



Collaborating with Infant-Toddler Court Teams: A Tip Sheet for Home Visiting Professionals



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

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WHAT ARE INFANT-TODDLER COURT TEAMS?

Infant-Toddler Court Teams (ITCTs) support families of very young children who are in, or at risk of involvement with, the child welfare system. ITCTs focus on the health and well-being of both the child and the family. The ITCT approach is driven by a vision of prevention, where systems work together to strengthen the family, putting the need to protect and build safe, stable and nurturing early relationships at the center of child welfare decision-making.

WHAT DO INFANT-TODDLER COURT TEAMS DO?

ITCTs provide a two-level structure for collaborative solution-finding:

- An **Active Community Team** brings together a multidisciplinary group of community partners for collective work to better coordinate services and supports for families with very young children.
- **Family Team Meetings** engage families in the case planning process. These meetings bring professionals and parents together frequently to ensure that both child and family needs are identified and met quickly and effectively. Family Team Meetings create a climate of trust among the professionals on the team and the family, holding space for parents to voice their needs and priorities. Such meetings offer an effective way to monitor access to needed services and supports, as well as to address the factors causing barriers or delays.

ITCTs include a unique role, the Community Coordinator, that bridges community and family level work to align and coordinate services; provides a consistent and strong voice for the developmental needs of infants and toddlers in the child welfare process; and elevates parent voice by shifting power to families.

WHY COLLABORATE WITH AN INFANT-TODDLER COURT TEAM?

ITCTs and home visiting programs have common goals for child and family well-being, including:

- Nurturing and protecting attachment relationships,
- Ensuring early childhood development is on a healthy track
- Strengthening family protective factors

Partnerships can maximize the benefits for families by:

- Streamlining referral processes for home visiting services, including reducing waitlist times
- Expanding access to resources and supports for families
- Supporting mutual goals of ITCTs and home visiting programs

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION WITH HOME VISITING PROGRAMS

Home visitors effectively partner with families involved in infant-toddler courts by:

1. Reaching out to the Community Coordinator of the local ITCT.

The ITCT Community Coordinator can work with home visiting programs to develop a simplified referral process that works best for the ITCT and home visiting program, taking into account potential barriers for families.

2. Joining a local Active Community Team.

When joining an Active Community Team (see description above), home visitors can:

- Share and learn information about services, supports, and resources for pregnant people, families, and children to prevent involvement with the child welfare system
- Increase awareness about the availability and benefits of home visiting programs in the community
- Build and strengthen connections with other community partners
- Think about new ways to deliver family centered services
- Bridge gaps, particularly from a racial equity perspective, to break down structural barriers to families gaining access to home visiting services

3. Participating in Family Team Meetings.

Family Team Meetings are an opportunity for home visitors to advocate for the families they are currently serving whose children are in the child welfare system. When home visitors participate in Family Team meetings, they:

- Learn about the court system process and the expectations of the family during the case
- Learn about what other services, programs, and supports the family is receiving
- Provide insight into the family's strengths and areas of focus
- Consider how the family's home visiting goals align with those of the case plan
- Share expertise related to early childhood development as well as parental needs and supports

4. Creating effective policies and procedures.

By working with ITCTs, home visiting programs can help create policies and procedures that allow home visitors to:

- Identify and support the needs of shared clients/families with the ITCT to prevent child removal
- Secure or continue home visiting services after child welfare involvement ends, which can be critical for the family and child to help ensure stable and ongoing support
- Create intake processes that facilitate timely and seamless child welfare referrals

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INFANT-TODDLER COURT TEAMS,
CHECK OUT THESE WEBSITES AND RESOURCES:**

- [AMCHP Innovation Hub](#)
- [National Infant Toddler Court Program](#)
- [Infant Toddler Court Program National Resource Library](#)
- [Safe Babies Court Team™ Approach](#)
- [Safe Babies Court Team™ Infographic](#)
- [Safe Babies Court Team™ Logic Model](#)

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