

# Exploring the Role of Counties and Courts in Family Well-Being

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September 29, 2022



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RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC.

# Speakers



**Aidan Bohlander, PhD**

*Outreach & Product  
Development Manager,  
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ZERO TO THREE*



**Dina Mezza, JD**

*Community Coordinator  
18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, Early  
Childhood Court*



**Kelly J. McKibben, JD**

*Circuit Judge  
18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit*



**Lindsay Ciavarelli**

*Director, Center for Maternal  
and Young Child Health  
Groundwork Ohio*





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



# The National Infant Toddler Court Program: Transforming Families and Communities

The National Resource Center for the Infant-Toddler Court Program (NRC)- operated by ZERO TO THREE in partnership with the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, Center for the Study of Social Policy, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and RTI International are supporting wide-scale dissemination of the Safe Babies Court Team™ approach to advance the health and well-being of very young children and their families, so they flourish.

This program is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$19,581,161 with 0 percent financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).





## **ZERO TO THREE's Safe Babies Court Team™ (SBCT) approach**

The goal of the Infant Toddler Court Program is to improve the health, well-being, and development of infants, toddlers, and families involved with the child welfare system and dependency court through training and technical assistance to increase the reach, effective implementation and sustainability of the SBCT approach.

# Our Bold Vision



**Transforming the child welfare system**  
so that every baby, toddler, and family  
heals and thrives.

# Safe Babies Court Team™ Approach Core Components

Interdisciplinary,  
Collaborative, &  
Proactive Teamwork



Enhanced Oversight &  
Collaborative Problem-  
Solving



Expedited,  
Appropriate, and  
Effective Services



Trauma-Responsive  
Support



Continuous Quality  
Improvement



# Systems Gaps Addressed by ITCP

## Strengthen



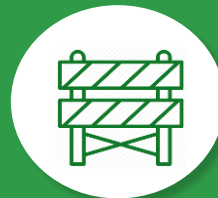
Strengthen  
parental capacity  
to care for  
their children

## Collaborate



Collaborate to  
address service  
gaps and disparities  
to meet  
child and family  
needs

## Equity



Remove barriers to  
racial equity and  
social justice

## Prioritize



Prioritize  
developmentally  
appropriate and  
evidence-based  
practices

## Build



Build  
trauma-responsive  
systems to support  
families and  
professionals



# The Reach of Infant Toddler Courts on Systems Change

## OUTPUTS / IMPACTS

Influencing policies and practice within state-level systems and advocacy for sustainable funding and legislation

## INFLUENCES

Supporting prevention and resiliency for families, reducing siloed service provision and increasing the capacity for trauma-responsive care across providers

**MACRO LEVEL**  
Cross- Sector Systems, Policy, Laws and Legislation

**MESO LEVEL**  
Providers, Multi-disciplinary Groups, Communities

**MICRO LEVEL**  
Individuals, Families, Relationships

## KNOWLEDGE / CO-PRODUCTION

Enhancing multi-disciplinary collaborations, supporting the infrastructure of engaged systems, addressing quality and access to services, and integrating community-based support networks

# The Active Community Team - Enhancing Community Capacity



Exploration and capacity building for  
Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs)



Identifying site/state training to increase the  
quality of services provided



Intentional partnerships to streamline  
processes for assessment and access to  
services



## OUR MISSION

To strengthen opportunities for parental capacity building and achieve lasting permanency for infants and toddler under the Court's jurisdiction



**2x**  
faster than traditional  
child welfare to  
permanency  
**10 Month** Earlier Exit  
from Foster Care

**No Difference**  
in **Outcomes**  
by **Race** or  
**Ethnicity**



Parents with  
highest ACE Scores  
**30% Reunited**

### Maltreatment Recurrence



### Strengthen

Strengthen parental capacity to care  
for their children

### Collaborate

Collaborate to address service gaps and  
disparities to meet child and family needs

### Promote

Promote racial equity and social  
justice

### Prioritize

Prioritize developmentally appropriate  
and evidence-based practices

### Build

Build trauma-responsive systems to  
support families and professionals

### \$14,000 per Family Savings



**\$400** due to increased placement  
with kin

**\$500** due to decreased recurrence  
of child maltreatment

**\$900** due to lower rates of re-entry

**\$2,000** estimated per family  
savings healthcare system due to  
decreased rate of child  
maltreatment

**\$10,200** Decreased time in  
permanency

**64%**  
Expected Cost Savings  
Per Family



**SBCT sites have begun to see policy and/or practice change in the jurisdictions where they work to the larger child welfare system, including:**

- ✓ Greater frequency and quality of family time
- ✓ Increased use of family team meetings
- ✓ Increase in professionals trained on evidence-based interventions
- ✓ Increased frequency of hearings
- ✓ Increased access to other services for parents/children, including mental health and substance use

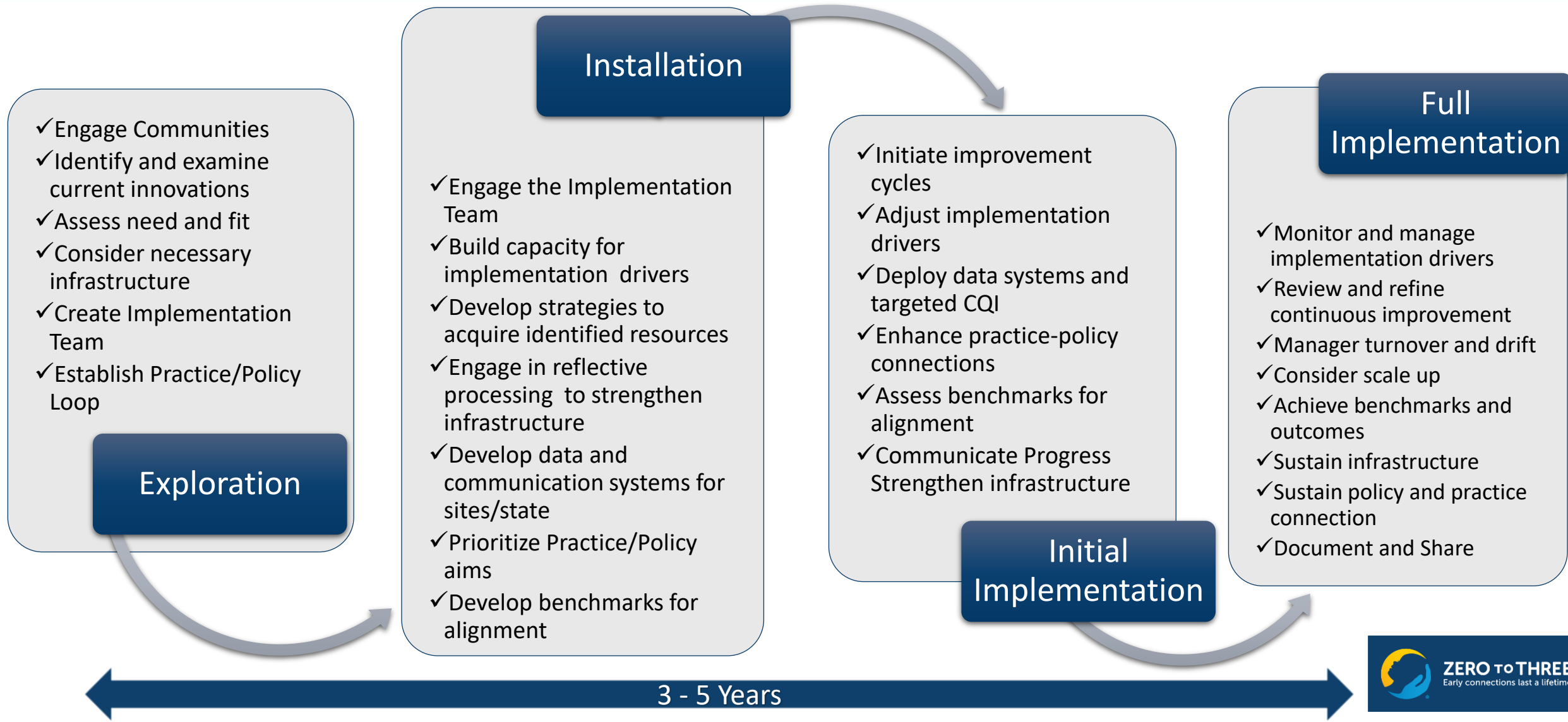


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Early connections last a lifetime

# Launching Infant Toddler Court Teams

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# Intentional Use of Implementation Science to Build a Sustainable Foundation





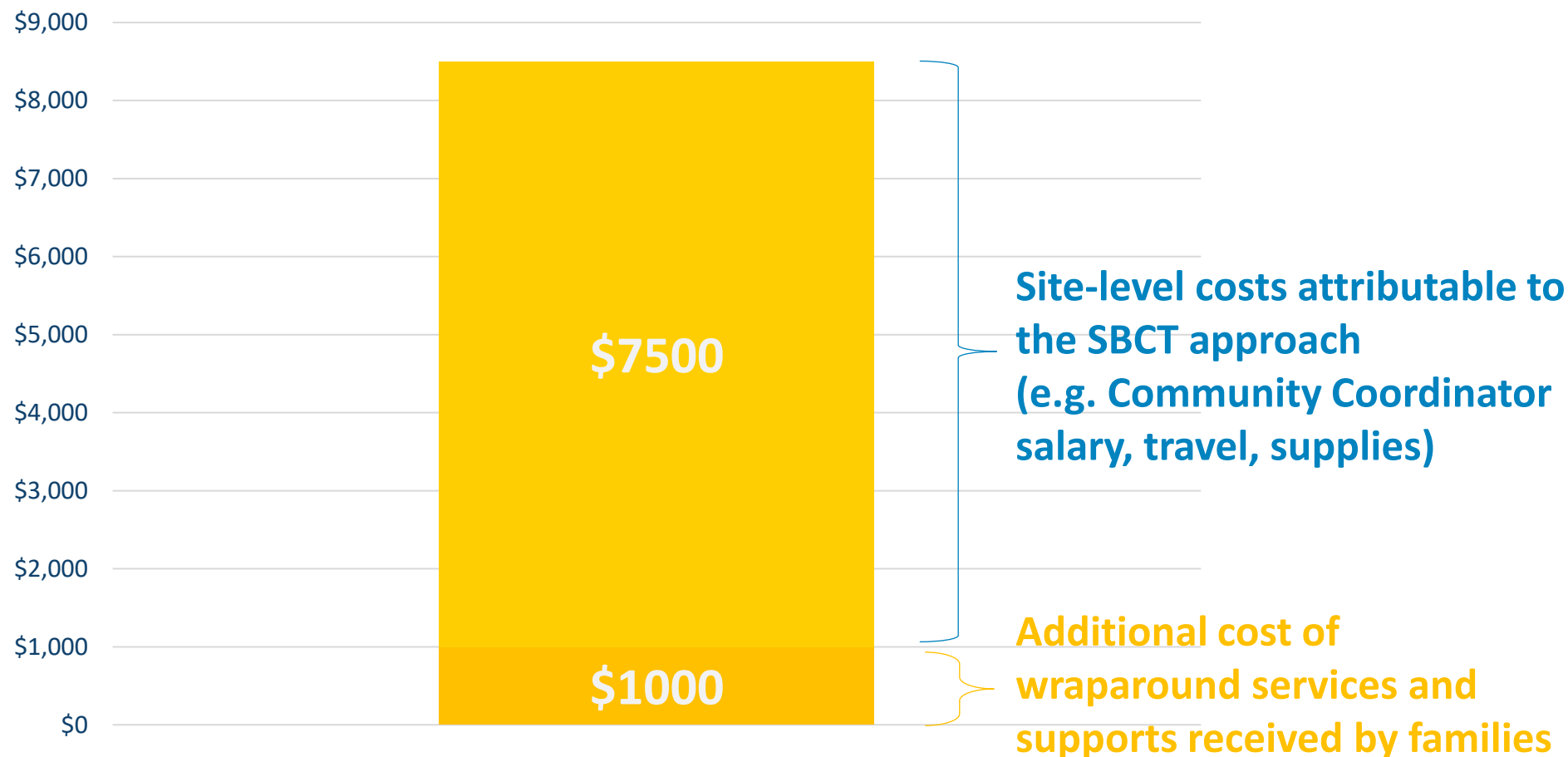
# Potential Challenges and Strategies

Aim	Anticipated Challenges	Successful Tools and Strategies Utilized
<b>Docket Capacity</b>	Competing resolution of backlog, docket identity challenges (specialty court), time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process mapping and strategic planning to develop feasible pathways</li> <li>• Peer supports from experienced Judiciary Leaders and Implementation Teams utilizing the approach</li> </ul>
<b>Family Contact</b>	Staffing capacity, belief systems (reward, safety, secrecy), locations, frequency, identified holder of quality assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools/strategies to support quality and frequency for child welfare</li> <li>• Exploration and integration of interventions that support family contact rooted in capacity building around protective factors</li> <li>• Training and consultation for providers</li> </ul>
<b>Parent Voice and Shared Parenting</b>	Safety concerns, parent engagement, compliance-focused frames, timing/frequency of Family Team Meetings, trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive training and on-going support for child welfare staff and resource caregivers</li> <li>• Use of National Advisory Group for Parent Voices/ Parent Leaders in developing Parent Ally Programs and family-driven resources</li> <li>• Family Team Meetings – training and support for operationalizing the model</li> </ul>
<b>Co-occurring Challenges</b>	Overwhelming impact of Substance Use Recovery on engagement, quality and availability of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-sector training</li> <li>• Strategic planning for service integration</li> <li>• Reflective Practice Consultations</li> </ul>
<b>Teaming and Collaboration</b>	Lack of buy-in, trust, capacity of professionals, synergy across cross-sector priorities, practices and policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development and mobilization of the Active Community Team</li> <li>• Community and Process Mapping to support buy-in and readiness and the development of a shared infrastructure</li> </ul>

# Cost of Implementing the SBCT Approach at the Site Level

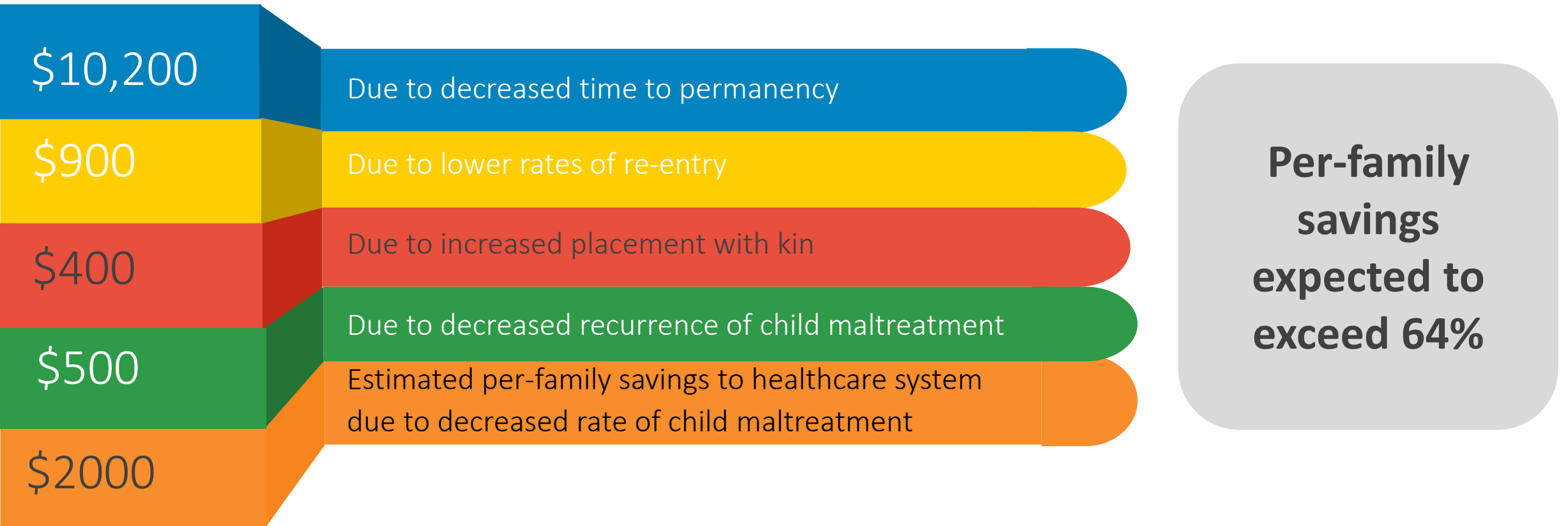


**Average Total Per-Family Cost is \$8,500**



# It Saves Money: Savings Significantly Exceeds Cost

**Estimated savings are \$14,000 per family:**



**Sources:** Florida Early Childhood Court (Office of Court Improvement, Office of the State Courts Administrator, June 2019); DSP Informational Memo Series 2017 (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Division of Safety and Permanence, December 2017); Cora Peterson, Curtis Florence, Joanne Klevens, The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States, 2015 (Child Abuse & Neglect, 2018): 86, 178–183.



# Transformational Change



I am astounded every day at how effective this trauma-informed approach is. When I began as a Florida Circuit Judge more than 30 years ago, I didn't know the impact Judges and Court Teams could have on the trajectory of families if only we understood and recognized that trauma, child development, and outcomes are inextricably linked. Thankfully, I have had the opportunity to apply it and see infants, toddlers and families thrive.

**- Judge Tepper, 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Florida**





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**National Infant Toddler Court Program**

ZEROTOTHREE • 2445 M Street NW Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20037

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

# Speakers



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# Early Childhood Court 18th Judicial Circuit Brevard County, Florida

Established: December 1, 2021

Presiding Judge Kelly J. McKibben  
Dina Mezza, Community Coordinator

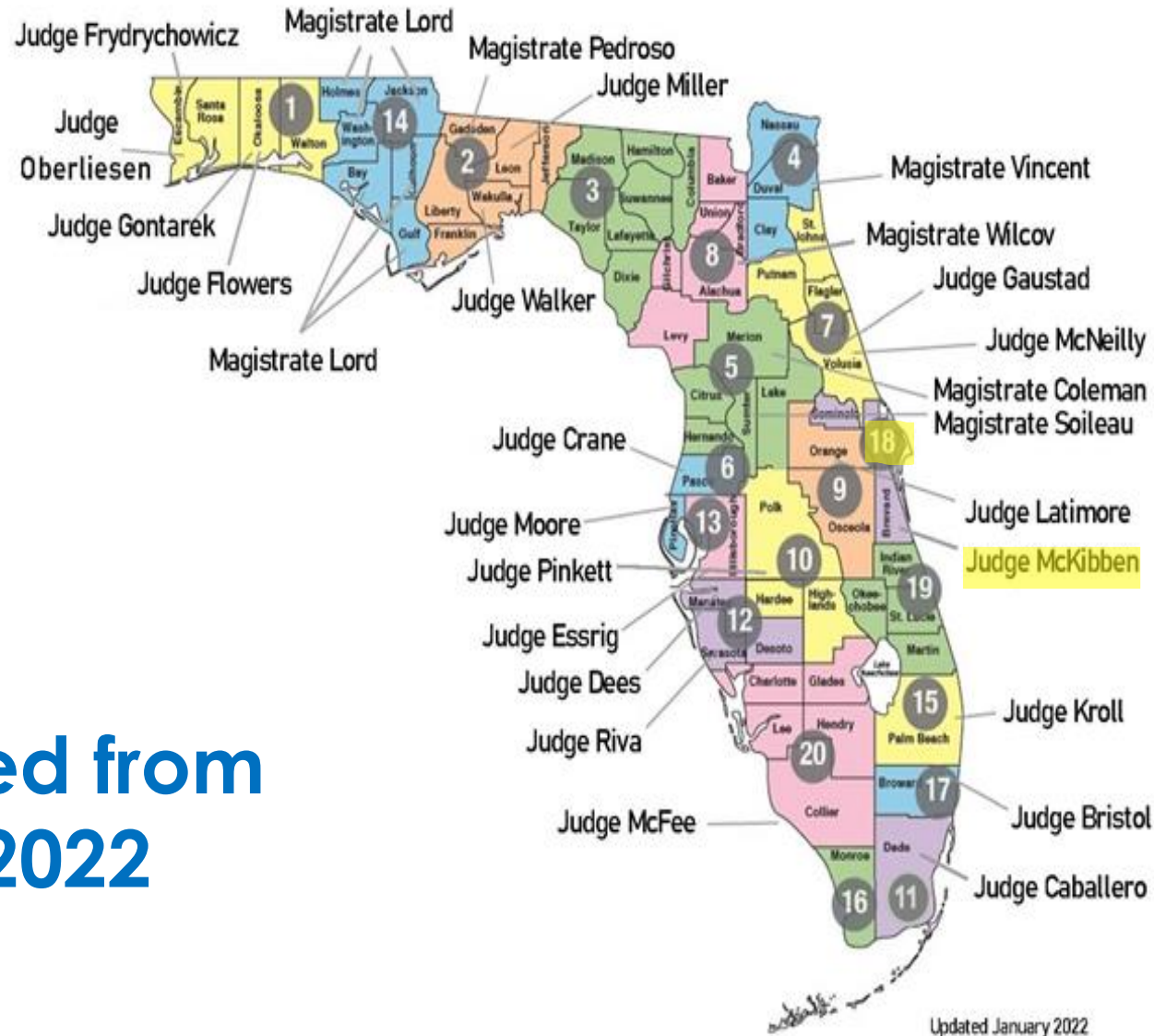




# Florida's Early Childhood Courts

32 Sites

Expanded from  
2013 to 2022





# Why Zero to Three?



Most vulnerable in  
child welfare

Up to 90% of child  
fatalities were under  
age 5

Up to 55% were under  
age 1

Approximately 43% of  
children in out-of-  
home care are ages 0-3

Largest age group  
being under age 1 at  
about 18%

Greatest period of  
brain development  
occurs in first 3 years of  
life

Maltreatment  
increases risk for  
developmental delays

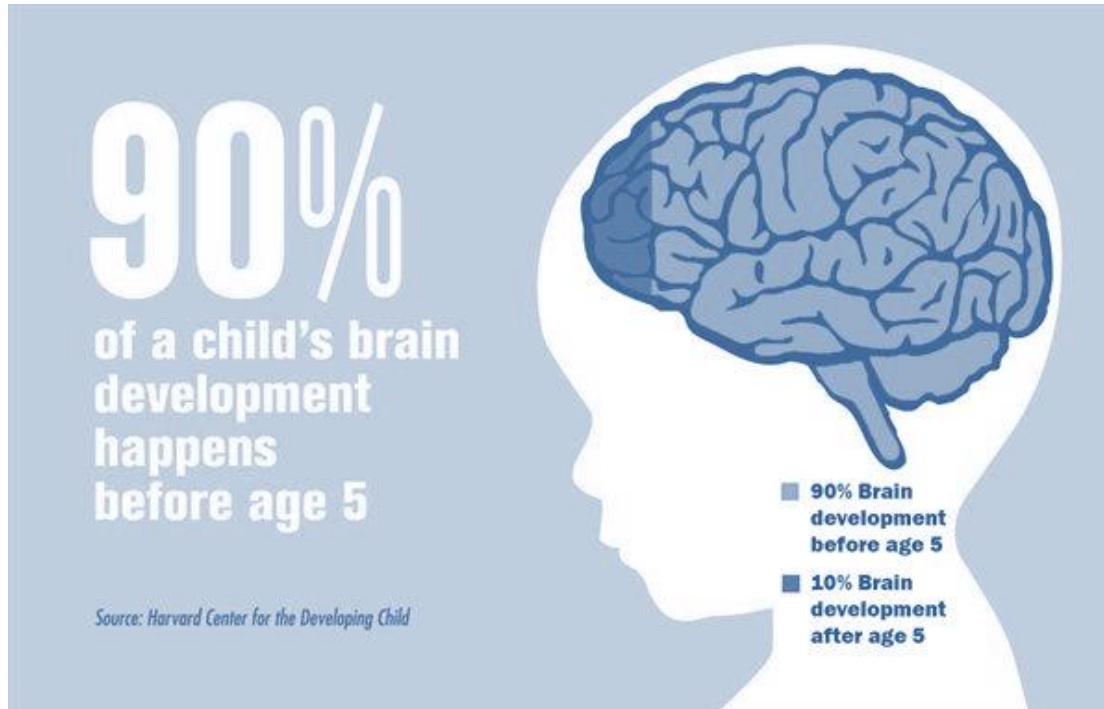
Up to 65% have  
developmental delays

Up to 82% have  
attachment problems

Over 80% of children  
aging out of foster care  
have had a psychiatric  
diagnosis prior to 18

Nearly 1/3 of foster  
children reported being  
re-traumatized while in  
foster care

# Science as the Foundation



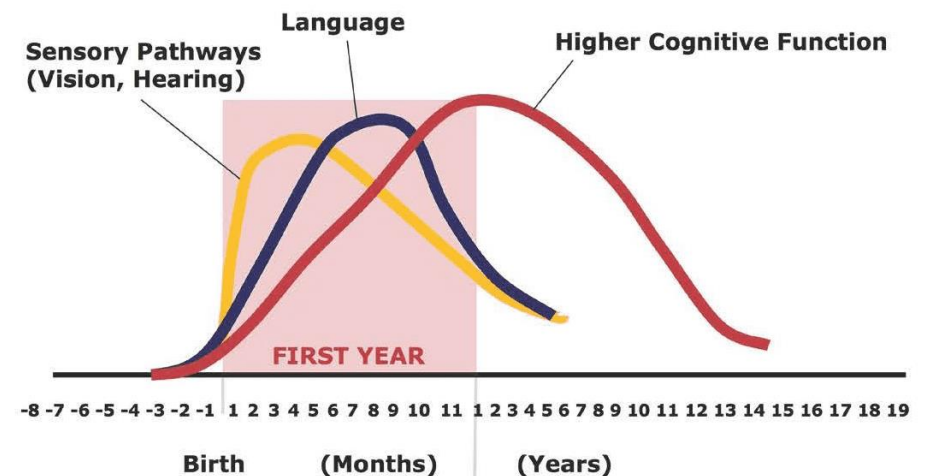
# Early Intervention is Key



Center on the Developing Child  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

## Human Brain Development

Neural Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially



Source: C.A. Nelson (2000)



# Florida Early Childhood Court Best Practice Standards

November 2019



## Florida's Early Childhood Courts Best Practice Standards

I.



### Target Population

The target population is abused and/or neglected children ages 0-36 months who are removed from their homes and placed in out-of-home care (relative, non-relative, or foster care homes).

II.



### Disadvantaged Groups

Individuals from groups who have experienced discrimination or reduced opportunities receive the same opportunities as others to participate and succeed in Early Childhood Court.

III.



### Roles & Responsibilities of Judge/Magistrate

The judge/magistrate is up-to-date on law and best practices, interacts frequently and respectfully with participants and child caregivers, and gives due consideration to the input of team members.

IV.



### Child Parent Therapy

Participants receive an evidence-based intervention, Child Parent Psychotherapy, based on an assessment of the parent, the child, and the attachment relationship. The therapist informs the case plan and treatment recommendations.

V.



### Additional Treatment & Social Services

Participants receive additional treatment and social services necessary to address co-occurring disorders and other needs of the family to ensure case plan compliance and successful permanency.

VI.



### Family Time

Early Childhood Court ensures individualized, frequent, and meaningful contact between parents and children to enhance the child-parent relationship, as well as expedite permanency.

VII.



### Multidisciplinary Team

A multidisciplinary team participates in the operation of the Early Childhood Court, reviews participants' progress, provides observations, and makes recommendations.

VIII.



### Caseloads

The Early Childhood Court serves as many eligible individuals as practicable while maintaining continuous fidelity to the best practice standards.

IX.



### Monitoring & Evaluation

The Early Childhood Court routinely monitors its adherence to best practice standards and employs scientifically valid and reliable procedures to evaluate its effectiveness.

# ECC Positive Outcomes

- ▶ REUNIFICATION 4.5 months sooner
  - ▶ ADOPTION 3 months sooner
  - ▶ PERMANENT GUARDIANSHIP 5 months sooner
  - ▶ OVERALL PERMANENCY 3.5 months sooner
  - ▶ CASE CLOSURE 4.5 months sooner
- 
- ▶ Over half (52%) of children reunified with a parent
  - ▶ 37% were adopted
  - ▶ 11% achieved permanent guardianship



Expedited  
permanency



Minimize impact  
of trauma



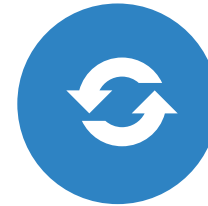
Heal parent-child  
relationship



Reduce number  
of moves



Prevent maltreatment/  
re-removal



End  
intergenerational  
cycle of abuse

# Goals of ECC



# Stakeholders



- ▶ Children
- ▶ Parents and Caregivers
- ▶ Trial Court Administrators
- ▶ Community Based Care Agency
- ▶ Case Management Organization
- ▶ Department of Children and Families
- ▶ Children's Legal Services
- ▶ Guardian ad Litem Office
- ▶ Parent Attorneys
- ▶ Community Providers
- ▶ Society
- ▶ Taxpayers
- ▶ And so many more....

# Key Team Members





# Implementation Nuts and Bolts

- ▶ Committed Judicial Leader
- ▶ Court-employed Community Coordinator
- ▶ Cultivate Stakeholder Support and Buy-in
- ▶ Establish Policies, Procedures, Eligibility Criteria
- ▶ Form an Active Community Team
- ▶ Think Tank Implementing Best Practices
- ▶ Develop Service Provider Capacity
- ▶ Docket Management
- ▶ Promote Parent Partnerships

# Resources

- [Zero to Three National Infant Toddler Court Program](#)
- [Florida Supreme Court ECC Best Practice Standards 2019](#)
- [Florida ECC Best Practice Standards Commentary](#)
- [Florida Early Childhood Court Manual](#)
- [Early Childhood Court in Florida Statutes](#)
- [Florida Early Childhood Courts Hope and Healing Video](#)
- [Florida Association for Infant Mental Health](#)
- [Circle of Security International website with training information](#)
- [Child Parent Psychotherapy resources, Florida State University, Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy](#)
- [Florida Tax Watch, Expanding Early Childhood Courts in Florida](#)

# THANK YOU

*Future Follow Up Questions are Welcome*



Dina Mezza  
Community Coordinator  
Early Childhood Court – Brevard County



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**Ohio Safe Babies Court Team™ (SBCT)**  
Prepared for the National Association of Counties (NACo)

September 29, 2022





# Ohio's Story

Ohio ranks in the bottom half of all 50 states and D.C. on:

## Infant maltreatment



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (2019)

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## Children ages 0-5 living in poverty



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019)

# Ohio's Story

## In Ohio:

**1** OF EVERY **39**  
**BABIES**

under 2 years old are  
victims of maltreatment.<sup>i</sup>

**70%**  
OF INFANTS  
UNDER 1 YEAR OLD  
IN STATE CUSTODY

have parents who use  
opiates including heroin.<sup>ii</sup>

**0-3**  
YEAR OLDS MAKE UP  
**29%** (4,646)

of all children in state custody.<sup>iii</sup>

i) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, "Child Maltreatment." (2017).

ii) Ready, Set, Soar Ohio, "The State of Infants & Toddlers." (March 2020)

iii) Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, "Heroin, Cocaine and Child Protection." (July 1, 2014)

# Contributing Factors

In Ohio, victims of maltreatment had caregivers with an identified substance abuse issue rose from 47% in 2016 to 52.2% in 2018. This is much higher than the national average of a 2% increase.

43.5% of Ohio infants and toddlers live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line.

# Statewide Advisory Group

- County Commissioners Association of Ohio
- Governor Mike DeWine's Office of Children's Initiatives
- Linking Systems of Care Program, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
- Lucas County Juvenile Court
- MomsFirst Fatherhood Coordinator
- Ohio Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
- Ohio CASA/GAL Association
- Ohio Chapter - American Academy of Pediatrics
- Ohio Children's Alliance
- Ohio Children's Trust Fund
- Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
- Ohio Department of Education
- Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Maternal, Child, and Family Health
- Ohio Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, Office of Families and Children
- Ohio National Association of Social Workers
- Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma)
- Ohio Supreme Court
- Public Children Services Association of Ohio

# Contributing Factors

Ohio has rural, urban, suburban, Appalachian communities



# National Leadership



ZERO TO THREE  
serves as our  
National  
Resource Center

[https://www.zerotothree.org/  
our-work/itcp/](https://www.zerotothree.org/our-work/itcp/)

# State Implementation Team



Department of  
Job and Family Services



**Ohio Children's Trust Fund**  
*Ohio's Prevent Child Abuse America Chapter*

# Local Sites

Lucas County

Scioto County

Cuyahoga County

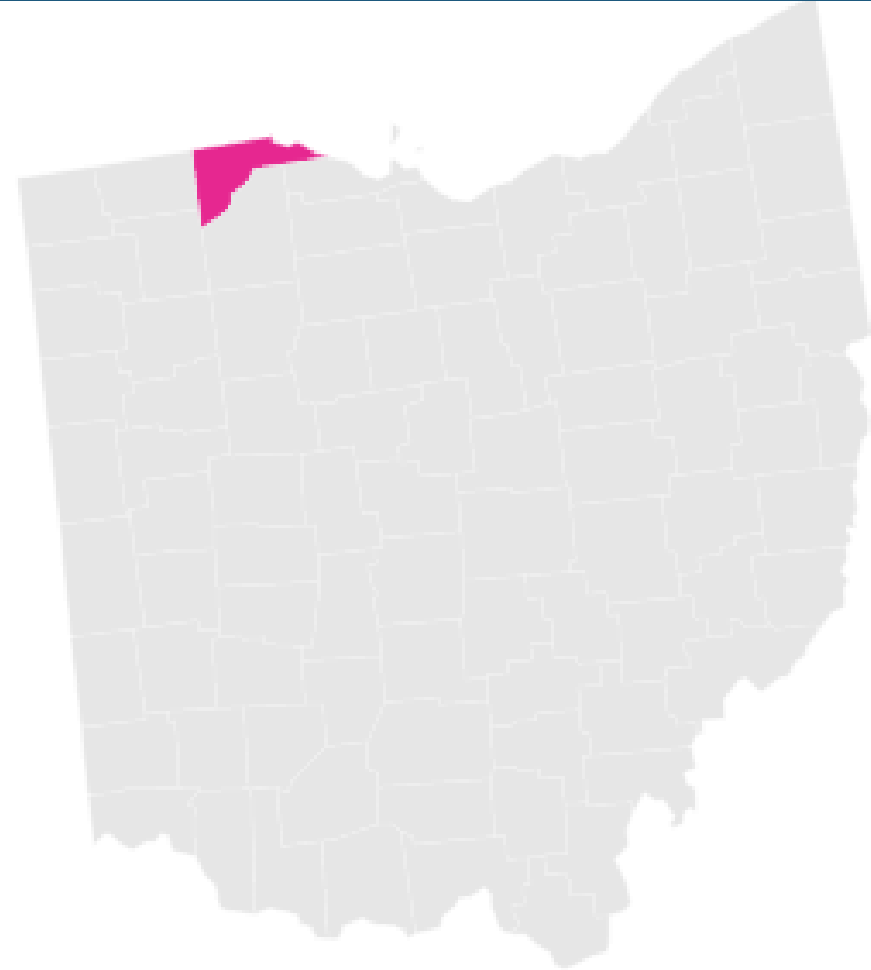


# Lucas County

Population: 431,102

Child Population: 99,585

Screened-in calls of A/N/D:  
5,327



# Scioto County

Population: 76,040

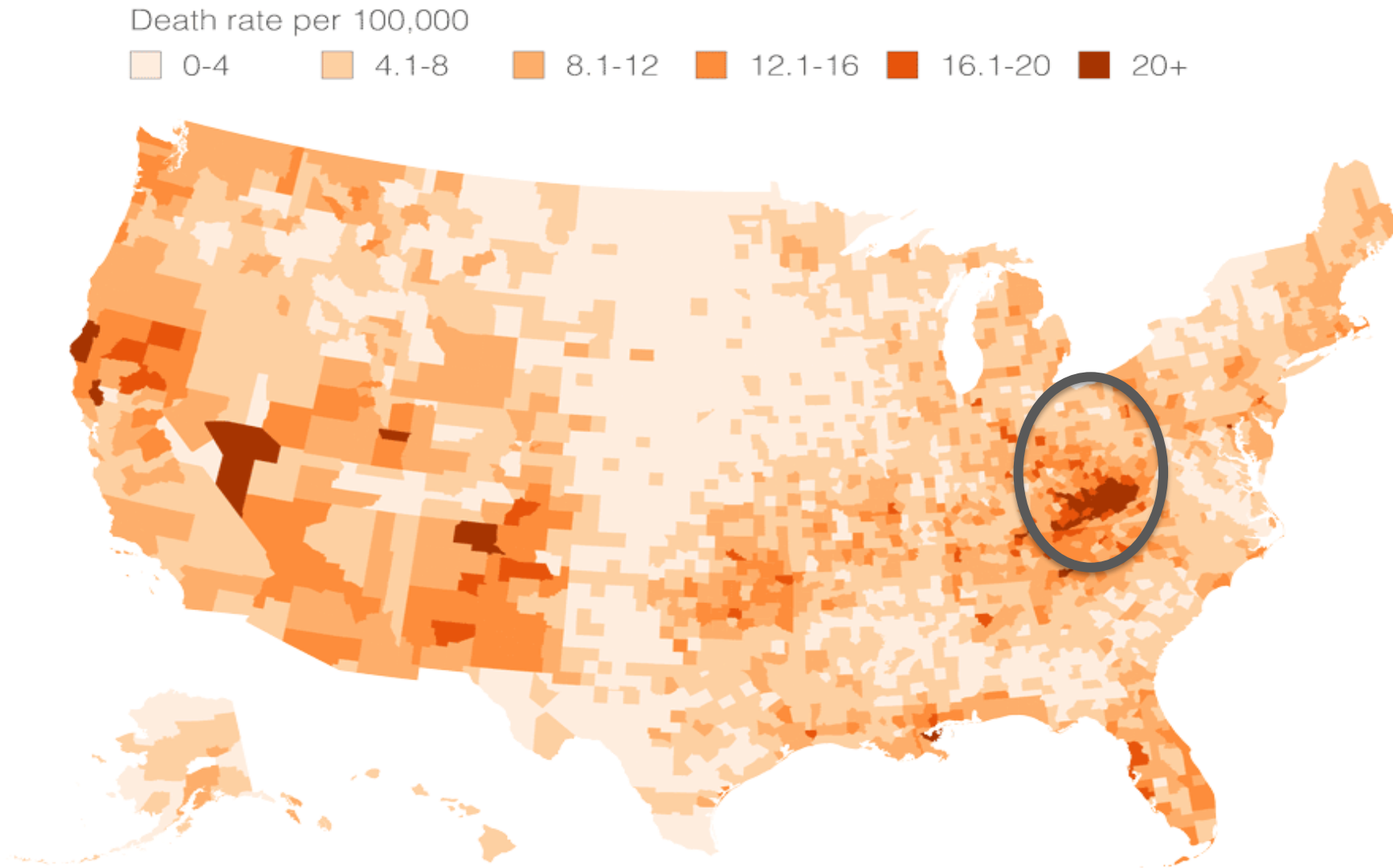
Child population: 16,653

Screened-in calls of A/N/D:  
701





# Opioid Overdose Deaths from 2002-2014 in the US



Source:  
CDC Drug  
poisoning  
mortality  
statistics.  
Graphic by  
Alex  
Newman.

**2002** | US: 23,518 deaths | 8.2 per 100,000

County 6.5

Lucas 6.5

Scioto 76.9

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION SERVICES

Scioto County 76

# Cuyahoga County

Population: 1,247,451

Child population: 261,965

Screened-in calls of A/N/D:  
13,349



# Next Steps

## **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration Grant Opportunity**

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Infant-Toddler Court Program – State Awards

Funding Opportunity Number: HRSA-22-073

Up to \$625,000 per award for 12 states

September 30, 2022 through September 29, 2027 (5 years)

Ohio proposed enhancements to current sites and eventual expansion to new sites across the state.

# Questions?





# For More Information

Visit Ohio's Safe Babies Court  
Team webpage:

[GroundworkOhio.org/SBCT](http://GroundworkOhio.org/SBCT)

Or email me:

[Lciavarelli@groundworkohio.org](mailto:Lciavarelli@groundworkohio.org)

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# Audience Q&A

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