

Why the focus on Infants and Toddlers

- Account for 30% of the children entering foster care
- Children birth to one have the highest rates of victimization
- Nationally, 1/3 of Infants and Toddlers investigated by Child Welfare Services have a developmental delay resulting in the need for early intervention services

Who is a part of the Court Team?

An important role of the Pinal County **Best for Babies Court Team** is the collaboration between the court, dependency unit, child welfare, agency, families, foster placements and community providers. A few members represent:

- Department of Child Safety
- Pinal County Regional Behavioral Health Authority
- Infant and Toddler Behavioral Health Agencies
- Arizona Early Intervention Program
- Department of Developmental Disabilities
- First Things First
- Early Head Start/Head Start

Court Team Vision Statement

The Pinal Best for Babies Court Team is committed to a process which seeks to improve efficient, timely and consistent services for children and families. The collaboration strives to protect, educate and support the overall well-being of dependent children in Pinal County.

Key roles in the Team process

Judicial Leadership

Judicial leadership is a key component for change as the judge is in the distinct position of authority over child welfare cases. They understand the need to focus on infants and toddlers when beginning to outline how the various parties can work together on behalf of dependent children in order to improve outcomes and achieve timely permanency.

Community Coordinator

The Community Coordinator, as part of Juvenile Court Services Dependency Unit, collaborates with local public and private agencies such as the Department of Child Safety (DCS), behavioral health providers, early educational services, mental health and developmental specialists in order to ensure children and families receive timely and appropriate service delivery. The Community Coordinator is assigned by the judge to ensure the required assessments are completed and referrals are made based on specific recommendations.

The Pinal County Court Team is taking a leadership role with the following:

- Improving timeliness of referrals for necessary assessments and services for children under the age of three;
- Increasing awareness regarding the negative impact of trauma for infants and toddlers in the foster care system;
- Strengthening a collaborative team approach to assessments and services provided to infants and toddlers in foster care; and
- Improving outcomes for dependent children by addressing barriers which impact timely permanency and their overall wellbeing.

