced emotional abuse.
- 28% experienced physical abuse.
- 21% experienced sexual abuse.
- 15% experienced emotional neglect.
- 10% experienced physical neglect.
- 13% witnessed their mothers being treated violently.
- 27% grew up with someone in the household using alcohol and/or drugs.
- 19% grew up with a mentally-ill person in the household.
- 23% lost a parent due to separation or divorce.
- 5% grew up with a household member in jail or prison.



## Adverse Childhood Experiences Linked to:

- Teen pregnancy
- Sexual behavior
- Alcoholism
- Stability of relationships
- Risk of revictimization
- Mental health
- Suicide attempts



**The more troubling the childhood, the greater the number and severity of medical and psychological conditions in adulthood.**

# Time does not heal all wounds

## Adverse Childhood Experiences:

- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Domestic violence against the mother
- Household member with mental illness
- Household member with substance abuse
- Household member ever imprisoned
- Absence of one or both parents
- Physical or emotional neglect

➤ **Correlate with a wide range of adult health problems: hepatitis, heart disease, fractures, diabetes, obesity, alcoholism**

➤ ***Predict the 10 leading causes of adult death and disability***

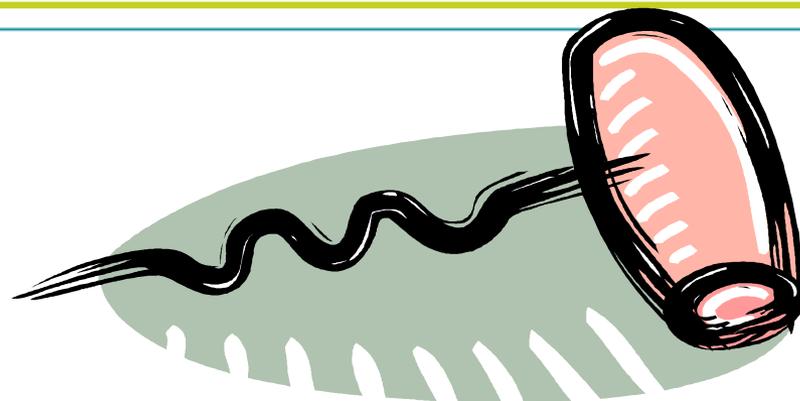
## Child Sexual Abuse is associated with...

- ❑ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- ❑ Suicidal behavior
- ❑ Depression
- ❑ Low self esteem
- ❑ Phobias

- Paranoid thoughts
- Substance abuse
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Eating disorders
- **Teen parenting**

## Parents with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

- **Function at a much younger age level than chronological age**
- **Difficulty planning, organizing, prioritizing, initiating and following through**
- **Difficulty learning from past experiences**
- **Impaired judgment**
- **Poor receptive language skills**
- **Difficulty switching gears**
- **Impulse control issues are demonstrated in episodes of rage and in promiscuity.**



- **Unable to predict outcomes**
- **Short trigger**
- **Starting with delinquent acts as adolescents, they continue pattern of minor crimes. Repeated offending escalates the legal consequences of their actions.**
- **They abuse drugs and alcohol.**

# Does this parent exhibit these signs of FASD?

- Seem disorganized?
- Have trouble following through on plans or keeping appointments?
- Repeat the same mistake over and over?
- Quickly forget things you told them recently?
- Take personal risks that could put them or their child in danger?
- Seem very eager to please you to the point where they provide incorrect information if they think that's what you want to hear?
- Spend a long time thinking before answering questions?
- Display discomfort (tears, anger, frustration) when transitioning from one activity or routine to another?
- Exhibit behavior you typically associate with a much younger person?
- Have trouble getting and keeping jobs?
- Act impulsively?
- Have a history of delinquent or criminal behavior without much ability to explain what they did wrong?
- Seem stubborn?
- Misread social cues?
- Have problems with depression or isolation?
- Drink or use drugs?
- Demonstrate an inability to manage money?

**Significant  
childhood  
trauma →**



**→ Substance abuse**

**→ Domestic violence**

**→ Depression**

**Many of the parents whose children enter foster care are very damaged by their experiences in life.**

## System Collaboration: Safe Babies Court Teams

# Abuse and Neglect of Infants and Toddlers

- **One in 50 U.S. infants experiences non-fatal abuse or neglect during their first year; one-third of that maltreatment occurs during the first week of life**
- **76% of all child maltreatment fatalities**
- **Children under four = 1/3 of all children entering foster care**
- **33% return to placement**
- **Approximately 42% are developmentally delayed, many so delayed that pediatricians consider them developmentally impaired**
- **Almost 80% have prenatal exposure to maternal alcohol and/or drugs**

**Leading economists such as Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Laureate and Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, have done extensive research on the value of investing in early childhood programs and have found that dollars invested early in a child's life yield extraordinary public returns. In fact, research has shown that for every dollar invested in early childhood programs, savings of \$3.78 to \$17.07 can be expected.<sup>[i]</sup>**

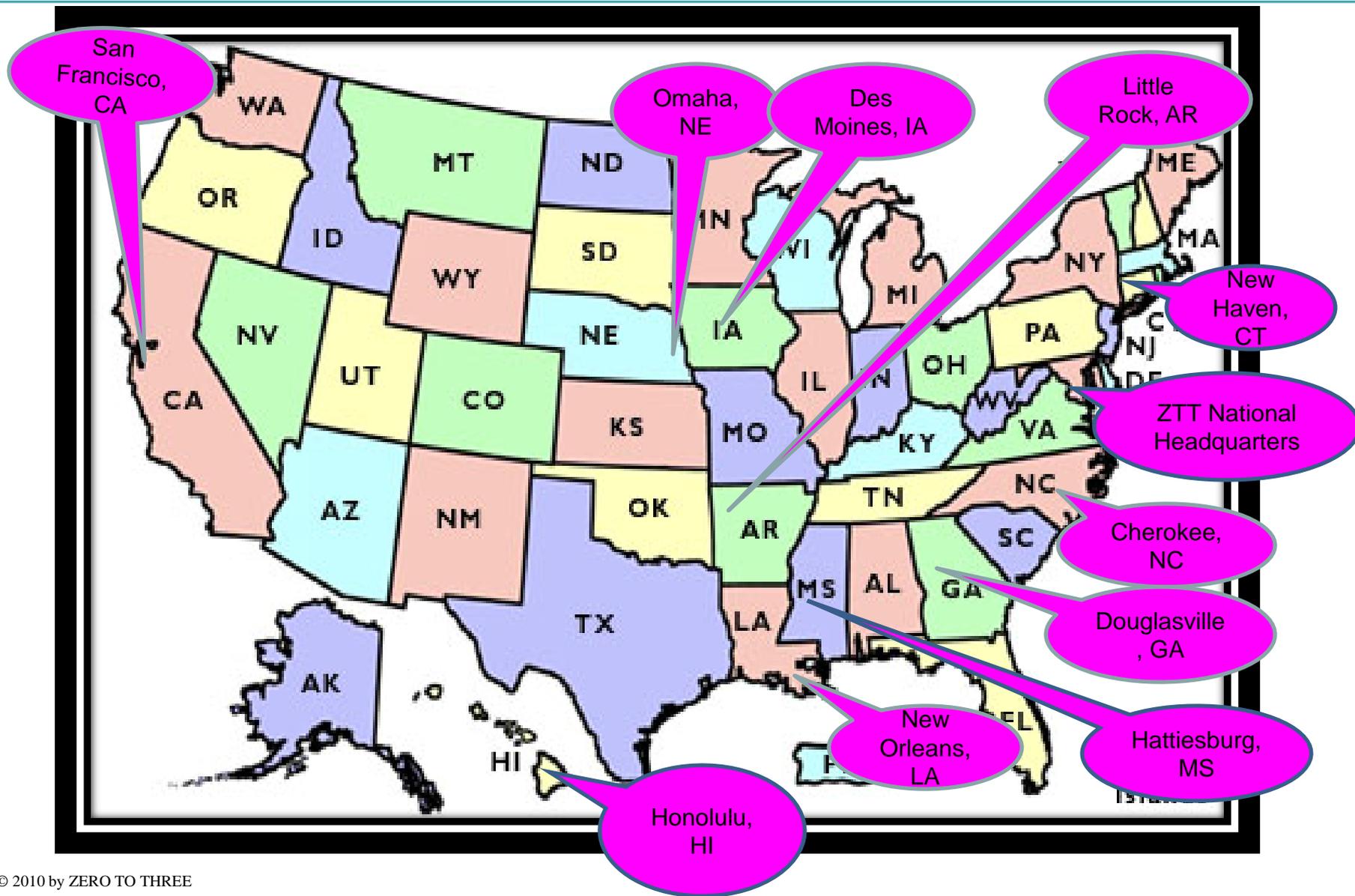
<sup>[i]</sup> Heckman, James, Grunewald, Rob, and Reynolds, Arthur. 2006. The dollars and cents of investing early: Cost-benefit analysis in early care and education. *ZERO TO THREE Journal* 26 (6): 10-17.

# Benefits of Early Investments

- **Reductions in:**
- **juvenile and adult crimes**
- **cases of abuse and neglect**
- **domestic violence**
- **welfare dependency**
- **special education, grade retention, and remediation services**
  
- **Increases in:**
- **children's cognitive and social-emotional development**
- **educational performance and graduation rates**
- **parental involvement**
- **job training and earnings**

**Help maltreated infants and toddlers reach safe, loving, permanent homes quickly.**

# Where we can be found...

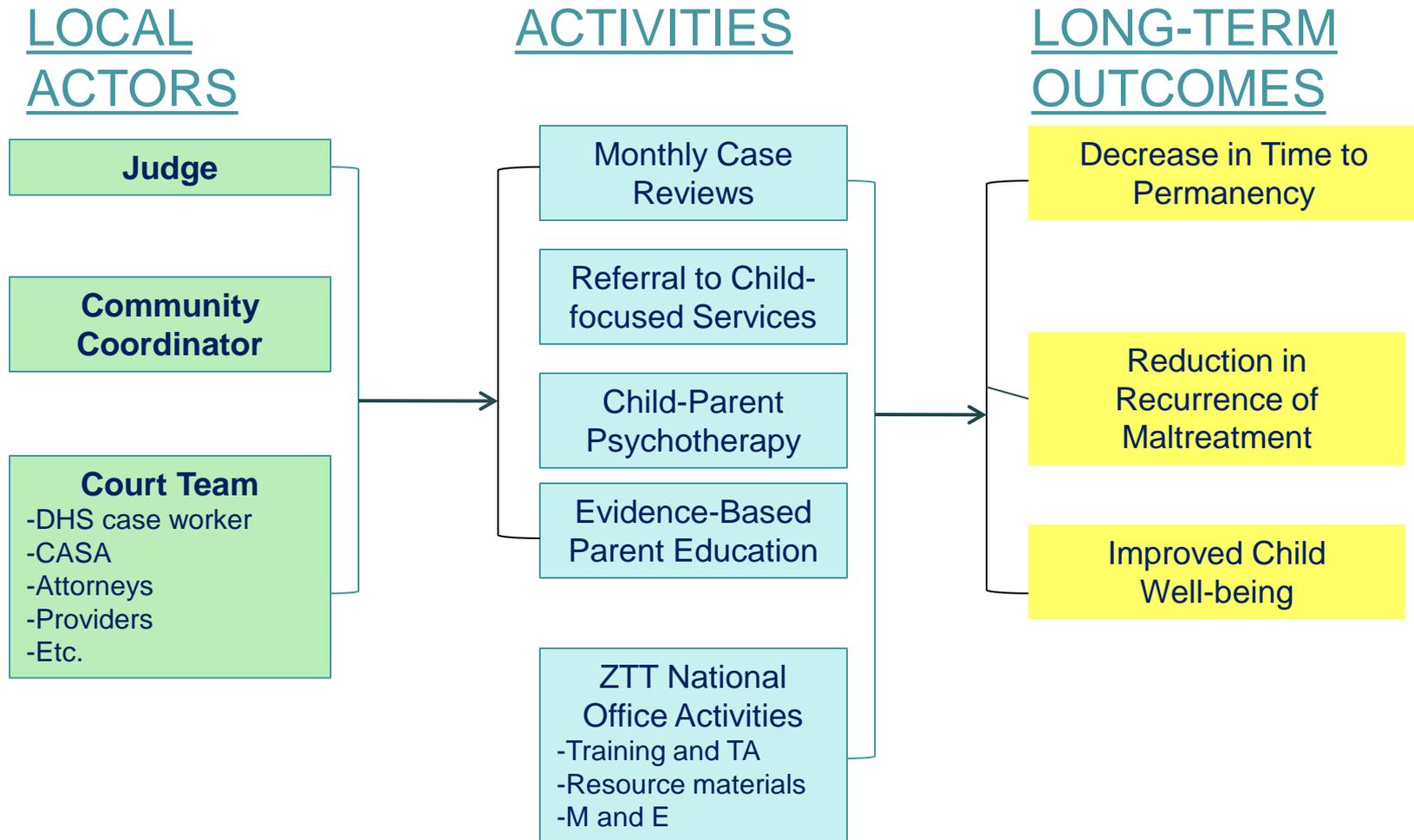


# The Court Team Strategy-Putting it all Together



# Safe Babies Court Teams Project

**TARGET GROUP: CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE BEFORE AGE 3**



*Core Components*

# Court Team Community Partners

## **Leadership provided by:**

- **Juvenile/Family Court Judge**
- **ZERO TO THREE Community Coordinator**
- **Child Protective Services**

## **Members include:**

- **Court Appointed Special Advocates**
- **Health care providers**
- **Mental health clinicians**
- **Substance abuse treatment**
- **County attorneys**
- **Private attorneys**
- **Early interventionists**
- **Foster parents**
- **Faith community**
- **Community foundations**
- **Early childhood community**
- **Parenting education programs**
- **Private foster care agencies**

## Critical concepts

- **Importance of stable caregiving relationships**
- **Making the first placement the last placement**
- **Focus on concurrent planning**
- **Frequent parent-child contact**
- **Building on parental strengths,**
- **supporting areas of need**

## Increasing placement stability

### **Des Moines Court Team pre-removal conferences:**

- **Child welfare agency facilitator**
- **Parents**
- **Friends and family members**

**who parents invite**

- **Investigative worker**
- **Parent mentor**

**(someone who has experienced the system and “graduated”)**

- **Visiting nurse**
- **Income maintenance worker**

## Ways to support visits:

- **Placement of child and parent together**
- **Expanded list of visit supervisors**
- **Community resources for visits**
- **Transportation assistance**

## Addressing developmental delays

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Amendments to the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) in 2003 and 2010: all children under age three who are involved in a substantiated incident of abuse or neglect are referred to Part C services.

The IDEA amendments of 2004 require Part C services for all children who have been maltreated or exposed to prenatal substance use or domestic violence.



# Increased and expedited services for young children with developmental delays

- Family training, counseling, and home visits
- Nursing, health, and nutrition services
- Service coordination
- Medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes
- Occupational and physical therapy
- Psychological and social work services
- Vision, orientation and mobility services
- Speech-language pathology services
- Transportation services
- Age-appropriate special education instruction



## Court Teams Evaluation Results

- 97% of the identified service needs met
- Timely permanency
- Increased parent-child contact (twice weekly or more)
- More than two-thirds remained in 1 or 2 placements
- 99.05% protected from further maltreatment

(Hafford, McDonnell, Kass, DeSantis, & Dong, 2009)

# Court Team Children Exit Foster Care Faster

Type of Exit from Foster Care		ZTT (n=298)	NSCAW (n=511)	
Reunification	Median	309	547	
	Mean	340	587	8 months faster on average
Adoption	Median	464	764	
	Mean	496	800	10 months faster on average
Relative custodian	Median	351	450	
	Mean	363	487	3-4 months faster on average
Non-relative guardian	Median	481	878	
	Mean	467	780	10-13 months faster on average

*Patterns hold using propensity scores in a competing risks analysis*

## Judicial leadership

**+ Community partners =**

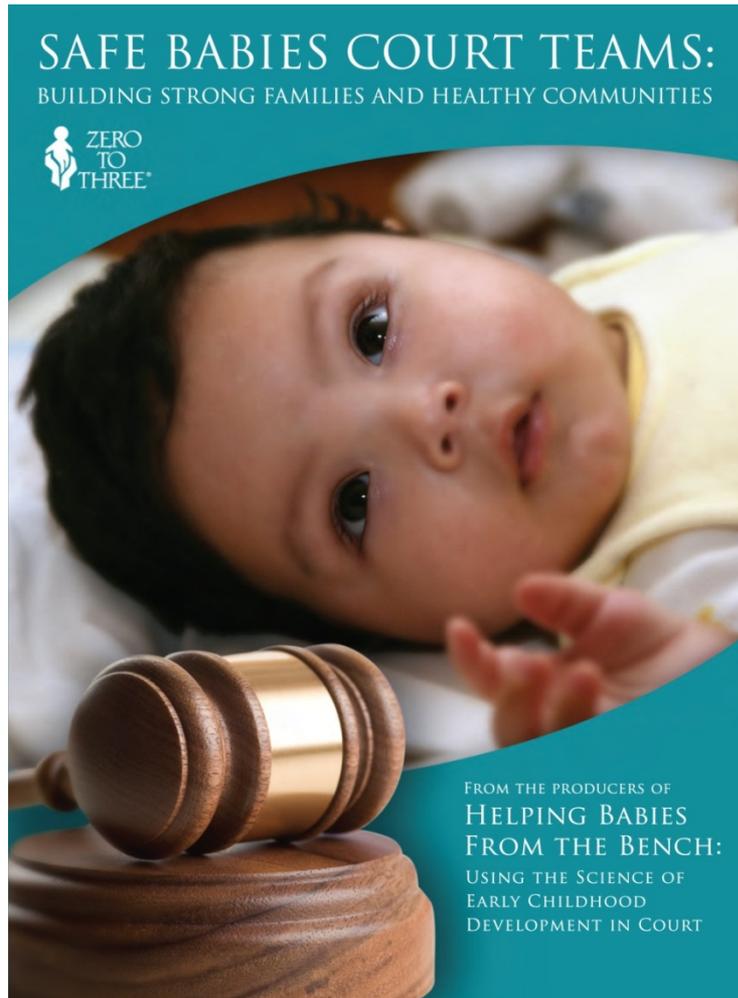
**Enhanced and better  
coordinated services**

# It's all about relationships



**Respectful  
relationships are  
the key to  
helping families.**

# Safe Babies Court Teams Project Explained



- To order a copy of **Safe Babies Court Teams: Building Strong Families and Healthy Communities**

Contact Marcia Sandifer at

[Msandifer@zerotothree.org](mailto:Msandifer@zerotothree.org)

OR

Download an order form from our website: [http://www.zerotothree.org/maltreatment/safe-babies-court-team/dvd\\_order\\_form\\_2009.pdf](http://www.zerotothree.org/maltreatment/safe-babies-court-team/dvd_order_form_2009.pdf)

*Change happens one  
child at a time. Help  
us to make a  
difference — right  
from the beginning.*

# Questions?

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