

THE EVALUATION IS IN

The Safe Babies Court Team Approach Is Changing Lives

The ZERO TO THREE Safe Babies Court Team™ approach transforms child welfare into the practice of child “well-being” by using the science of early childhood development. The program connects babies and their families with the support and services they need to promote healthy child development, while at the same time ensuring speedier exits from the system and faster permanency.

A recent evaluation* of the Safe Babies Court Team approach reveals that the innovative program has extraordinarily positive impacts on participating infants, toddlers and their families. The evaluation also provides recommendations to better support implementing and sustaining the approach in communities.

Here are some key findings from the evaluation, which was conducted at Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams^ sites:

- **Safety:** Based on data received from states, the United States Department of Health and Human Services; Administration for Children, Youth and Families; Children’s Bureau determines a national standard of maltreatment recurrence at 9.1% over 12 months. *The evaluation found that maltreatment recurrence over 12 months among 251 children across sites using the Safe Babies Court Team approach was just 0.7%.* The focus on addressing the root causes of safety concerns as well as the close monitoring of cases were critical elements supporting positive safety outcomes.
 - **Placements:** 94.2% of cases in the foster care system for fewer than 12 months have no more than two placements, and 79.4% among those in care from 12 to 23 months have no more than two placements. *These numbers are significantly better than the national median for placements based on the last report to Congress on child welfare outcomes.*
 - **Placements and children’s race/ethnicity:** Most children had two or fewer placements regardless of their race/ethnicity. *For children in the program, there were no statistically significant differences by race/ethnicity for number of placements overall or by time in foster care.*
 - **Changes in practices:** Sites utilizing the Safe Babies Court Team approach hold frequent Family Team Meetings and court hearings, from biweekly to every two months or less. This allows rapid responses to family’s needs and challenges.
- Over two-thirds of families had regular parent-child contact – either daily or several times a week.*
- **Service receipt:** Among children identified by court teams as in need of developmental screening, early intervention, and child-parent psychotherapy, over 90% received services. *Most sites provided services like child-parent psychotherapy in less than a week (31.7%) or within the first month (71.9%) of the family’s contact with the court team.*
 - **Services and children’s race/ethnicity:** There were no statistically significant differences by race/ethnicity across sites comparing time from court order to service receipt for developmental screening, early intervention, and child-parent psychotherapy. *Overall, more than 80% of children received services within the first 60 days from court order or referral to service.*

* Evaluation completed in December 2017 by RTI International, 3040 E. Cornwallis Road, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709

^The Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams began in 2014 and is funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services; Administration for Children, Youth and Families; Children’s Bureau.

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Learn more about the Safe Babies Court Team approach at zerotothree.org/safe-babies.

