



Child Welfare and Early Childhood: Cross-Systems Collaboration to Improve Outcomes for Young Children and Their Families

Webinar 2: Cross-Systems Engagement

Moderator

Cynthia L. Tate, Ph.D.
The BUILD Initiative

Wednesday, February 16, 2022



Objectives of the Series

- Raise awareness about young children and their families encountering or involved with the child welfare system.
- Promote opportunities and strategies for prevention for families and communities.
- Educate participants about the racial disparities in family separation from child welfare involvement.
- Provide examples of cross-systems collaboration on behalf of our youngest children.

Objectives of Webinar 2: Cross-Systems Engagement

- To review research on policies and practices to support maltreated infants and toddlers and their families.
- To learn about Washington State's DCYF Child Welfare-Early Learning Navigator program.
- To learn the Framework and Strategies for cross-systems engagement in Infant-Toddler Court Programs.
- To discuss the challenges and successes of collaboration between the early childhood and child welfare systems.

Presenters

Torey Silloway

Director, Policy and Financing
National Infant-Toddler Court Program
(ITCP)

Erinn Havig, MSW

Primary & Community Prevention
Lead
Strengthening Families WA | Family
Support Programs Division

Darneshia Allen

Director of Practice and Field
Operations
National Infant-Toddler Court Program

Minette Mason

Child Welfare-Early Learning Project
Lead
WA Dept. of Children, Youth, and
Families

What does the data tell us about young children in child welfare?



About 40% of children who are confirmed by child protective services as victims of child maltreatment are ages 0-4

Infants and toddlers are removed from their homes at a rate more than double that of children ages 4-17

There were 30,687 infants under the age of 1 in foster care in 2019, and 145,468 children between 1-5

Children of color are disproportionately represented in foster care.



ZERO TO THREE

Our mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

Cross-Systems Engagement

Torey Silloway, Director, Policy and Financing
National Infant-Toddler Court Program, ZERO TO THREE

Safe Babies Court Team™ (SBCT)

ZERO TO THREE's Safe Babies Court Team™ (SBCT) Approach applies the **science** of **early childhood development** in meeting the **urgent needs** of infants and toddlers and strengthening their **families**.

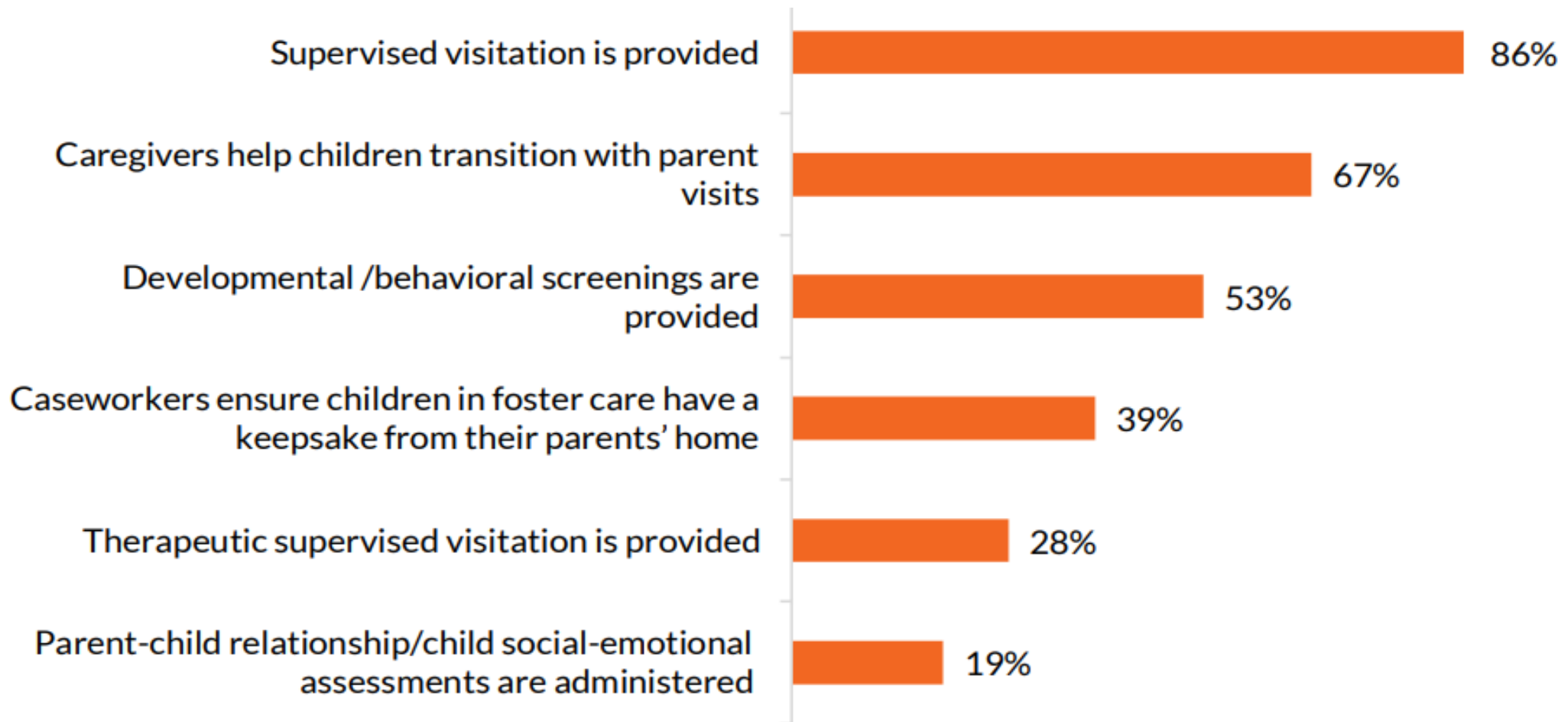
- The goal is to **advance the health and well-being** of very young children and their families, so they flourish.
- The target population is children **birth to three** years of age under the **court's jurisdiction**, who are in foster care or at risk for removal, and their families.
- The intense focus drives best practices for babies, toddlers, and their families by:
 - **Removing barriers** to racial equity and social justice.
 - Empowering parents and **elevating the parent voice**.

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).



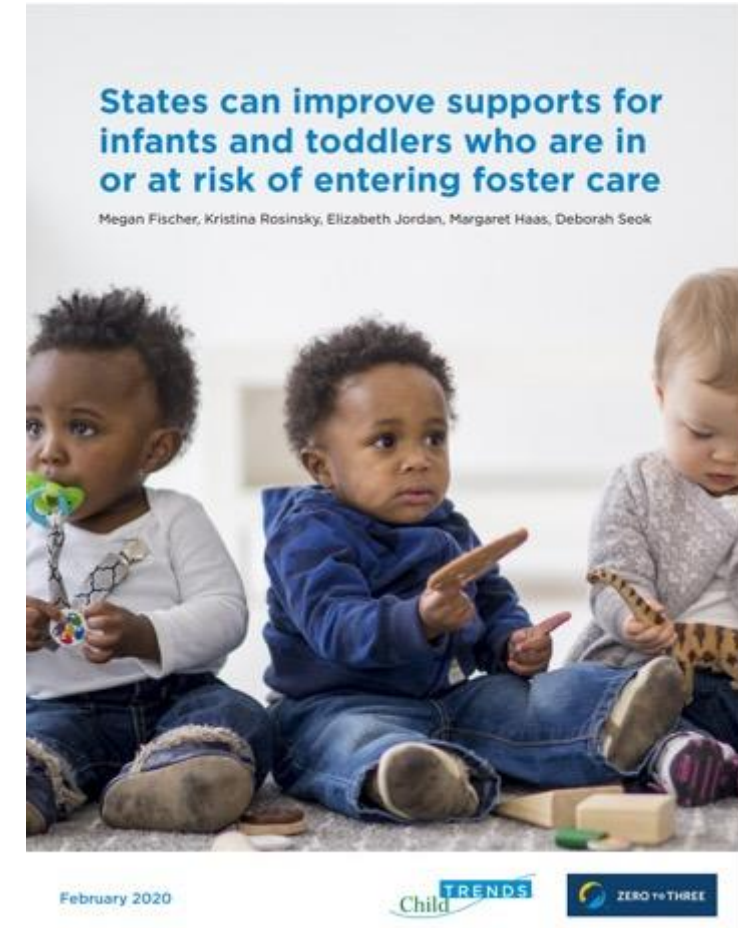
Supportive Practices for Social and Emotional Well-Being

- Supportive practices/services routinely provided to meet the social and emotional well-being of infants and toddlers who are in foster care or candidates for foster care, and their families



Key findings from the ZERO TO THREE and Child Trends survey:

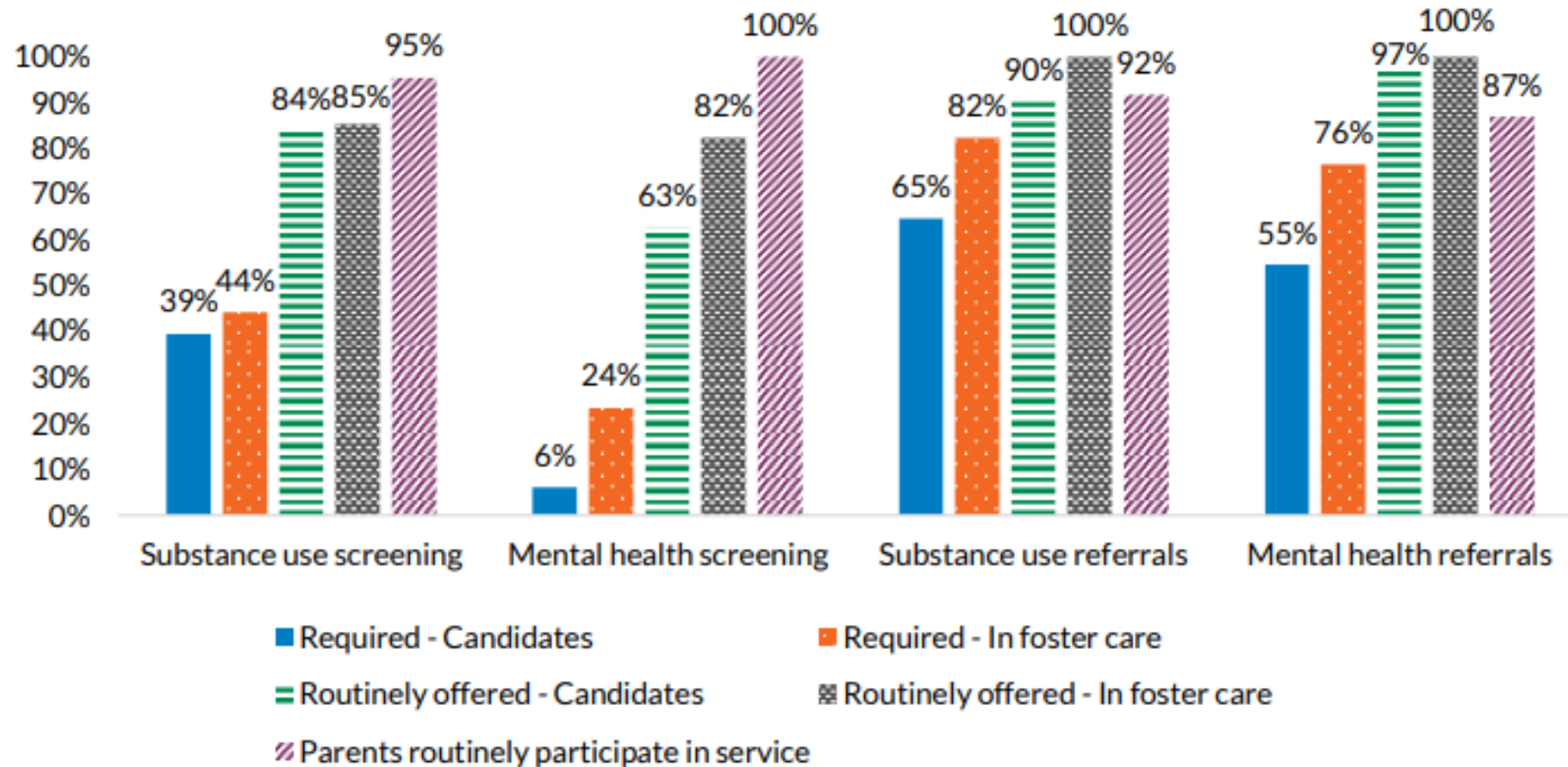
- State policies and practices for maltreated infants and toddlers and their families have not changed significantly since the 2013 survey was administered.
- State child welfare policies and practices could better address the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers.
- Despite areas of strength, fewer states have implemented policies or practices to support candidates for foster care as compared to children in care.





Screening and Referrals of Parents

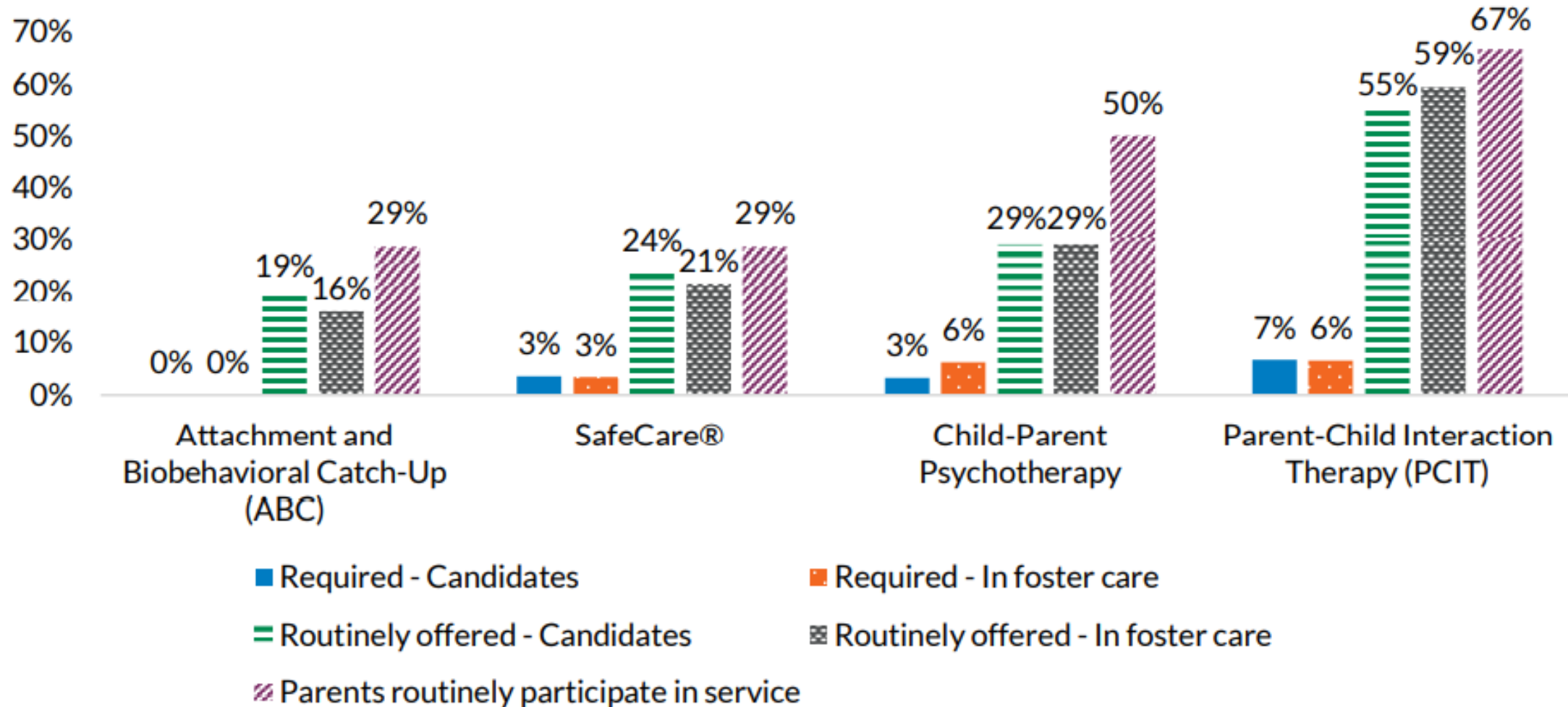
Screening and referrals of parents of children in foster care or candidates for foster care





Parent-Child Relationship Interventions

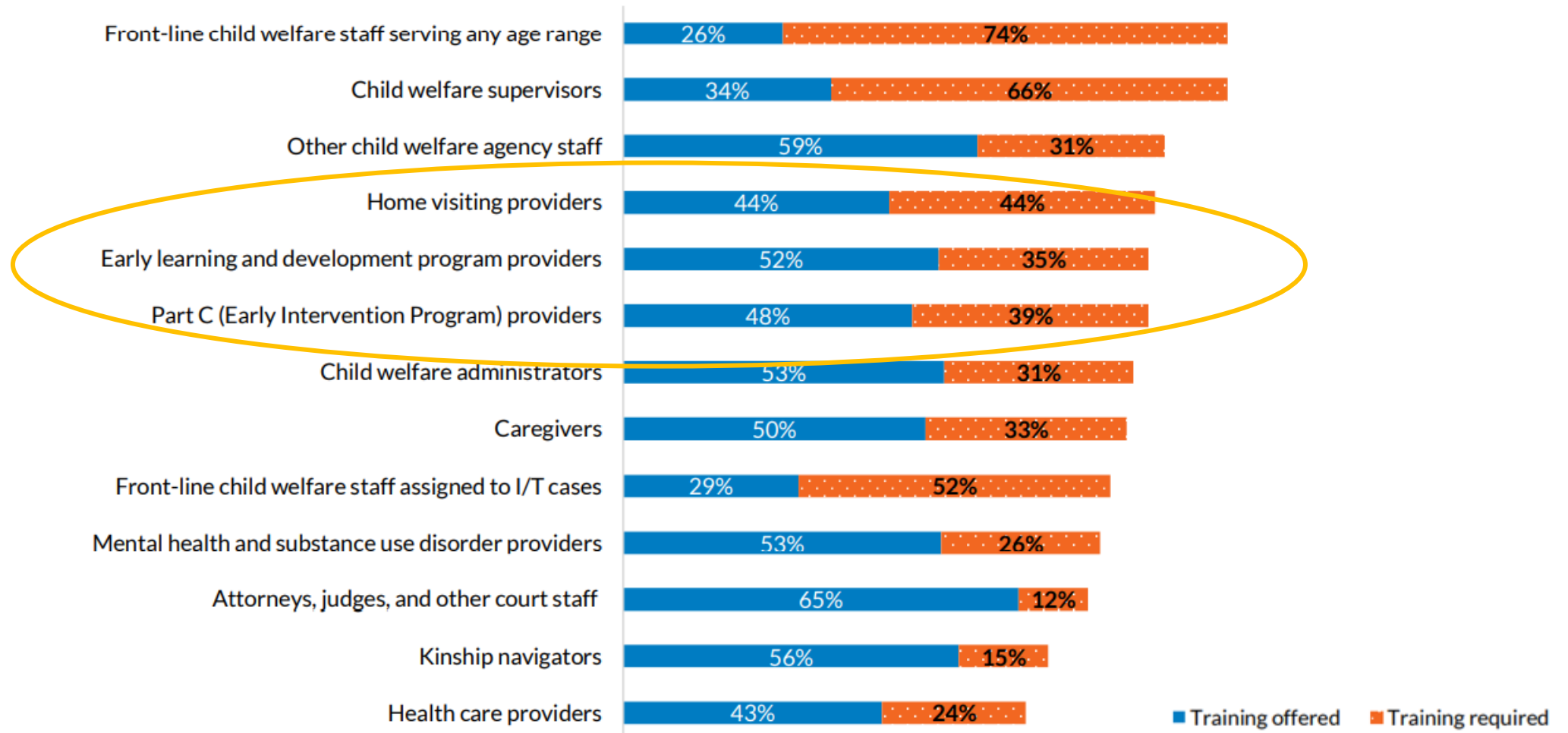
Parent-child relationships interventions by percentage of states





Training for Professionals

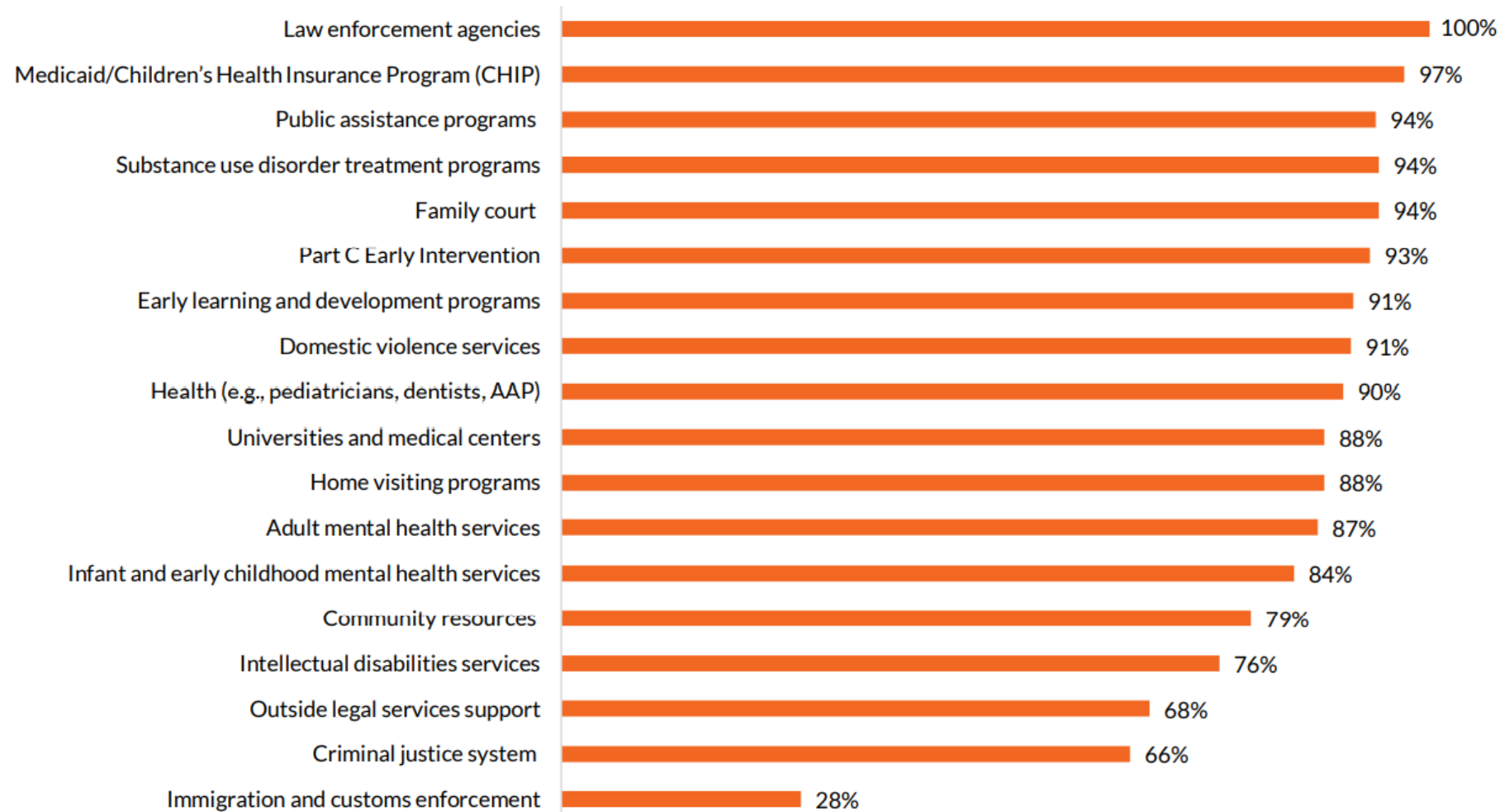
Training on developmentally appropriate practices for infants and toddlers in foster care and candidates for foster care





Partnerships and Collaboration

States reporting linkages between child welfare agency and other entities, by percentages of states





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Related Policy Recommendations

1. Create a child and family well-being system that helps all families thrive.
2. Infuse family strengthening, child development, and parent voice into child welfare systems.



Step 1: Create a child and family well-being system that helps all families thrive



Challenge

- Families may not receive services until a crisis occurs and services often do not meet underlying unmet needs that negatively affect child and family health.
- Vast majority of children removed from home due to “neglect.”
- Poverty often mistaken for neglect, resulting in increased reports of child maltreatment and out-of-home placements. Also, systemic racism and implicit bias have led to unnecessary removals.
- Systems don’t support families in navigating and accessing the array of supports they need to be strong nurturers of their children.

Opportunity

- Provide a continuum of services to all children and families to support good health, including affordable health care, comprehensive health and well-being assessments, and nutritious food.
- Ensure families have access to affordable, high-quality services and supports that meet their basic needs, including safe and stable housing and economic supports.
- Strengthen early learning experiences, including access to high-quality child care.
- Build community-level systems that provide a comprehensive continuum of supports to families through enhanced coordination and access to resources and services for families.

Step 2: Infuse family strengthening, child development, and parent voice into child welfare systems

Challenge

- Case workers, attorneys, judges, and some early childhood service providers not trained in key issues related to early childhood development, child trauma, and other critical issues that require additional training and expertise.
- Lack of timely screening, assessment, and linkage to services to address needs of infants, toddlers, and their parents.
- Parents are frequently sidelined in their children's case planning/decision-making, with limited opportunities to improve the relationship with their children.

Opportunity

- Adopt early childhood development principles into all child welfare and dependency court and family treatment court practices.
- Provide infants and toddlers with an open child welfare case and their parents with regular screenings, comprehensive assessment of needs, and timely referral and connection to appropriate services.
- Require frequent, high-quality family time (visitation) for infants and toddlers in out-of-home care and their parents and siblings.
- Create a network of family support partners or mentors to help parents successfully navigate the child welfare and court processes.



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The National Infant-Toddler Court Program
Transforming Families and Communities
Early Childhood and Child Welfare: Cross-Systems Engagement



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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 US 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 US Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).



Our Bold Vision



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



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.

Why This Approach Matters



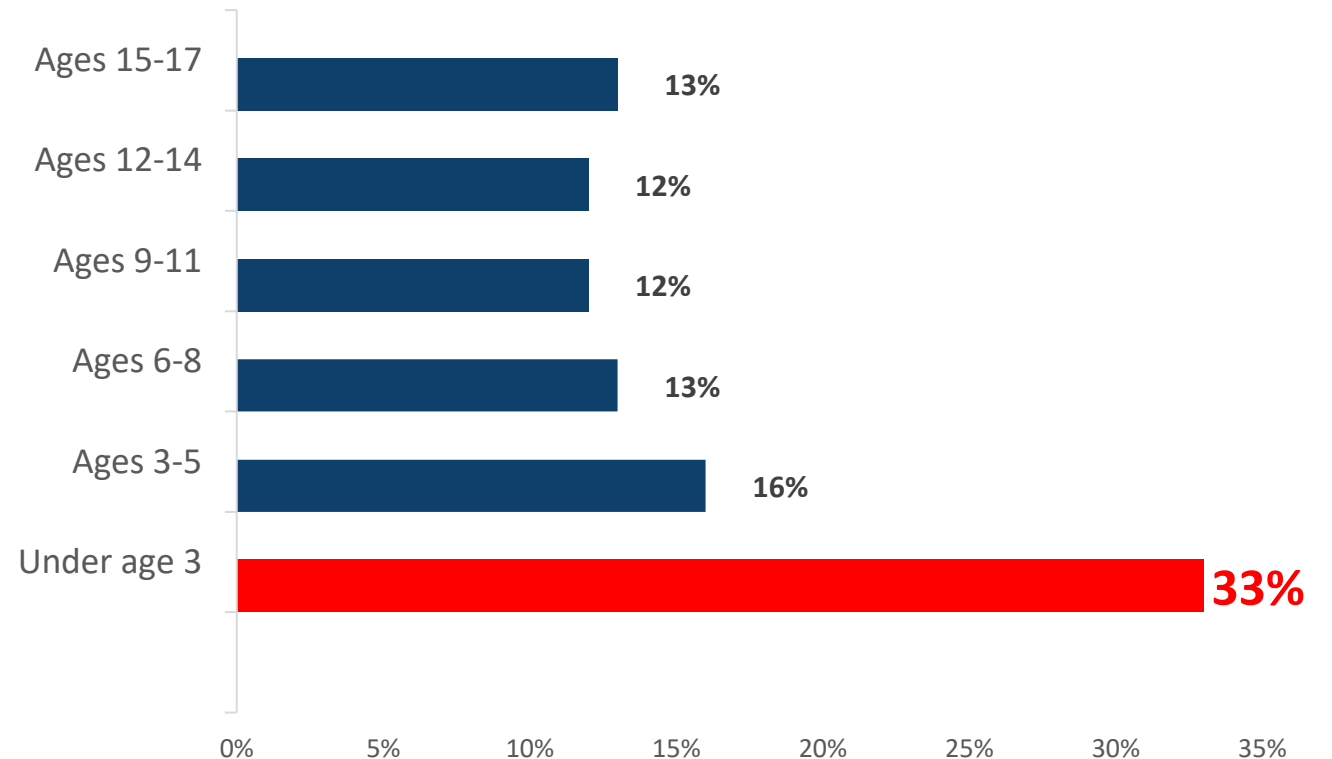
EVERY 7 MINUTES...

a baby or toddler is **removed** from their parents in the US due to **neglect or abuse** and sent to live in a foster home.

Babies and toddlers are the **largest group** of children who are maltreated in the US



Children **under age 3** enter foster care at a higher rate than any other age group



Data represents children entering foster care in FY2020: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, *AFCARS Report No. 28*, November 2021

Safe Babies Court Team™ Approach Core Components and Key Activities



Interdisciplinary, Collaborative, and Proactive Teamwork

- Judicial and Child Welfare Leadership
- Local Community Coordinator
- Active Community Team

Enhanced Oversight and Collaborative Problem-Solving

- Pre/Post Removal Conferences and Family Team Meetings

Expedited, Appropriate, and Effective Services

- Continuum of Services for Children and Families

Trauma-Responsive Support

- Meetings Parents Where They Are
- Nurturing Parents' Relationships and Building Supports in the Community
- Quality Family Time
- Concurrent Planning

Continuous Quality Improvement

- System Commitment to Continuous Learning and Improvement

What We Do



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

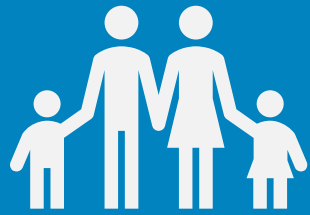
Elevating the Parent Voice

“Fostering resilience in children means investing in the adults who support them.”

- Dr. Sufna John



Community Capacity Building through Cross-System Collaboration



Family Level

- Parents
- Caregivers
- Children
- Assigned Attorneys
- Child Welfare
- Immediate Service Providers – Working Directly Each Specific Family



Community Level

- Courts
- Child Welfare Agency
- Community Agencies
- Public Health Department
- Early Interventionist
- Child Advocates
- Foundations
- Law Enforcement
- Other Community Institutions





The Active Community Team



Enhancing Community Capacity



Exploration and capacity building for Evidence-Based Interventions



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



Intentional partnerships to streamline processes for assessment and access to services



Leveraging Resources at the State and Local Level



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Grounded In Research



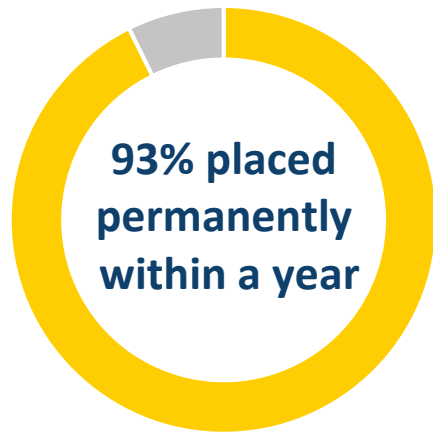
- ✓ Our approach was designed to infuse systems with best practices specific to the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families, based on the science of early childhood development.
- ✓ The Safe Babies Court Team™ approach is recognized as having promising research evidence by:
 - The **California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare.**
- ✓ The Safe Babies Court Team™ approach is approved as a best practice in:
 - The **Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Innovation Hub.**

<https://www.amchpinnovation.org/database-entry/infant-toddler-court-teams-based-on-the-zero-to-three-safe-babies-court-team-approach/>

It Works: Stronger Families



No differences in outcomes by race or ethnicity



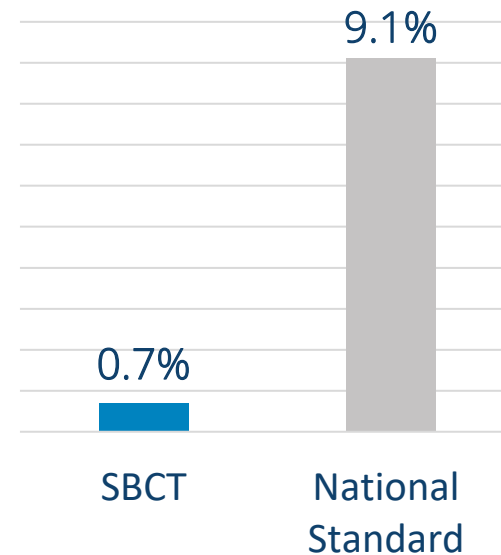
Double the national standard

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

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.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Interdisciplinary, Collaborative, and Proactive Teamwork
-Family Team
-Active Community Team

Enhanced Oversight & Collaborative Problem Solving

Expedited, Appropriate, & Effective Services

Trauma-Responsive Support

Continuous Quality Improvement

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Community partners and leaders

SBCT Community Coordinator

Child welfare agency decision-makers

System stakeholders

A state-level team supports SBCT implementation in states with multiple sites

The National Resource Center for the Infant-Toddler Court Program

Supports SBCT sites and states through technical assistance and training

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



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National Infant-Toddler Court Program

ZEROTOTHREE • 1255 23rd Street NW • Washington, DC 20037

www.zerotothree.org

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Child Welfare Early Learning Navigator (CWELN) Project

Virtual

Erinn Havig – Primary & Community Prevention Lead
Minnette Mason – CWELN Project Facilitator

www.dcyf.wa.gov

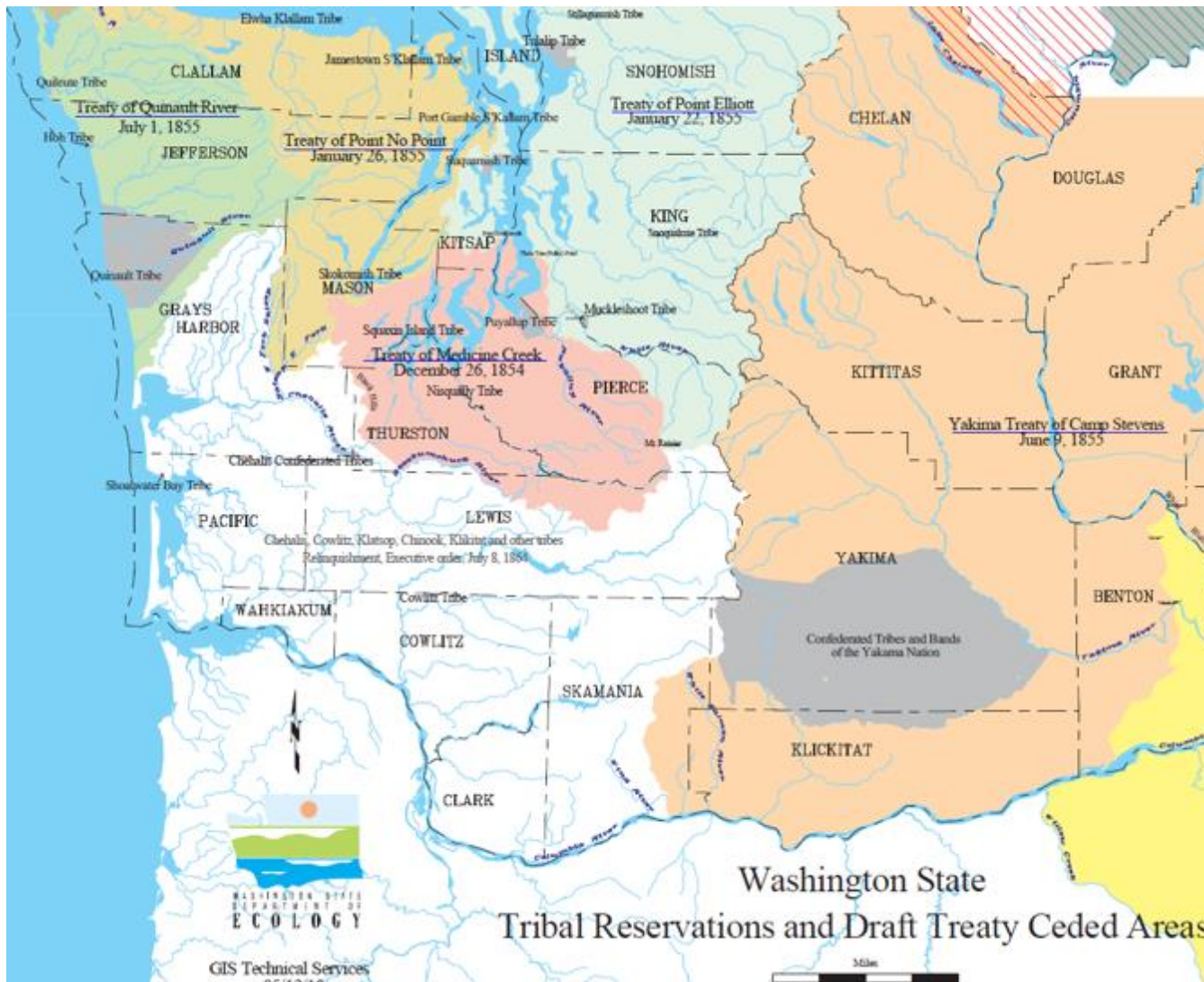


Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

We Are On Native Land

Erinn Havig
Primary & Community Prevention Lead
*Traditional lands of the **Cowlitz Tribe***

Minnette Mason
CWELN Project Facilitator
*Traditional lands of the **Steilacoom Tribe***



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Synopsis

- Where did the CWELN Project come from?
- What have we learned about child welfare-early learning connections?
- Where are we now?
- What's next?
- Resources

DCYF was created in 2017



Our vision is to ensure that "Washington State's children and youth grow up safe and healthy—thriving physically, emotionally, and academically, nurtured by family and community."



Working with Families, Providers, and Caseworkers to Uncover Barriers

DCYF Goals for the Project:

- Operationalize prevention mandate by linking child welfare and early learning functions.
- Increase engagement in early learning and family support services among CPS-involved families.
- Prevent subsequent maltreatment among CPS-involved families and prepare vulnerable children for academic success.



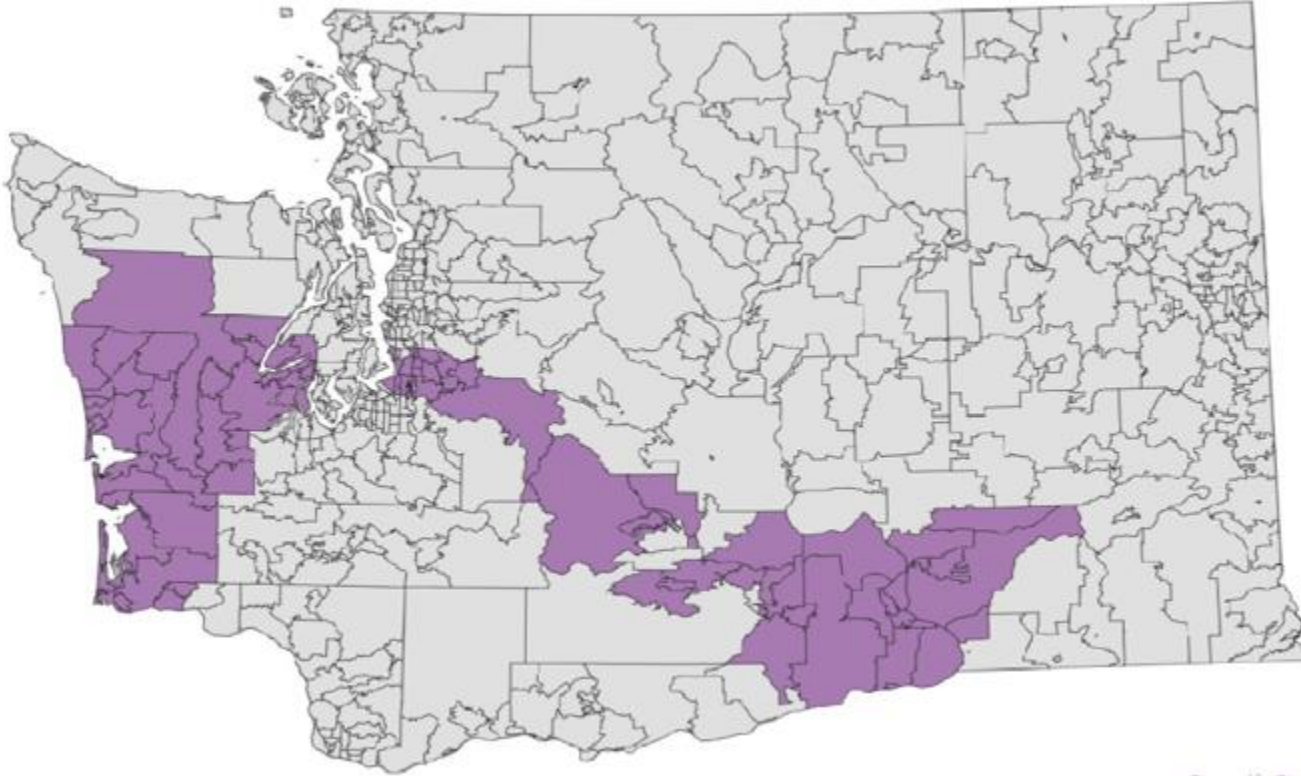
HARVARD Kennedy School
Government Performance Lab

CHALLENGES IN THE EARLY LEARNING REFERRAL PROCESS

- INCONSISTENT IDENTIFICATION OF FAMILIES ELIGIBLE FOR EARLY LEARNING
- FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS DID NOT CONSIDER LEARNING
- DIFFICULTY IN HELPING FAMILIES SELECT THE MOST APPROPRIATE SERVICES
- CUMBERSOME MECHANICS FOR CONNECTING FAMILIES WITH PROVIDERS
- INADEQUATE FOLLOW-UP TO ENCOURAGE SERVICE ENROLLMENT



Regions served by the Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators



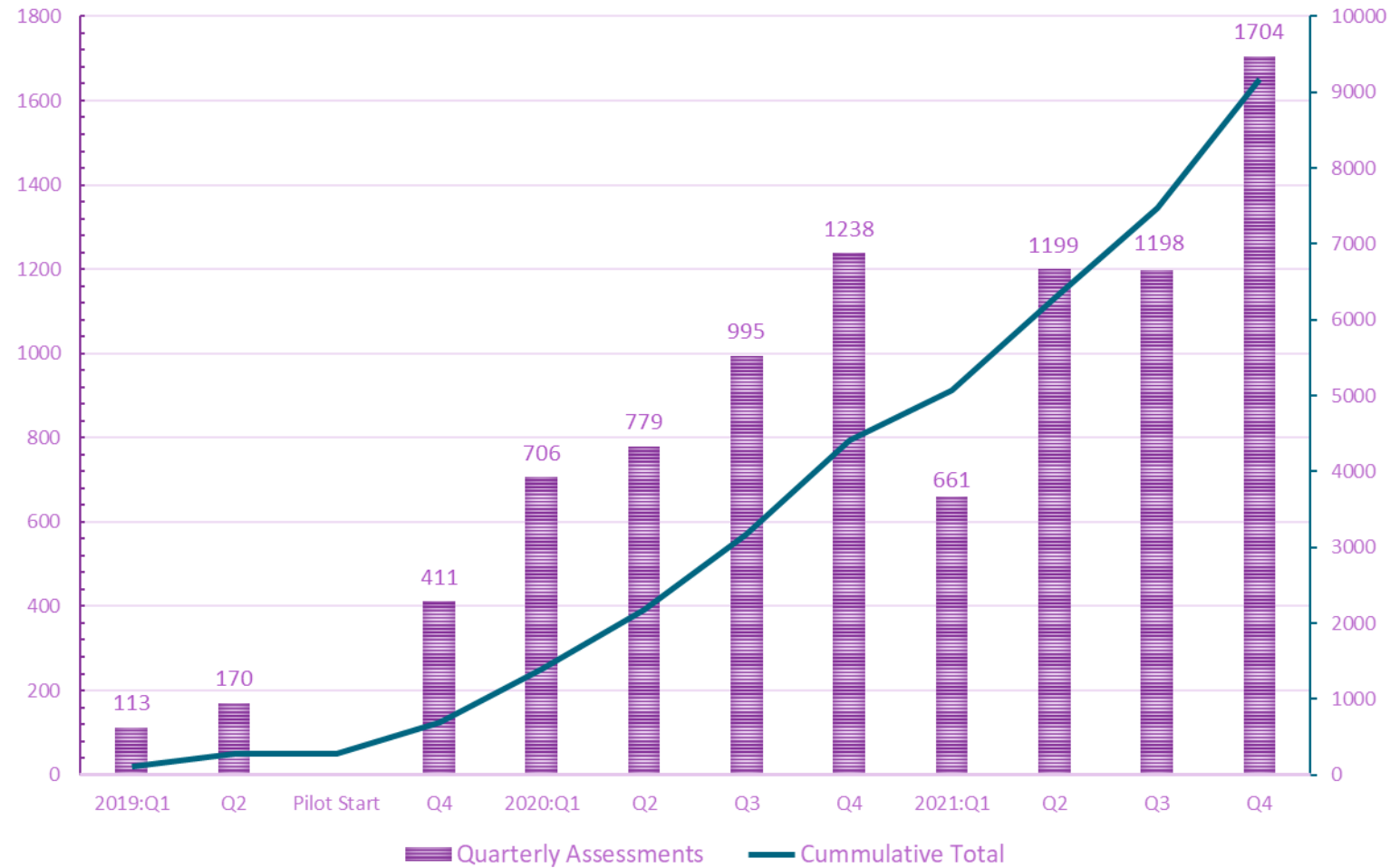
Four navigators working out of 10 child welfare field offices across various communities, including:

- South King County
 - Yakima County
 - Grays Harbor, Mason, and Pacific Counties
 - Cowlitz, Lewis and Clark Counties*
- *Intentional focus on Indian Child Welfare services*

Funding from the *Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five* has allowed the CWELN team to reflect on data, practices, and structures that make these referrals successful, so that the state can take this to scale.

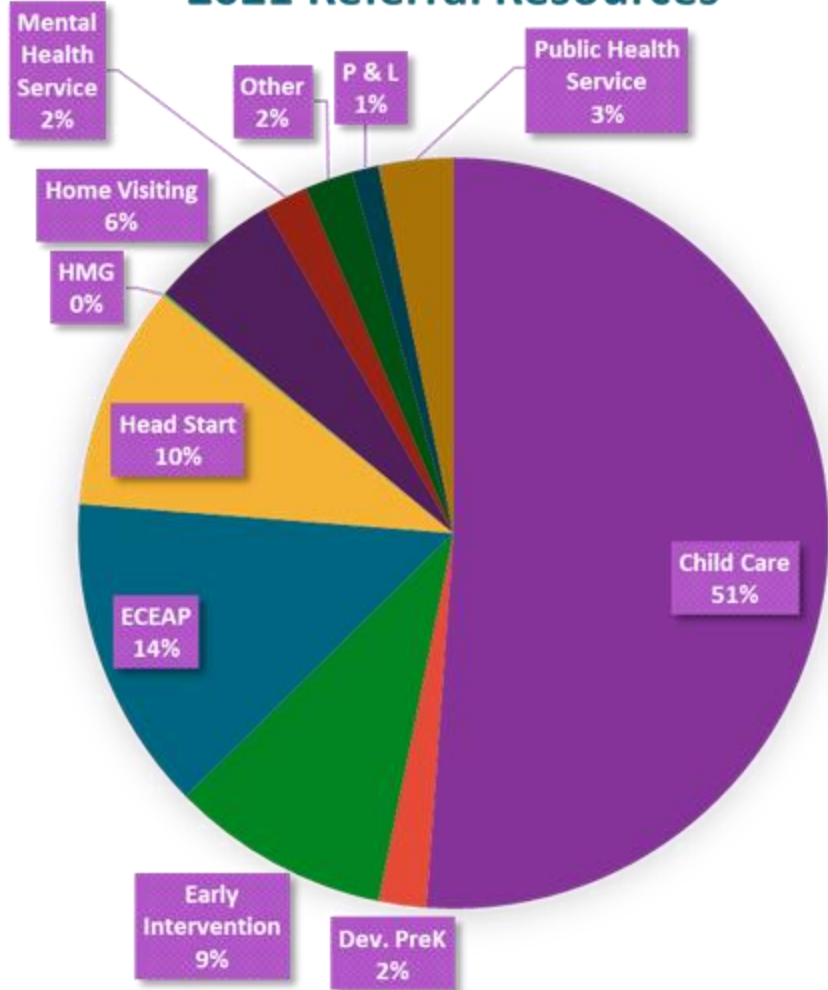
Measuring Success

CHILDREN ASSESSED FOR EARLY LEARNING NEEDS



Measuring Success

2021 Referral Resources



In 2021, the Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators:

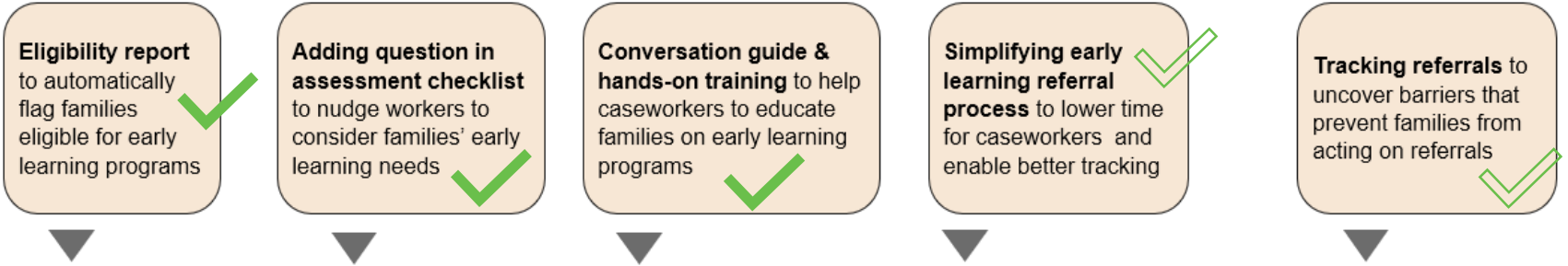
- Assessed 4,762 child welfare cases for early learning needs
 - Of those cases, 2,093 had their early learning needs met
 - And 1,646 accepted referrals for early learning supports



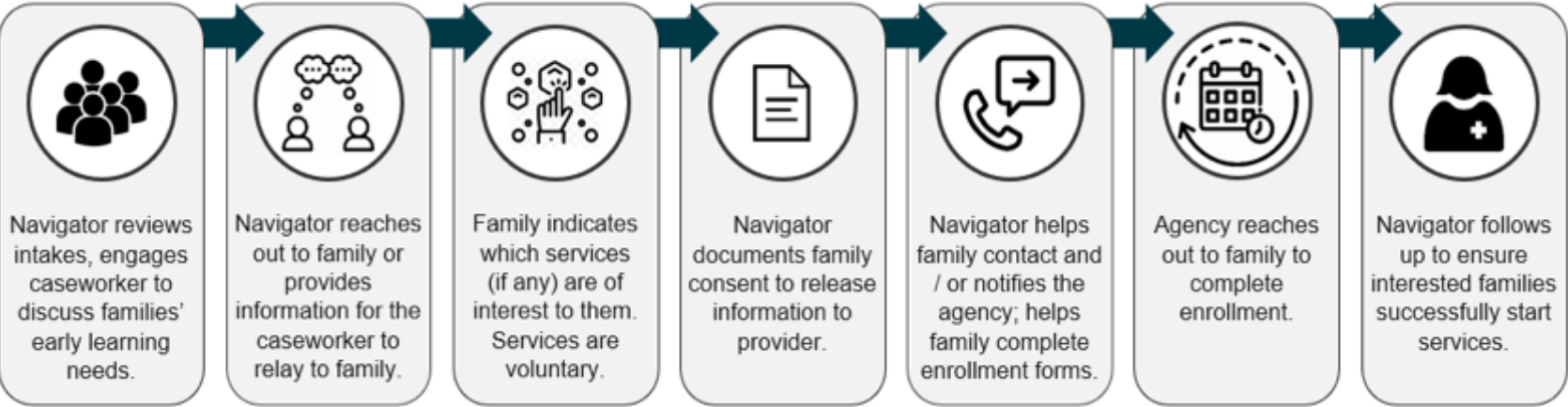
Testing Complementary Solutions That Enable Statewide Reach

System-level improvements across steps of early learning referral process

Statewide solutions



How the Navigator role supports the referral process



“What has been most helpful, rewarding, and/or exciting for you while working with a Navigator?”

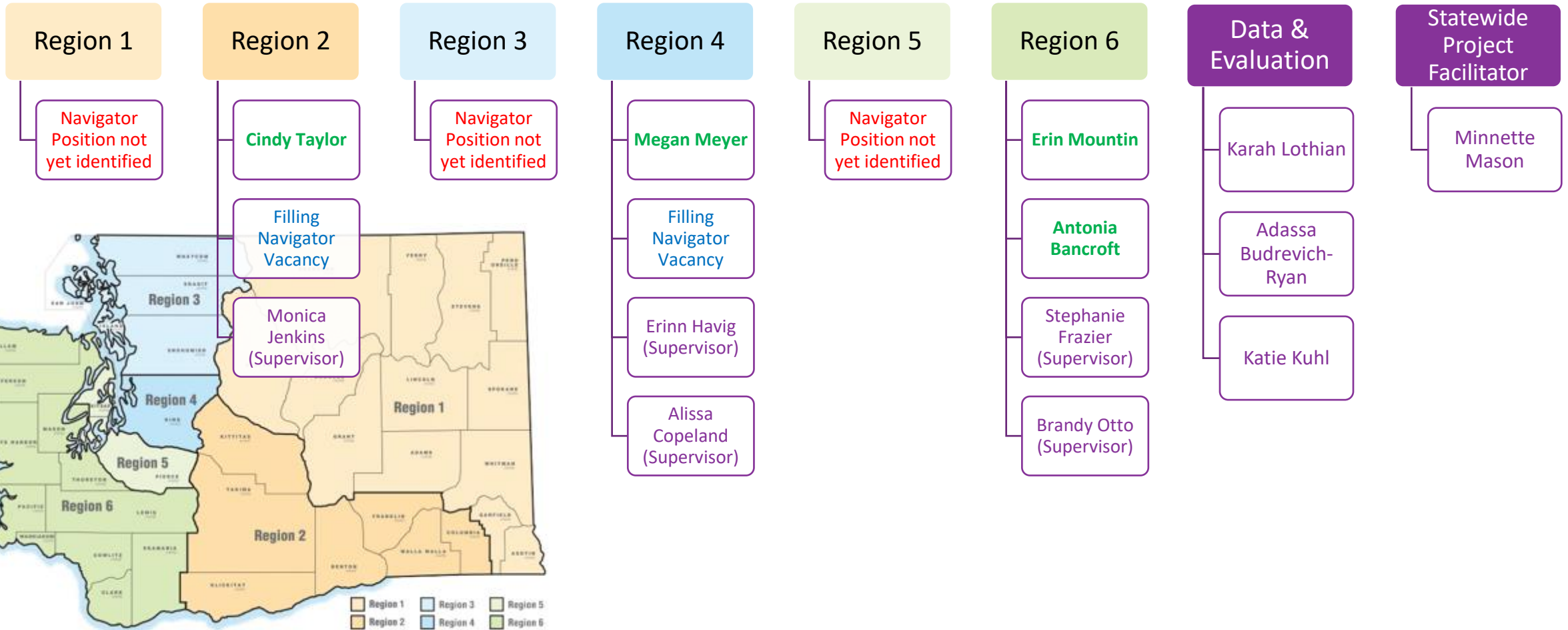
“As a CPS investigator, my focus was on the investigation and assessing for [child abuse and neglect]. The Navigator was able to be a positive connection for the family no matter the outcome of the investigation.”

“I learn more from my Navigator, and we are able to review best options. The amount of knowledge is very beneficial especially when it is hard to remember all the special areas.”

“There are a lot of BIPOC in our community, so being able to connect families with resources that are relevant to their cultural practices is always beneficial.”

“[The navigators] are able to identify specific educational needs for the family and make those contacts for the primary worker. They help ease the caseworker's workload. They are able to answer any questions the family may have and follow up on any services.”

What's Next?



Thank you!

Resources:

- CWELN Fact Sheet
- Conversation Guide and Matrix
- Article: *Connecting families involved in child protective services to early learning programs and family supports in Washington*
- <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/about/government-affairs/pdg>

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Discussion

