

### What is the PURPOSE of a State Advisory Group?

The State Advisory Group brings state partners together<sup>1</sup> across sectors to improve equitable access to a comprehensive continuum of promotion, prevention, early intervention, and therapeutic services and supports for families with very young children. This work can be thought of as building an integrated and aligned “early childhood system” through state and community-based collaborations and public-private partnerships to reach all children and families with needed services and supports.



An early childhood system brings together health (holistically defined and for all members of the family), child welfare including the dependency court, early care and education, other human services, and family support program partners - as well as community leaders, families, and other partners - to achieve agreed-upon goals for thriving children and families.

### What DOES IT LOOK LIKE when a State Advisory Group is implemented successfully?

- All State Advisory Group participants feel a sense of **collective leadership and inclusion**.
- All participants feel a climate of **trust, compassion, and transparency** necessary for collaborative solution-finding and alignment of shared resources.
- Shared early childhood system-building **priorities are identified, monitored, and achieved**.
- Policies, funding, and other infrastructure **changes are made to support promotion and prevention efforts at the state level for prenatal-to-three families**.
- Strategies to **counteract or change disparities, racist policies, and discriminatory practices and increase health equity** are implemented.

### Who PARTICIPATES in a State Advisory Group?

- Participants represent the broad and diverse sectors serving families with very young children, including but not limited to sectors serving families who are involved in the child welfare system or are at risk of child welfare involvement. The exact **makeup of the group will depend on the unique state needs** and its priorities. The partners involved in the State Advisory Group may evolve over time as priorities shift. However, it is critical to include:
  - Families with lived experience in the child welfare system;
  - Leadership across broad and diverse sectors including child welfare, court improvement, and legal/advocacy;
  - Other key child and family serving sectors (e.g. health, housing, IECMH, Medicaid, adult mental health and substance use treatment services, home visiting).

<sup>1</sup> In communities where an existing early childhood coalition is engaged in similar efforts, it may be preferable to integrate the work of the State Advisory Group into the already active coalition; the intention is to align early childhood system-building efforts in the state and reduce duplication and overlap.

### Who PARTICIPATES in a State Advisory Group? (continued)

- The team is **convened and led** by the State Team leadership – Project Director, Statewide Coordinator and Data/Evaluation Lead.
- This group may be a stand-alone group convened for the state’s Safe Babies initiative OR a part of a standing early childhood system building collaborative meeting where the Safe Babies approach can be part of the focus.
- This group meets at least quarterly and may meet more frequently as the state is building its capacity to support implementation of the Safe Babies approach in the state or in times of policy action.

### Essential Functions and Activities

The list of essential functions and activities below describes the key functions and specific activities that fall under the purview of the State Advisory Group. These functions incorporate key strategies from the field of health promotion and prevention and collective impact arena, with a central focus on health equity for infants, toddlers, and their families.

Essential Functions	Activities
<b>Fostering a supportive environment</b> for the Safe Babies approach and related programs, practices, and policies at the state level	<b>Meeting regularly and frequently</b> to build expansive state support and champions for the Safe Babies approach and its promotion and prevention efforts
	<b>Creating space for cross-system networking and partnering</b> that increases communication and builds resilient and sustainable collaborations
	Promoting <b>new policies and procedures</b> that support, sustain, and spread Safe Babies approach practice changes across sectors addressing the need of infants, toddlers, and their families
	Planning, implementing, and aligning cross-system <b>trainings and technical assistance</b> to increase workforce skills and competencies in core areas related to the Safe Babies approach, such as the science of early childhood development
	<b>Advocating, as appropriate, for legislative changes that will benefit families</b> with very young children (e.g., Housing voucher access improvements –WA Senate Bill 5256 [May 2023])
	Exploring/identifying <b>funding opportunities to sustain the Safe Babies approach and expand the reach</b> of Safe Babies practices to more children/families (e.g., State Team positions, and Community Coordinator positions, or braiding funding with State and Medicaid to support Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services). Funding may involve direct financing of program expenses, or it may be indirect by way of in-kind donations of goods and services.

Essential Functions	Activities
<p><b>Fostering a supportive environment</b> for the Safe Babies approach and related programs, practices, and policies at the state level</p>	<p>Supporting the <b>organizational/operational conditions that lead to effective implementation and sustainability</b> of the Safe Babies approach in local sites (e.g., in times of turnover or leadership transitions), including sustainability planning over time</p>
	<p>Exploring/identifying <b>funding opportunities to build/expand the continuum of programs and supports</b> for infants, toddlers, and their families such as parent partner programs, evidence-based interventions that strengthen the parent-child relationship, and effective services to address perinatal substance dependence</p>
	<p>Exploring/identifying <b>opportunities</b> to develop concrete supports for very young children and families (e.g., diapers, housing vouchers, transportation benefits, medical resources etc.)</p>
<p><b>Reflecting and solution finding</b></p>	<p>Sharing timely information about <b>availability of statewide programs (services, resources, and supports)</b> for very young children and their families in the child welfare system or at increased risk of child welfare involvement</p>
	<p>Identifying <b>long-term systems change/improvements</b> to address barriers and gaps for very young children and their families in the child welfare system or at increased risk of child welfare involvement</p>
	<p>Utilizing solution-based prioritization to <b>discuss system successes as well as gaps/barriers using data</b> from Safe Babies sites to identify and address root causes</p>
<p><b>Advancing equity</b> across the early childhood system</p>	<p>Actively <b>engaging and supporting parents/those with lived experience</b> in the child welfare system in decision-making and leadership roles</p>
	<p>Serving as a platform for <b>open conversations</b> about personal biases, community discrimination, and institutional barriers</p>
	<p>Advancing a common <b>vision for a more equitable early childhood system of care</b> for families with very young children</p>
	<p>Using <b>data separated out by race and ethnicity</b> to recognize barriers to equity, such as discriminatory practices and policies across systems</p>
	<p>Developing, implementing, and monitoring the effectiveness of <b>strategies to counteract or change the disparities, racist policies, and discriminatory practices</b> impacting infants, toddlers, and their families</p>



Safe Babies  
A Program of ZERO TO THREE

# The Safe Babies Approach

## State Advisory Group

Promoting continuous quality improvement across the early childhood system

**Sharing data trends** from across Safe Babies sites in the state and other available sectors to examine availability, accessibility, and alignment of comprehensive services and supports

Engaging in the **development of a shared set of priorities**, measurement, and outcomes among the State Advisory Group partners

Creating a **plan to address shared priorities**, monitor effectiveness of the plan, and adjust as needed



**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime