

Sustainable Change Starts Here: Process Mapping to Strengthen Early Childhood Systems

November 19, 2025

Infant-Toddler Court Program National Resource Center



Safe Babies
A Program of ZERO TO THREE





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Today's Agenda

- Ground ourselves in key concepts of continuous quality improvement
- Introduction to Process Mapping: a CQI Tool
- Hear from a State and Site utilizing Process Mapping as a CQI Tool
 - Georgia THRIVE Overview
 - Georgia's State and Local Case Mapping Process

The Opportunity in the Early Years



newborn

1 month

3 months

6 months

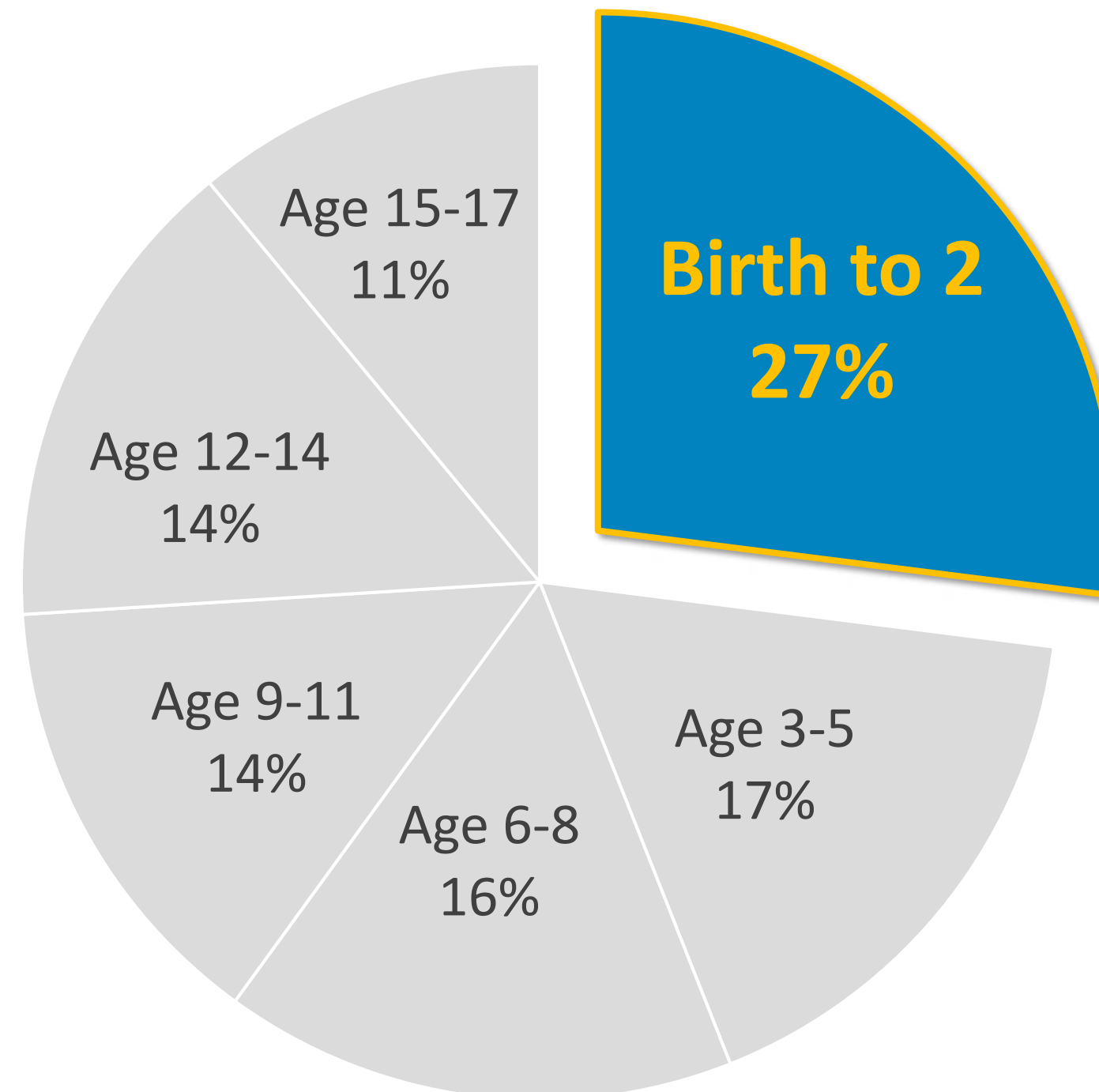
Children Experiencing Maltreatment

Poll question:

**What percentage of children who are maltreated
are under the age of 3?**

Children Experiencing Maltreatment

27% of Children Who Are Maltreated Are Under Age 3



Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2025). Child Maltreatment 2023.

The Safe Babies Approach

IMPACT:

Safe Babies focuses on the urgent developmental needs of young children during all planning and decision-making to strengthen early relationships with parents and caregivers and to create safe, stable, and nurturing environments for babies and toddlers.



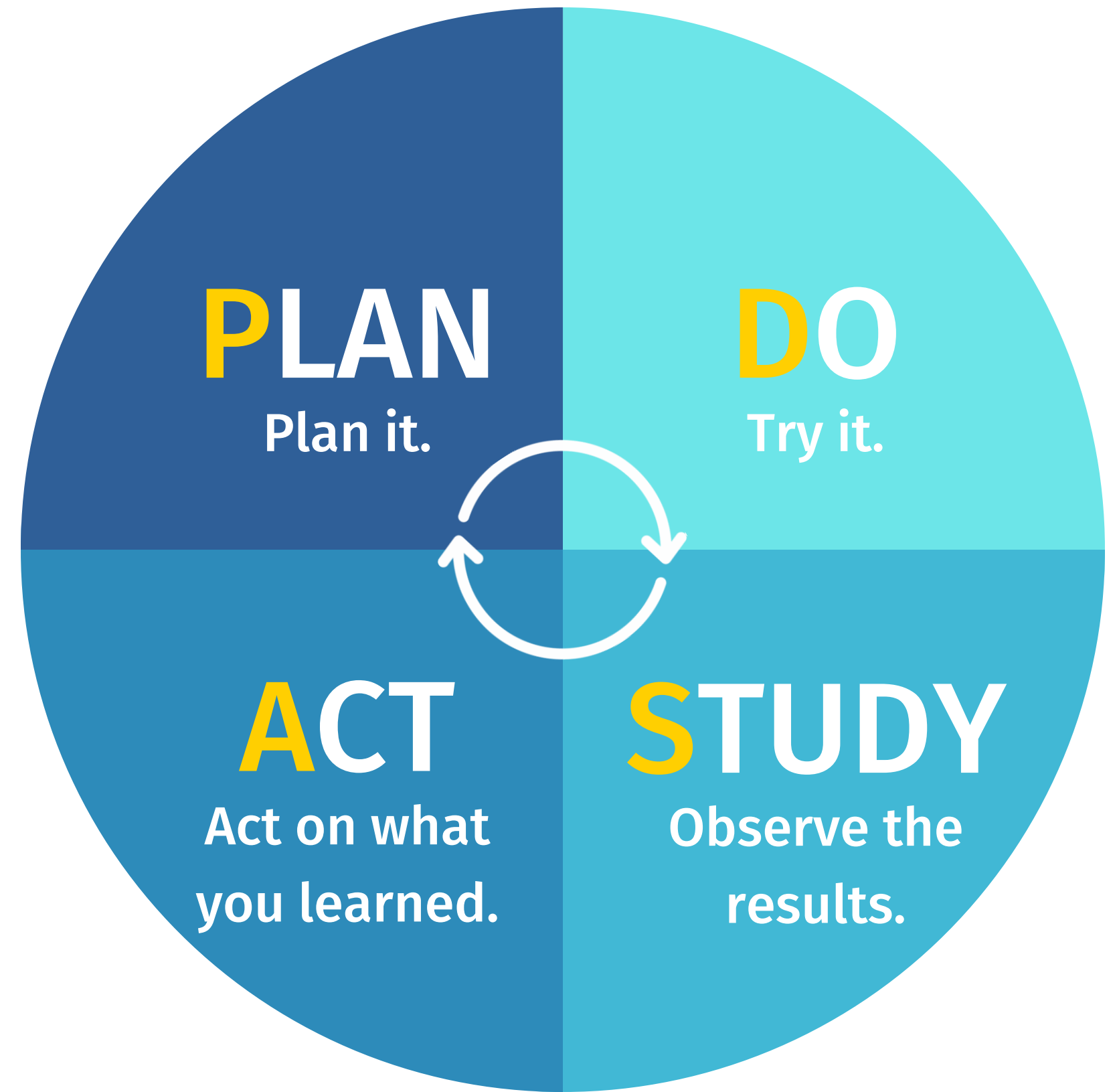
A woman in a blue button-down shirt is drawing a fishbone (Ishikawa) diagram on a glass wall. She is holding a black marker. In the background, a man in a blue shirt is looking at the diagram, and another woman is partially visible. The wall is covered with several yellow sticky notes. The scene is set in a modern office or meeting room.

What is continuous quality improvement?

**The science of
problem solving.**

PDSA Cycles

PDSA or Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles are the heart of continuous improvement.



Process Maps

WHO

DOES WHAT

HOW

BY WHEN

Process Maps

By mapping processes, we begin to see where and how to improve.

We can:

- **Create standard work.**
- **Compare plan to actual.**





The ACT Phase

Three options for Action:

Adopt

Worked well. Let's try this on a larger scale and see if it still works. (9% of PDSAs)

Adapt

Pretty good. It could be better if we make some adjustments and try again. (90% of PDSAs)

Abandon

Total failure. Nothing to learn from this. Don't do this again! (1% of PDSAs)



Program Overview

Program Infrastructure

- Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health and Wellbeing
- State Advisory Group
- Local Implementation Workgroup
- Data and Evaluation Workgroup
- Sustainability Workgroup
- GA-AMH Training Team



Program Locations

Intervention

Athens-Clarke County

Family Connection-Communities in Schools

Intervention and Prevention

Gwinnett County

Easter Seals North Georgia, Inc.

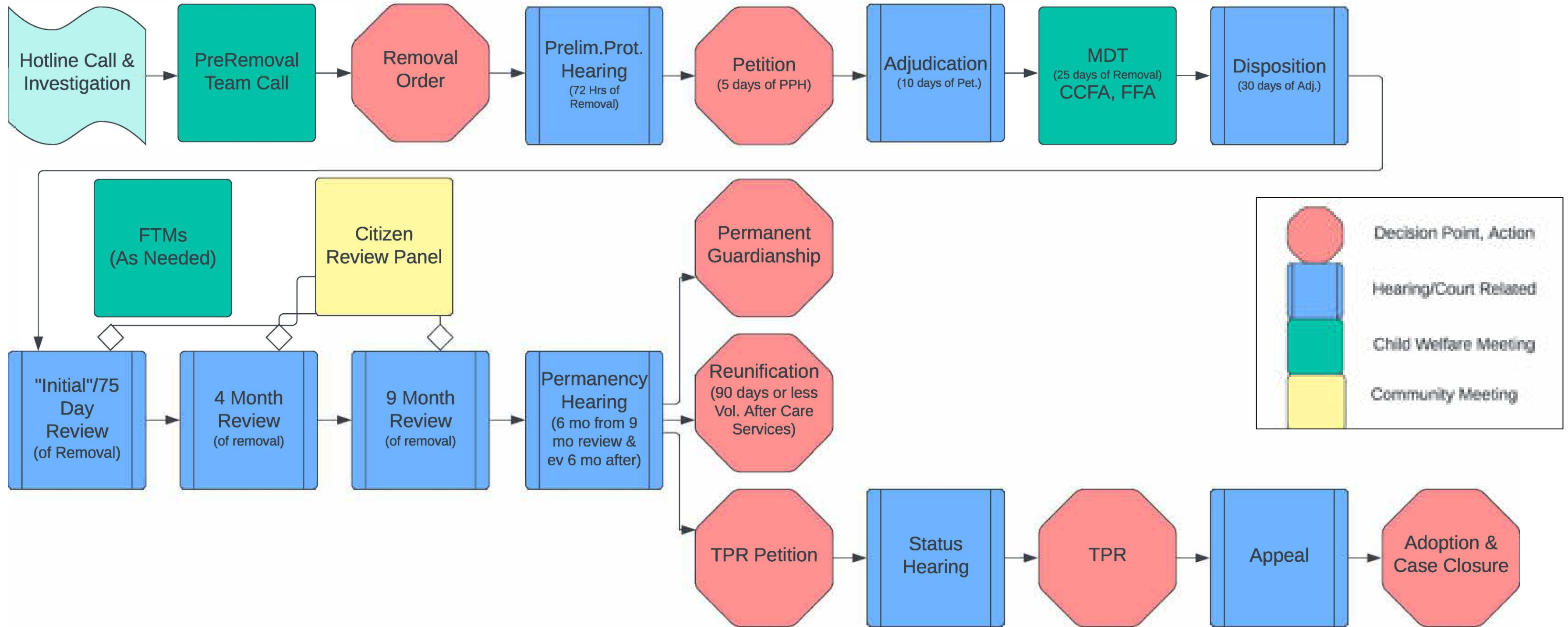
Troup County

Troup County Board of Commissioners

Map



Georgia's Dependency Case Flow Map



MDT – Multidisciplinary Team Meeting
CCFA – Comprehensive Child & Family Assessment
FFA – Family Functioning Assessment
FTM – Family Team Meetings
TPR – Termination of Parental Rights

Eligibility Requirements

01

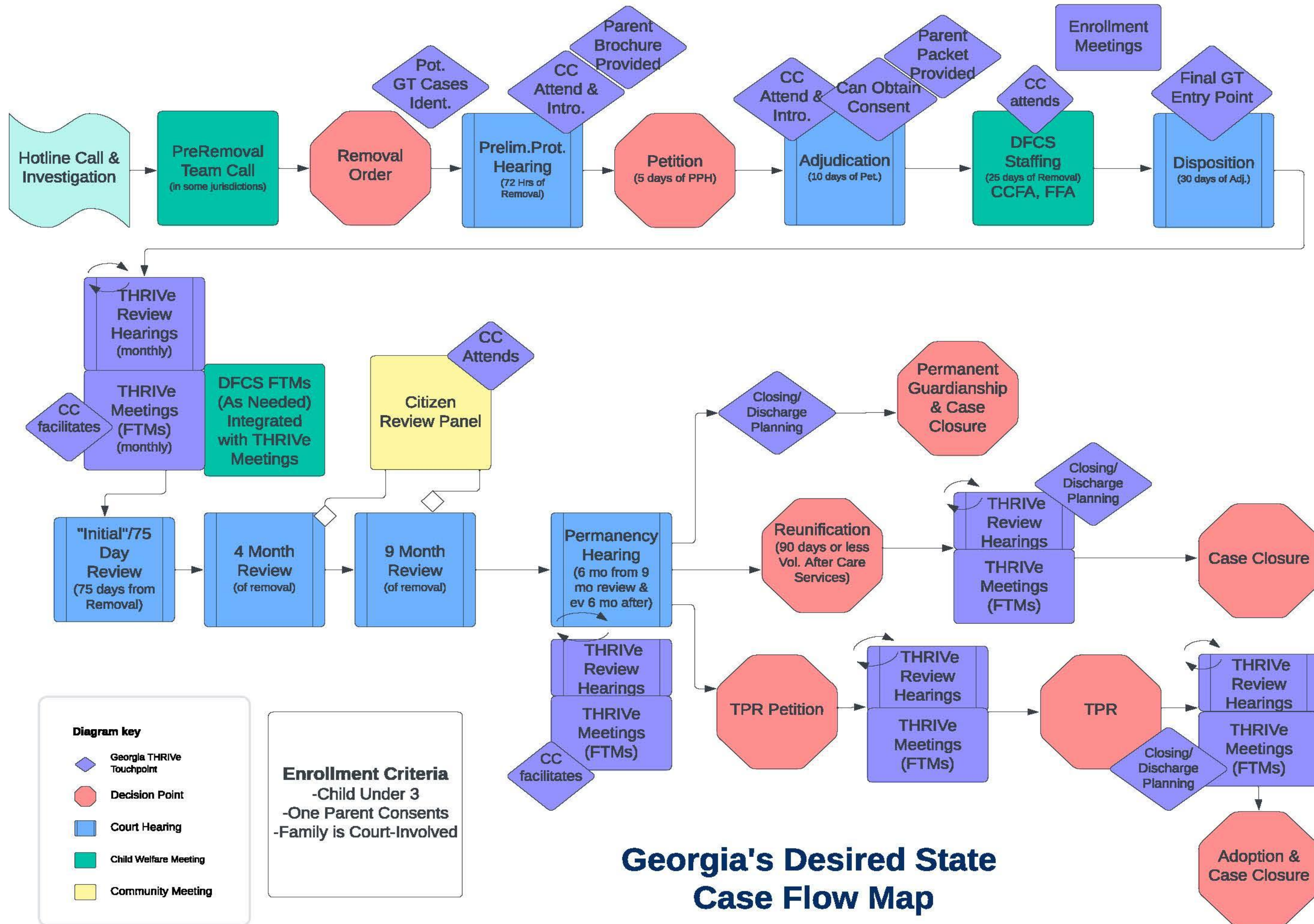
Families with a child between the ages of **0 to 3** (up to their 4th birthday)

02

The child is either **involved with** or **at risk of involvement** with child welfare

03

At least one parent must provide consent for program enrollment



Athens THRIVE Implementation

Athens THRIVE Eligibility Criteria

State Criteria:

- *One child ages 0-3*
- *Family is court involved*
- *At least one parent must consent to participate*

Athens THRIVE:

- *Parent must be a Clarke County resident*
- *History of family preservation prior to removal is allowed*

Athens THRIVE Eligibility and Referral

This screening form is to help identify families with an active DFCS case plan who may be appropriate for Athens THRIVE ITCP. If program eligibility is met referral form may be sent to [REDACTED]

Meets the following Eligibility Criteria YES ☐ NO ☐

Clarke County Residency

[At least] one child ages 0-3

Open dependency case: _____ Kinship Placement _____ Foster Placement

Family Preservation Involvement YES ☐ NO ☐ **FP to/from:** _____

Date of removal order: _____

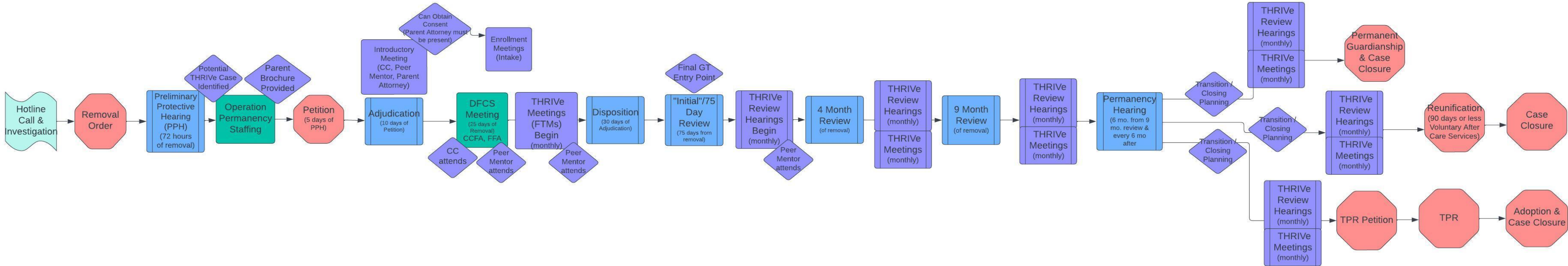


ACRONYMS
GT = Georgia THRIVE
DFCS = Department of Family and Children's Services
CC = Community Coordinator
CCFA = Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment
FFA = Family Functioning Assessment
FTM = Family Team Meeting

Athens THRIVE Case Flow Map

Eligibility Criteria:
-Child under 3
-One Parent Consents
-Family is court-involved
-Child is in Foster Care placement
-Parent is a Clarke County Resident

Starting Capacity: 10 cases/year



Identification & Referral Process:

- Eligibility:
 - Foster care cases; including kinship foster care placements
 - History of Family Preservation is okay
 - Parent is Clarke Resident; able to participate in program/services
- DFCS Tech Team will send referral by email to CC. CC will track eligibility on printed referral emails.
- Operation Permanency Staffing:
 - Box will be added to Operation Permanency Staffing form to ensure that referral has been made
 - Case is transferred to Foster Care Case Manager
 - CC attends
 - Scheduled as soon as removal happens
- CC will communicate with Parent Attorney to coordinate introductory meeting.
- All professional members of the Family Team will sign a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines their agreements in working together.

Safe Babies Introduction to Parents:

- Parent attorney will discuss Safe Babies eligibility with Parent
- At or after the Adjudication Hearing, the CC will facilitate an Introductory Meeting with the parent, with the Parent Attorney and Peer Mentor (if available) present
- Community Coordinator will provide brochure to Parent. If Peer Mentor is not available, CC will also provide a brochure about Peer Mentor opportunity.

Consent and Enrollment:

- CC and Parent Attorney will be present when the parent signs Consent. If Peer Mentor is available, they may also be present at the Parent's approval.
- Consent can occur at the time of the Introductory Meeting or anytime after, until the Disposition hearing.
- Parent will have the opportunity opt-in to working with the Peer Mentor at any point in the case (no deadline).
- Following Consent, CC will meet with the parent for Enrollment Meeting and complete intake forms & provide Participant Handbook.

Screenings/Assessments/Referrals:

- All families with a DFCS case complete a CCFA and may complete additional assessments based on the details of their case.
 - THRIVE families will typically be referred to Project Family for their CCFA
- All children under 3 in a DFCS case are referred for Babies Can't Wait Developmental Screen.
- Opportunity for THRIVE partnership with local Pilot Program for additional Social-Emotional Assessment that can lead to CPP referral.
- Services for children under 3:
 - CPP: Limited availability. Project Family and Advantage take Medicaid
 - Circle of Security: some capacity and availability

Family Time:

- Standard: 3x/week for infants & 2x/week for children under 3, in the least restrictive environment.
- Family time plan is reviewed at every hearing. Changes to supervision can be discussed at hearings or agreed to and filed by consent motion or letter for the Judge to consider.

THRIVE Meetings (FTMs):

- **Frequency:** Monthly, 2nd Wednesday of Month
- **Location:** Brightpaths and DFCS, dependent on parent location (1 location AM; 1 location PM)
- **Format:** Hybrid available
- **Length of Meetings:** 1 hour (currently set at 2-hour intervals as caseload builds)
- **Required Participants:** Parent, Attorneys for all parties, DFCS case worker, Providers
- **Facilitator:** CC
- **Agenda & Notes:** Utilize ZTT forms
- **When in case do FTMs begin:** After Consent is completed. The CC should attend the 25-Day DFCS FTM, and monthly THRIVE Meetings should begin following that meeting after consent is completed.
- **Peer Mentor Role:** If Parent has consented to work with Peer Mentor, Peer Mentor will help Parent prep and will attend THRIVE Meetings to provide support.
- THRIVE Meetings and Review Hearings will continue through transition planning and legal permanency. If a parent disengages, team will continue to meet and will reengage with parent if they come back.

Safe Babies Review Hearings:

- **Frequency:** Monthly, 4th Thursday of Month
- **Format:** Hybrid available
- **Length of Hearings:** 1 hour at the start, may reduce to 30 minutes
- **When in case do monthly reviews begin:** After the 75-day review hearing (which is often combined with the Disposition hearing)
- **Peer Mentor Role:** If Parent has consented to work with Peer Mentor, Peer Mentor will help with Parent prep and will attend hearings to provide support
- **THRIVE Meeting Summaries:** Follow the same process as CASA reports (file with the clerk, share with all parties to the THRIVE Meetings ahead of review hearings)
- **THRIVE Docket:** Judge Prempeh will be lead; both Juvenile Judges will participate in training and ACT.

Concurrent Planning

- Will be discussed at each THRIVE Meeting
- Using Genogram from CCFA as basis for building out a map of supports within family and community
- Normalizing discussion of backup plans
- Promote Partnership Parenting relationships as a support for Concurrent Planning

Planning for Permanency & Case Closure:

- Transition planning starts from Day 1
- Reunification:
 - Intentional conversations about pace of transition to reunification during THRIVE Meetings
 - Returning to Genogram to consider familial and community supports as child returns home
- Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption:
 - Intentional conversations at THRIVE Meetings.
 - Parent Attorneys have ongoing conversations with their clients as well
 - Discussion about how to preserve a potential future relationship with adoptive parents and child
- Permanent Guardianship
 - Intentional conversations at THRIVE Meetings
 - Post-Permanency Visitation Plan - can use mediators to help with this process

CQI to Date

Eligibility updated to include families with history of Family Preservation Services

Enrollment deadline extended from Disposition to Initial 75 Day Review

Community Coordinator attendance at Operation Permanency Staffing and Adjudication

Team ACE assessment training

Parent focused updates to Family Team Meeting agenda

Resources

Tools that others have used to create process maps/case maps:

- Lucidchart
- Power Point
- Figma
- Miro
- Canva

Thank you!

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ZERO to THREE
Early connections last a lifetime