

# *Framework for a Developmental Approach to Child Welfare*

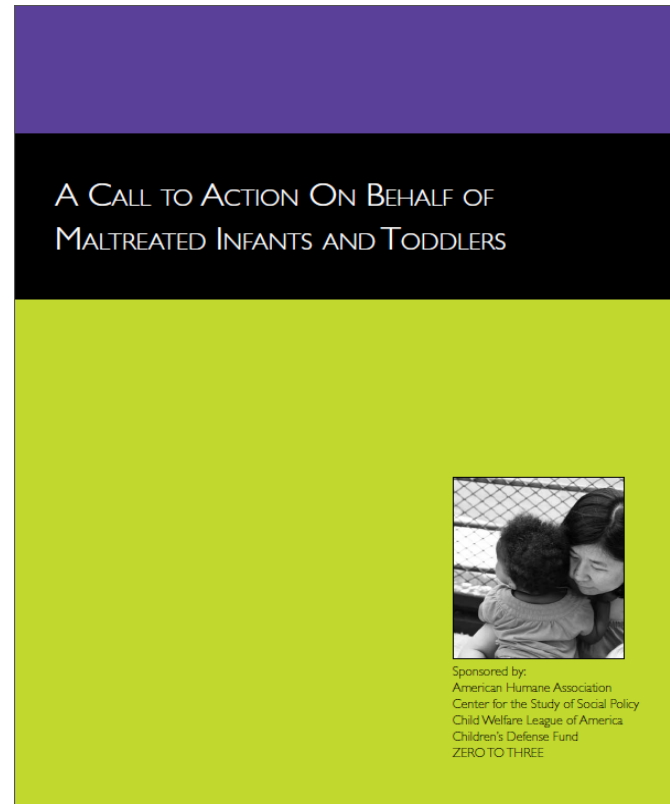
**Patricia Cole**

# Framework for a Developmental Approach to Child Welfare Services for Young Children

The early years present an unmatched opportunity to effectively intervene with at-risk children



# Using what we *know* from the science to change what we *do* for vulnerable babies



[www.zerotothree.org/acalltoaction](http://www.zerotothree.org/acalltoaction)

**American  
Humane  
Association**

The nation's voice for the protection  
of children & animals

Center  
for the  
Study  
of  
**Social  
Policy**

**CWLA**  
Together, Making Children  
and Families a National Priority

DEAR LORD  
BE GOOD TO ME  
THE SEA IS SO  
WIDE AND  
MY BOAT IS  
SO SMALL



Children's Defense Fund

**ZERO  
TO  
THREE®**

National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

# What is a developmental approach?

**A focus on infants, toddlers, and their families that builds guiding principles for infant and toddler development into child welfare systems and practices**



# What does this look like?

## Five Key Elements:

- Decisions guided by knowledge of early childhood development
- An emphasis on fostering stable, caring relationships
- Ensuring access to a range of services from the start
- Cultivation of family and community partnerships
- Using data and research to guide policy and practice

# Elements of a Developmental Approach

## Key Element One:

Decisions and services are developmentally appropriate and have the explicit goal of enhancing the safety, permanency, and the developmental well-being of infants and toddlers.

# Decisions Guided by Knowledge of Early Childhood Development

- Child welfare workers, judicial personnel and all stakeholders educated in the science of early development
- Developmental services built into case plans
- Child welfare agencies and courts share responsibility in overseeing developmental services and steps to permanency

# Elements of a Developmental Approach

## Key Element Two:

All infants and toddlers in the child welfare system have the opportunity for stable, caring relationships essential for healthy development.



# A Renewed Effort to Foster Stable, Caring Relationships

## **For infants, toddlers, and their families:**

- Assessments of the child, the parents, and child-parent relationships
- Understanding parents' issues
- Assessment of risk and protective factors
- Family-centered practices to support family strengths and positive parenting

# A Renewed Effort to Foster Stable, Caring Relationships

## **For infants and toddlers placed in foster care:**

- Careful transitions: Pre-removal conferences and stability in care
- Commitment to concurrent planning
- Foster/adopt homes with ready support
- Frequent, supportive parent-child contact
- Frequent case review and court monitoring
- Concept of care beyond traditional boundaries

# Elements of a Developmental Approach

## Key Element Three:

Intervention procedures and services are accessible from the start to prevent the consequences of early adversity in infants and toddlers.

# Ensure Access to a Range of Intervention Services From the Start

**Providing physical, mental, emotional, developmental, and family assessments and services such as:**

- Preventive health services
- Infant and early childhood mental health services, including parent-child therapy
- Assessment and services for parents

**Collaboration between Part C services and child welfare agencies**

# Ensure Access to a Range of Intervention Services From the Start

## Building Relationships with the Early Childhood System

- **Priority given to infants and toddlers in:**
  - Early Head Start
  - Early childhood home visiting programs
  - High-quality child care

# Elements of a Developmental Approach

## Key Element Four:

Families and communities should work as key partners to ensure the well-being of every infant and toddler.

# Cultivation of Family and Community Partnerships

- **Collaboration between child welfare and community systems for a web of services for infants, toddlers, and families.**
- **Use community resources to help families build informal support systems and foster protective factors.**

# Elements of a Developmental Approach

## Key Element Five:

Ensure there is a focus on infants, toddlers, and their families in administrative functions such as data collection, research, and attention to special populations.



# Informing Services with Ongoing Data and Research

- **Data collection** gives direction to planning and program development for infants and toddlers
- **Practices** adopted that reflect infant-toddler needs
- Pull it all together for infants and toddlers in **state child welfare plans**

# Leading Change for Babies



- Infants and toddlers *do* call for our attention.
- States and communities have the *capacity* to change the lives of vulnerable children.
- Seize the *opportunity* to incorporate what we know from the science into what we do for babies.
- Create a systemic approach that *orients policy and practice* toward supporting positive development.
- Use the new state plan requirement as a *beginning*, not an end.

# New Resource for State Planning

## A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR STATES AND COUNTIES ADMINISTERING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES



ZERO TO THREE  
in collaboration with:  
Center for the Study of Social Policy  
Child Trends  
Children's Defense Fund  
National Black Child Development Institute  
National Council of La Raza  
Voices for America's Children

Available soon at [www.zerotothree.org/childwelfaretool](http://www.zerotothree.org/childwelfaretool)

## Additional Resources...

- **Later this month: Webinar on the state tool to create *A Developmental Approach to Child Welfare Services for Infants, Toddlers, and their Families***  
[www.zerotothree.org/policywebinars](http://www.zerotothree.org/policywebinars)
- **Coming in July: Survey of all states on child welfare initiatives directed at infants and toddlers, ZERO TO THREE and Child Trends**
- **New DVD - *Safe Babies Court Teams: Building Strong Families and Healthy Communities***  
[www.zerotothree.org/maltreatment/safe-babies-court-team/safe-babies-products.html](http://www.zerotothree.org/maltreatment/safe-babies-court-team/safe-babies-products.html)