

EVALUATION BY: TEXAS INSTITUTE FOR CHILD & FAMILY WELLBEING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Safe Babies seeks to promote secure attachment for infants and toddlers in foster care, remediate the effect of inadequate or problematic caregiving that the child previously experienced, and limit the institutional trauma that infants and toddlers commonly experience as they move through the child welfare system. The program accomplishes this by working directly with birth families and foster families to strengthen relationships, and by facilitating the broader systemic changes necessary to achieve a more developmentally informed child protection response. Anticipated results include better permanency and wellbeing outcomes among participating children.

THE SAFE BABIES PROGRAM PROVIDES:



Coached visitation for foster children, birth parents, and foster parents

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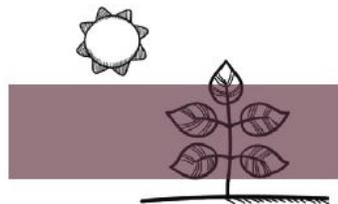
Coordinated health and mental health care for children and birth families

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Training and technical assistance to child welfare professionals

WHICH PROMOTES:



Child's secure attachment so they can experience healthy development leading to resilience

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System capacity to engage and increase collaboration between birth and foster parents

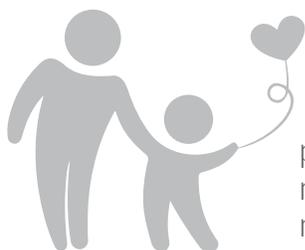
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Child welfare system policies that are guided by the developmental needs of infants and toddlers in foster care

***Of the children who exited care, a higher percentage of Safe Babies children were reunified with birth parents.**

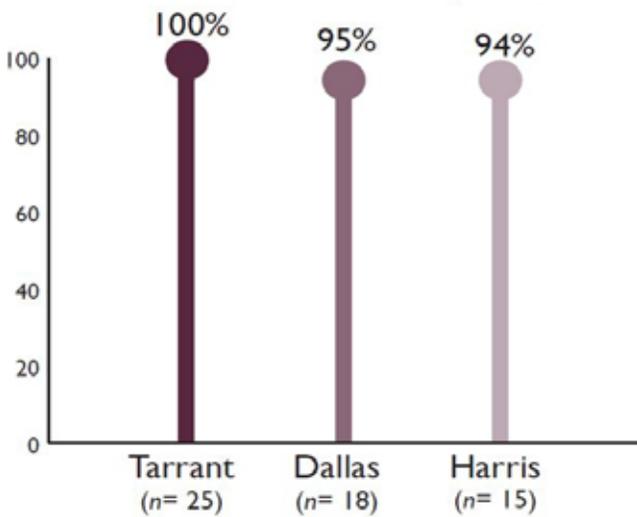
"It empowers the birth parents. It also empowers the foster as well, and I think the birth parent could have the child reunify and still have the foster parent as a support if they wanted for the rest of their life. So, getting a message from a foster parent that they believe that you can be successful as a birth parent is pretty powerful and a very different message...." - Professional



BIRTH AND FOSTER PARENTS DEMONSTRATE SENSITIVE PARENTING

Professional and foster parent interviews reflected Safe Babies' promotion of sensitive parenting among birth and foster parents, including the promotion of secure attachments, more reflective parenting, modeling and mimicking behavior, and better recognizing and meeting the child's needs.

"Children age 0-3 can bond with multiple caregivers."



For all 3 counties:

100%

of professionals "somewhat agree" or "agree" with:

"Foster parents can offer unique supports to birth parents."

Footnote: Given the small sample size, these findings should not be interpreted as reflective of the population.

One foster parent interview highlighted the idea that Safe Babies helped decrease stigma around accessing services for birth parents. Specifically, having someone on their side helps to avoid feeling like they are fighting the system.

PROFESSIONALS REFERRED TO COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIP AS TWO OF THE GREATEST STRENGTHS OF SAFE BABIES.

"I feel that this program, showing a united front with all caregivers involved, makes a huge difference on building the attachments, knowing that it's safe to love other people, and I mean, just like I said, a community coming together." -Professional



CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVES:

Foster parents and professionals reported that Safe Babies promoted improvements in children's physical and mental health by facilitating easier transitions for the child, having their basic needs met more frequently, and increased wellbeing because of the positive relationship between birth and foster parents.

COPARENTING:

One of the greatest strengths of the Safe Babies program is the promotion of coparenting between birth and foster parents. Birth and foster parents feel more supported and empowered, increase their communication and collaboration, and demonstrate more sensitive parenting in a coparenting environment.

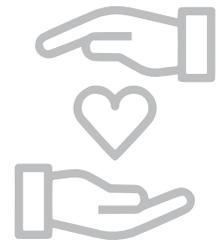


EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Safe Babies creates a strong alliance between all parties involved in the case and improves communication and problem solving between professionals by continually centering the child and family, ultimately promoting the child's healthy attachment and development and minimizing institutional trauma.

COORDINATION OF CARE:

Safe Babies not only fosters an environment with less stigma and more support in which parents and children can better access needed services, it also aims to connect children with the crucial developmental supports they need to thrive over the long term.



First3Years contracts with the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing at the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work to evaluate the Safe Babies program.



SAFE BABIES

A FIRST3YEARS INITIATIVE

Our mission is to educate, advocate, and collaborate to advance the healthy development of infants, toddlers, and their families.

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