

Strategy 2(b): Infant Toddler Mental Health

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council has identified the need for regional implementation of the following strategies:

- Support Court Teams to coordinate essential services related to the health, development, and social-emotional needs of young children age birth to five in the child welfare system.
- Provide specialized training in infant and toddler mental health to Court Teams, including foster parents, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), representatives of the Court System, Child Protective Services, as well as health, mental health, and early intervention service providers.
- Increase the number of local mental health service providers with expertise in infant toddler mental health through tuition reimbursements and financial incentives.

Infants and toddlers who have been maltreated represent nearly 38%¹ of all Arizona children entering foster care, as of March 2008. Many of these children have complicated and serious physical, mental health, and developmental problems. Children in foster care are six times more likely than the general population of infants and toddlers to be developmentally delayed and three times more likely to develop chronic health conditions.² Foster parents and others who work regularly with this vulnerable population frequently do not have the necessary training to help them address the unique social and emotional needs of pre-lingual children in distress.

Court Teams of child welfare professionals initiate system changes informed by the science of early childhood development. They improve how the courts, child welfare agencies, and related child-serving organizations work together, share information and expedite services for young children. These teams increase the knowledge among those who work with abused and neglected children about the needs of infants and toddlers. System improvement measures are used to improve the coordination and delivery of services to infant and toddlers in the child welfare system.

Court Teams focus on cross-disciplinary program development, coalition building, service integration, and training for professionals who provide services to the target population including Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), resource (foster) parents, representatives of the Court System, Child Protective Services, as well as health, mental health, and early intervention service providers.

Court Teams advocate for vulnerable children and families through the application of several identified key components. The core components include: judicial leadership, formation of a community team, inclusion of child development/infant toddler mental health experts, availability of training/technical assistance, and monthly case reviews. It has been found that judicial leadership plus community partners result in enhanced and more coordinated services for infants and toddlers in the court system.

¹ Arizona Department of Economic Security. *Child Welfare Reporting Requirements Semi-annual Report for the Period of October 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008*. Issues August 11 2008.

² Leslie, L.K., Gordon, J.H., Lambors, K., Premji, K., Peeples, J., Gist, K. (2005). Addressing the developmental and mental health needs of young children in foster care. *Journal of Development and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 26-140-151.

Under the leadership of the Mohave County Juvenile Court Judge, the Mohave County Children's Action Team (*Best for Babies*) brings service providers together at monthly meetings to discuss service delivery to young children in the court system, identify problems, provide training and develop and implement plans for improvement.

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council has identified the need to provide a Court Team Coordinator in order to:

- Coordinate ongoing operation of the Mohave County Children's Action Team
- Facilitate specialized training and technical assistance to Court Teams on early childhood development and infant toddler mental health

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council has also identified the need to expand the knowledge of local mental health service providers and build a more skilled and specialized workforce in the region. Few mental health service providers who work regularly with young children have the specialized training necessary to fully understand early childhood mental health concerns specific to infants and toddlers. Tuition reimbursements and financial incentives to increase the number of mental health professionals with specialized training in infant and toddler mental health will improve therapeutic support for the general population of infants and toddlers in the region as well as reduce the trauma experienced by young children in foster care due to frequent changes in caregivers, and support foster and birth parents in appropriately transitioning infants and toddlers for visitation and placement purposes.

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council believes enhancing the coordination, training and capacity of our Court Teams and providing tuition reimbursements and financial incentives to local mental health service providers for completing specialized training in infant and toddler mental health are effective strategies to address the mental health needs of infants and toddlers in the region.

Goals:

- FTF will lead cross-system coordination efforts among state, federal and tribal organizations to improve the coordination and integration of Arizona programs, services and resources for young children and families.
- FTF will advocate for timely and adequate services for children identified through early screening.
- FTF will build a skilled and well prepared early childhood development workforce.

Key Measures:

- Percentage of families who report they are satisfied with the level of coordination and communication among agencies serving their children.
- Percentage of families with children birth through age five who report they are satisfied with the accessibility of information and resources on child development and health.
- Total number and percentage of professionals who work with young children outside of early care and education settings with a credential, certificate, or degree in early childhood development or other appropriate specialty area.
- Total number and percentage of professionals who work with young children outside of early care and education settings who are pursuing a credential, certificate, or degree in early childhood development or other appropriate specialty area.

Target Population: Families with children age birth to five involved in the child welfare system and/or receiving services from mental health service providers.	
	SFY2010 July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010
Proposed Service Numbers	100
Performance Measures SFY 2010-2012	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of court team participants/stakeholders reporting an increase in knowledge about early childhood development and health, infant and toddler mental health and satisfaction with level of coordination (minimum questions provided by FTF). • Number of Court Team meetings/proposed number of Court Team meetings. • Number of trainings concerning early child development and health and infant toddler mental health provided to Court Team participants and other stakeholders/proposed number of trainings. • Number of children (0 to 3 years of age) with a Best for Babies service checklist within one month of entry into the child welfare system/number of children (0 to 3 years of age) in the child welfare system. • Number of system improvement measures implemented/number of system improvement measures identified. • Number of mental health service providers with credentials/certificates in infant toddler mental health Proposed Service # /Number of mental health service providers with credentials/certificates in infant toddler mental health Actual Service # 	
How does this strategy build on the service network that currently exists?	
This strategy builds on the existing leadership of the Mohave County Juvenile Court and the existing partnership of service providers already established through the Mohave County Children’s Action Team.	
What are the opportunities for collaboration and alignment?	
The Court Team Coordinator will coordinate with the La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council and First Things First to provide local access to specialized training in infant toddler mental health.	
SFY2010 Expenditure Plan for Proposed Strategy	
Population-based allocation for strategy	\$250,000
Budget Justification:	
<p>Mohave County Children’s Action Team (Best for Babies) Coordinator – \$60,000</p> <p>Additional costs including ERE, travel, supplies, and administrative support – \$40,000</p> <p>Ongoing Specialized Training for Court Teams in Infant and Toddler Mental Health – \$50,000</p> <p>Tuition Reimbursements/Financial Incentives to Local Mental Health Service Providers – \$100,000 (\$20,000 per therapist for 5 therapists) (\$6,000 upon completion of coursework, \$6,000 after year 1; \$8,000 after year 2)</p>	
TOTAL – \$250,000	

