

# Georgia Infant-Toddler Court Project

May 4, 2023

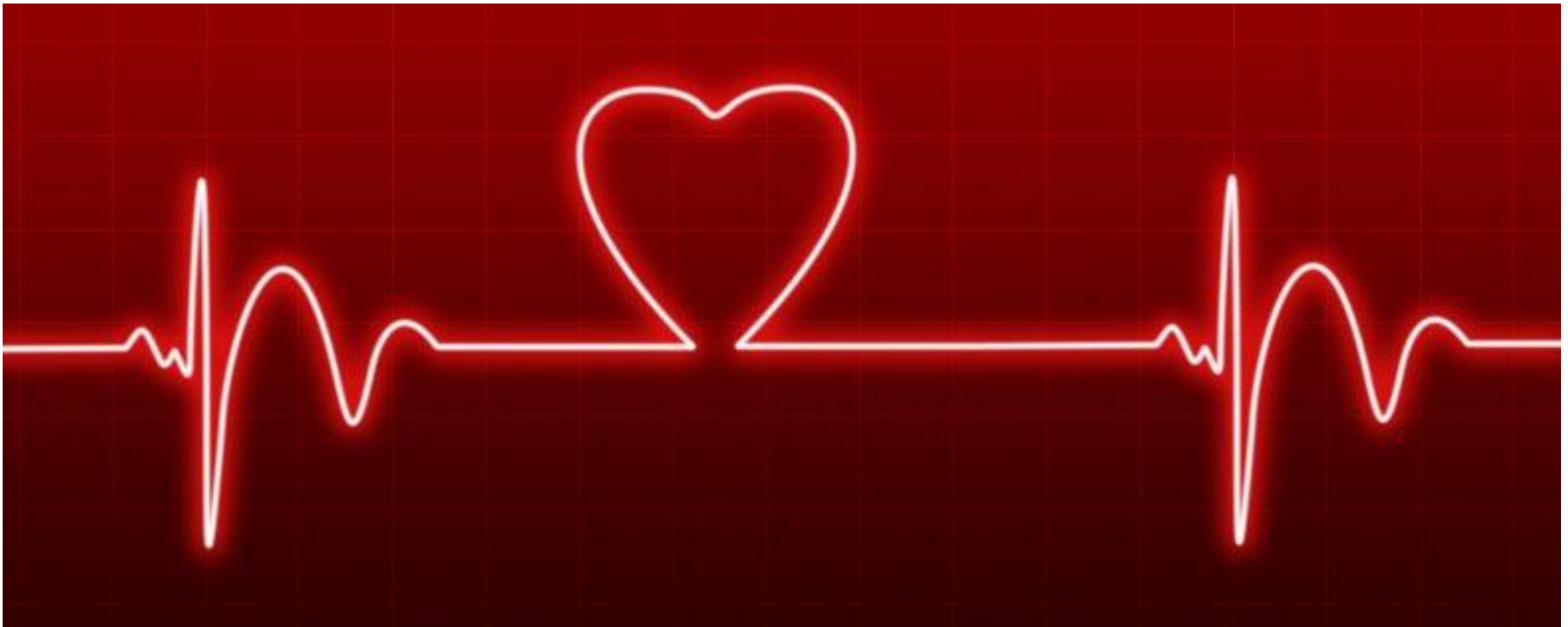


# Objective



To share information about a new and exciting program that will support communities and families to create safe stable nurturing home environments and communities.

# Heartbeats





*The Safe Babies approach is driven by a vision of prevention, where systems work together to strengthen the family, putting the need to protect and build safe, stable and nurturing early relationships at the center of child welfare decision-making.*

# HRSA Infant-Toddler Court Program & The Safe Babies Court Team Approach



## The Safe Babies Court Team™ Approach

ZERO TO THREE's SBCT approach applies the science of early childhood development in meeting the urgent needs of infants and toddlers and strengthening their families.

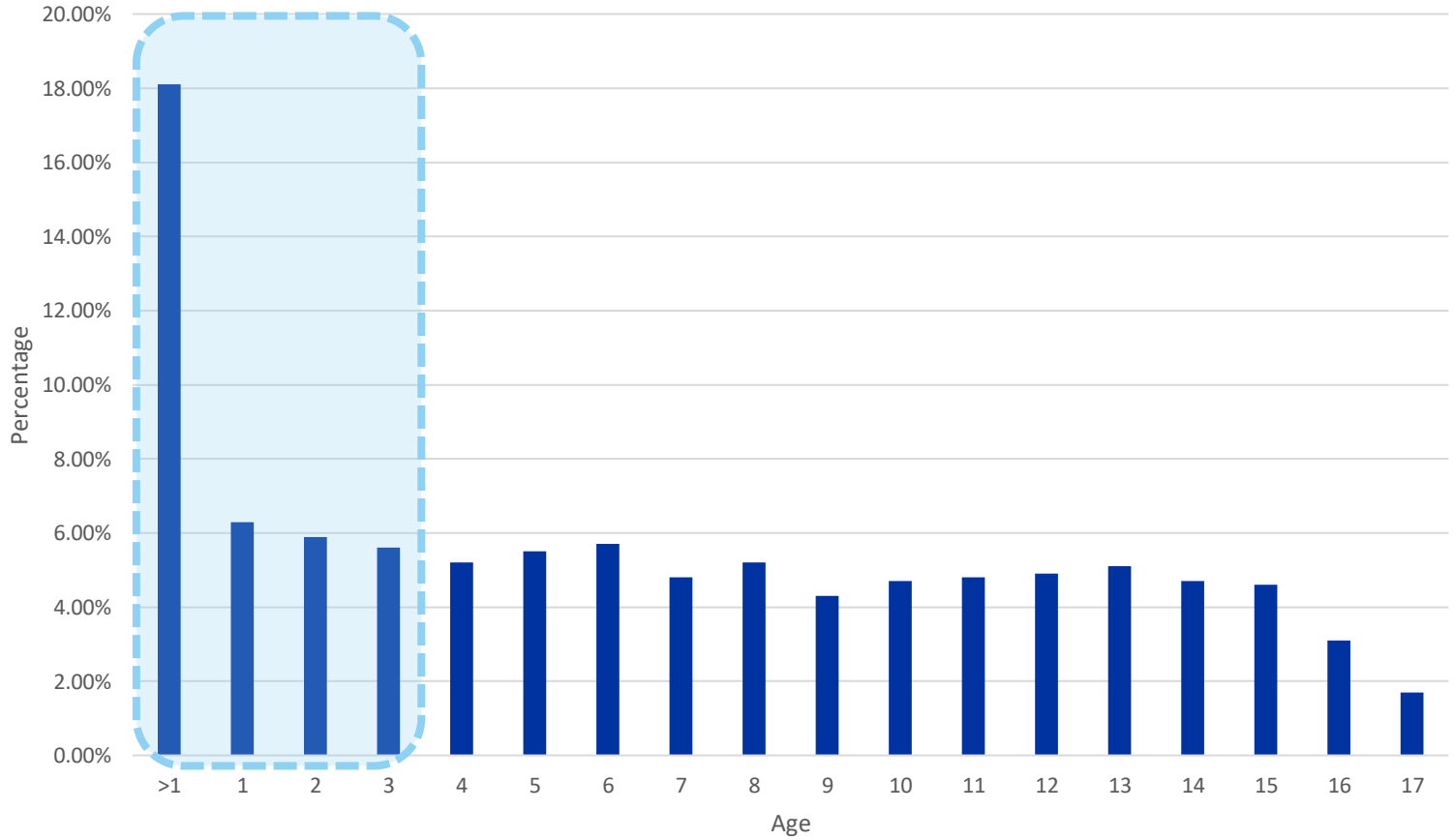
- The target population is children birth to three years of age under court jurisdiction, who are in foster care or at risk of removal, and their families.
- The goal is to advance the health and well-being of very young children and their families, so they flourish.
- SBCTs promote healthy early childhood development, support family resiliency, and build community capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect.



**IMPACT**  
Children and families that participate in SBCTs experience better outcomes. Over time, SBCTs lead to systems improvements and community-wide benefits.

- THE CHALLENGE**
- Child welfare and dependency court systems are not designed to address the urgent needs of infants, toddlers and their families
  - Risk and protective factors are not adequately addressed

# Highest Rates of Maltreatment - Georgia





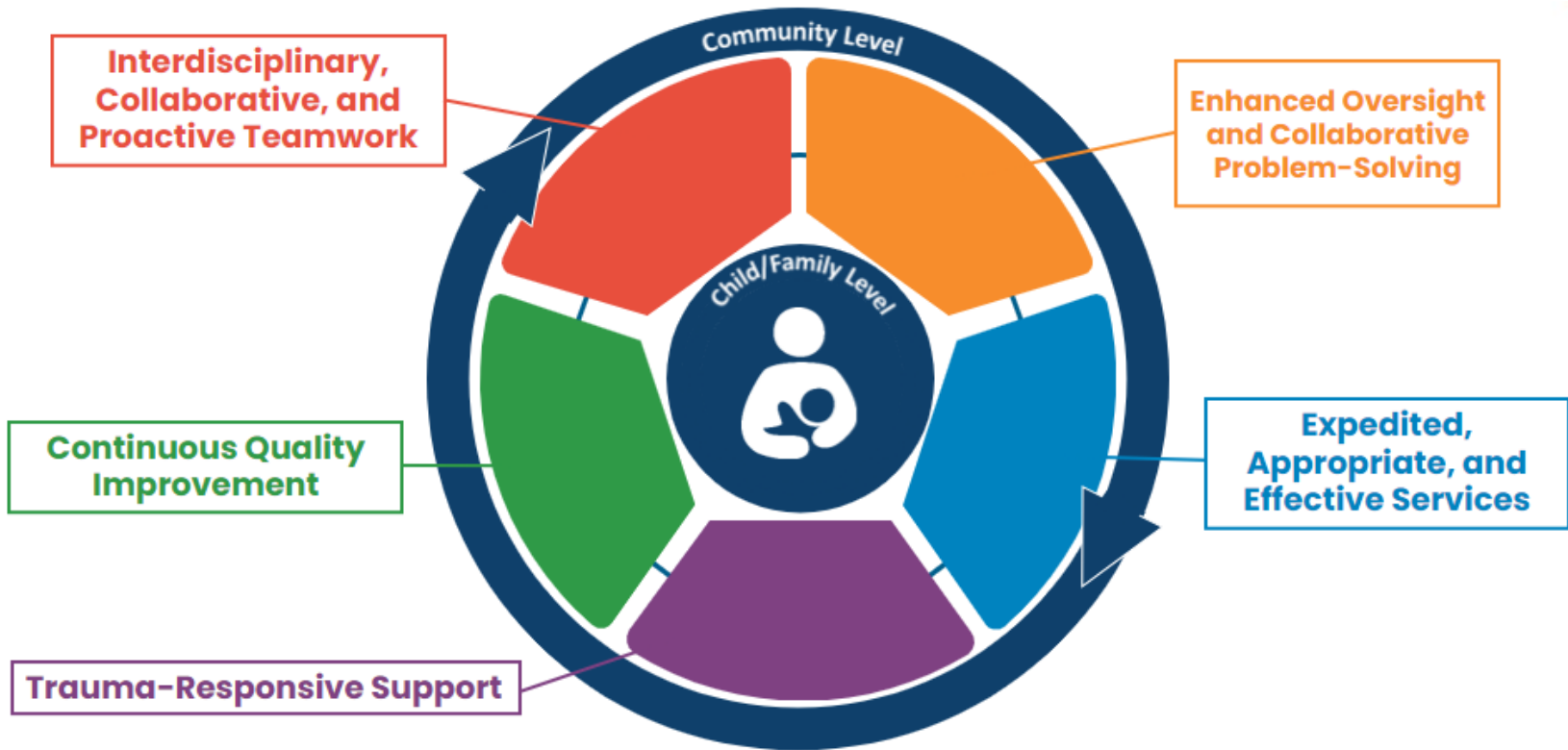
ZERO TO THREE  
Safe Babies Court Team™  
(SBCT)



Science of **early childhood development** to transform the **court** and **child welfare** systems to a new way of doing business



# SBCT Approach: Areas of Focus



# Safe Babies Approach Impact and Efficacy



No differences  
in outcomes by  
race or ethnicity



Double the national standard

Parents with highest ACE Scores



30% reunified

Maltreatment Recurrence within 12 months



Exit foster care 10 months earlier



Reach permanency **two times** faster than traditional child welfare

## State Team Development

Milestones for building a State Team and building the capacity of the State Team to support sites



Setting the stage and building relationships

State Team hired and trained

State Action Plan developed

Communication plan developed

State Advisory Group launch

State Action Plan implementation

Site selection process begins

## Site Exploration

Key process steps for determining capacity and fit to implement the approach

Site exploration team formed

Inventory of community resources and practices

Introductory trainings and exploratory discussions

## Site Installation

Key process steps for installing the drivers/infrastructure to support implementation and sustainability of the approach

Active Community Team launched

Community Coordinator hired and trained

Site Implementation Team launched

Site implementation plan developed

## Site Initial Implementation

Key process steps for beginning to implement the approach and continuing to build infrastructure

Family engagement begins

Monitoring case-level data through CQI

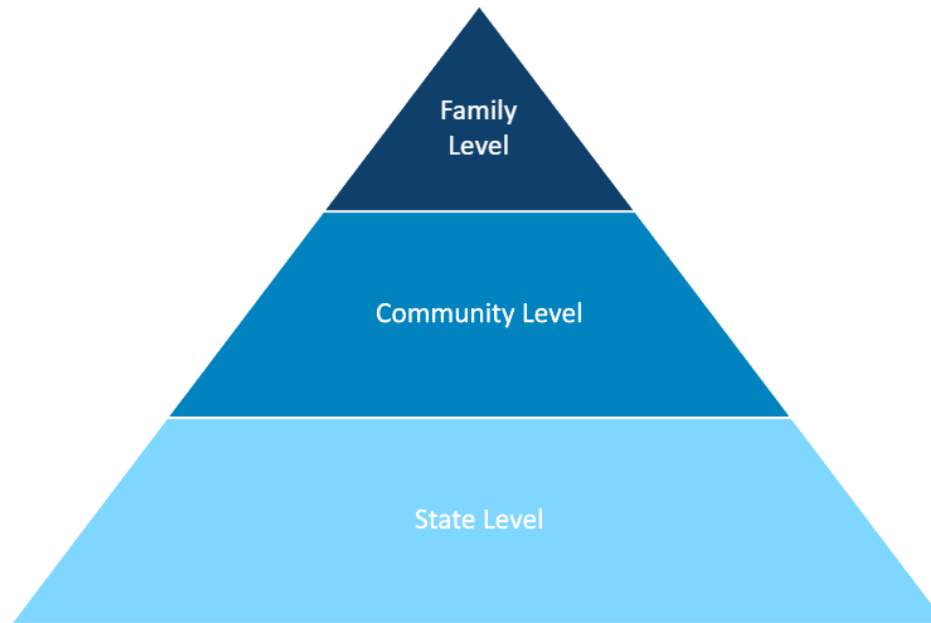
Monitoring implementation progress through CQI

## Site Full Implementation/Sustainability

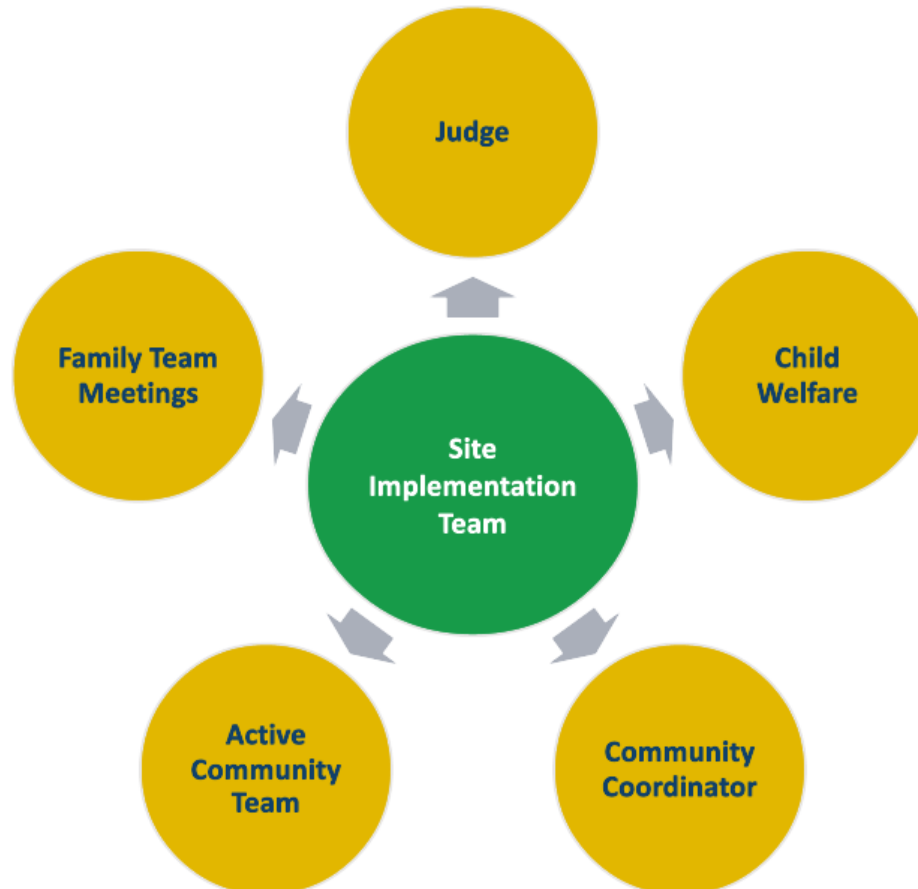
Key process steps for ongoing sustainability of the approach

Sustain infrastructure to support the SBCT approach (CQI, resources, policies)

# Three levels of Work



# Role of Site Implementation Team



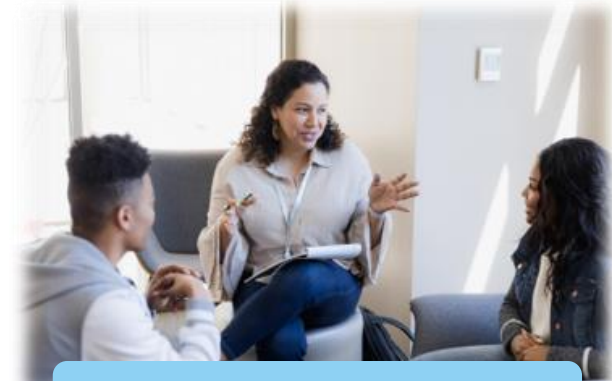
# SBCT: Agents of Change



Judge



Child Welfare Staff



Community Coordinator



Family Team Meetings



Active Community Team

# The Judge's Role: In-Court and Out-of-Court

## Create

Create a collaborative solution-finding atmosphere in the courtroom

## Develop

Develop an atmosphere of kindness, respect, and empathy for parents

## Engage

Engage community partners to assure that needed services for children and families are available and accessible



# The Community Coordinator

- *Build linkages across systems so that services are better aligned and coordinated*
- *Provide a consistent and strong voice for the urgent developmental needs of infants and toddlers, including the critical role of early caregiver-child relationships*
- *Elevate parent voice throughout the child welfare process.*





# Child Welfare Staff

Engaging parents in the approach and empowering them in the case process

Facilitating access to systems and supports

Building community partnerships that increase coordination, alignment and integration of services and supports



# The Family Team & Family Team Meetings



- *Regular meetings, with neutral facilitation*
- *Discussions center on the **specific developmental needs** of the infant/toddler*
- *Empower parents, shared planning process*
- *Teaming – solution-focused, mutual respect, no surprises*

# How Do We Know the SBCT Approach is Working?

## Responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences

# 83.7%

reached permanency within 12 months among children with closed cases.

Compared to the Children's Bureau national standard at **40.5%**



JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC



# 48.6%

were reunified with parents



# 32.2%

were adopted



# 14%

were placed with a fit and willing relative

# 74.3%

was the lowest percentage among SBCT sites for reaching permanency within 12 months across all analysis of ACEs and risk factors

*Note: No significant differences for permanency within 12 months by child's race/ethnicity.*



Quality Improvement Center  
for Research-Based  
Infant-Toddler Court Teams

Safe Babies  
Court Team™  
Approach

### CITATION

Adverse Childhood Experiences, Family Risk Factors, and Child Permanency Outcomes of Very Young Children Involved in Safe Babies Court Team™ Sites is part of a series of briefs based on the evaluation of the Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams.

# Georgia's Project Objectives & Workplan



# HRSA-Funded Georgia Infant-Toddler Court Project

**\$3 million  
across  
5 years**

For statewide  
and local site  
planning and  
implementation

**3 local  
sites  
funded**

With 1/3 of the  
grant's funds  
supporting local  
site  
implementation  
and trainings

**National  
technical  
assistance**

From Zero to  
Three and HRSA  
to help build  
state-level  
leadership and  
infrastructure

A photograph of a family of four—a woman with curly hair, a man with a beard, and two young children—gathered around a laptop. They are all looking at the screen with interest and smiles. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter.

# Project Goal

To improve Georgia's statewide systems and policies to support young children (ages 0-3) and their families who are involved, or at risk of involvement, with the child welfare system, and build capacity to prevent child maltreatment more broadly.

# Project Objectives

## Establish leadership capacity

in Georgia to inform ITC implementation through the creation and training of a state-level ITC leadership team. The leadership team will include state-level partners, local leaders, and families with lived experience.

## Develop a state action plan

to guide ITC implementation in the state through a systematic process led by the state-level ITC leadership team and involving the ITC National Resource Center, relevant stakeholders, and families with lived experience.

## Increase capacity through training

of state and local partners in the ITC approach and topics related to the developmental health, mental health, and wellbeing of very young children.

## Establish local capacity for ITC implementation

by establishing three local ITC sites through a Request for Applications process informed by the state action plan, ITC leadership team and families with lived experience.

## Improve child and family outcomes

during and after child welfare and/or court involvement demonstrated through collection and evaluation of program outcomes data at the 3 local ITC sites. (Process & Outcome Evaluation)

## Establish sustainability and scaling plan

utilizing evaluation data and learnings from implementation to inform sustainability and future scaling of the model across Georgia. (Implementation & Sustainability Evaluation)

# Project Infrastructure

## Infant-Toddler Court (ITC) Leadership Team

*The ITC Leadership Team will provide leadership and oversight to all project activities, support creation of the state action plan, and inform project implementation.*

- State Advisory Board
- Local Implementation Workgroup
- Funding & Sustainability Workgroup
- Data & Evaluation Workgroup
- Other Workgroups to be identified by ITC Leadership Team

## Local Infant-Toddler Court (ITC) Sites

*Local ITC sites will be selected through a Request for Applications process based on criteria developed by the ITC Leadership Team. Sites will receive funding for at least 3 years at \$60,000 per year and receive technical assistance from the COE and National TA Center.*

- Local ITC Site 1: Site Coordinator Data Support
- Local ITC Site 2: Site Coordinator Data Support
- Local ITC Site 3: Site Coordinator Data Support

## GA-AIMH Training Team

*GA-AIMH will be the training provider for the project. They will help build local site capacity to serve families with young children in developmentally appropriate ways.*

## Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health

*The COE will provide leadership, backbone, & evaluation support to the ITC project, including a full-time project coordinator.*



# Project Timeline

## Year 1

**Planning and development** of leadership team, statewide action plan, and RFA for local sites

## Years 2-5

**Implementation** of statewide action plan, funding of 3 local sites, and evaluation of project activities.

Year 2: Local sites 1 & 2 identified

Year 3: Local site 3 identified

All local sites will be funded for at least 3 years.



By the end  
of Year 1...


We will have 5 key documents to guide our work

- Disparity Impact Statement
- State Action Plan
- Request for Applications for Local Sites
- Sustainability Plan
- Evaluation Plan

These will be living documents and will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to address changes in implementation.



## **Infant Toddler Court Programs keep babies and their families at the center by...**


- Advocating for frequent, quality family time
  - Incorporating the voices of people with lived experience
  - Raising awareness for the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers
  - Training agents of change and community members
- 

# Early Connections Last a Lifetime



# Questions?

Some of the content in today's presentation was provided by the *National Resource Center for the Infant-Toddler Court Program* at Zero To Three ([www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org))



# Thank you!

**Twanna Nelson**  
Deputy Director  
System of Care  
tnelson45@gsu.edu

**Mitzi Fears**  
Statewide Coordinator  
Georgia Infant-Toddler Court Project  
mfears1@gsu.edu



**CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR  
CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**  
integrating research, policy, and practice

**55 Park Place NE, 8th Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
gacoeonline.gsu.edu**