

Success Through Addiction Recovery

AN OVERVIEW:

The Infants and Toddlers Court in Harris County is a unique problem-solving court docket specializing in Child Protective Service (CPS) referred abuse and neglect cases involving infants and toddlers to age three. An innovative approach to the issue of infant and toddler abuse is used to integrate Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), into a therapeutic judicial structure; utilizing evidence based practices for abused and neglected infants and toddlers in a large and complex jurisdiction; leveraging existing resources and systems for expedited outcomes. The Infants and Toddlers Court docket establishes a coordinated and integrated systematic approach that brings together parents, their children, representatives and community service providers whenever possible in an effort to provide safety, permanency and well being of our most vulnerable citizens.

Desired Outcomes:

- Improved permanency, safety and well-being for infants and toddlers
- Prevent the cycle of abuse
- Increase system capacity to handle infant and toddler abuse cases knowledgeable, effectively and efficiently
- Preserve and support families where possible, provide links to needed services, increase parent-child visitation
- Increase the level of ECI screening and services for all infants

- Increase parent-child visitation
- Increase Judicial outreach, develop community-based team network, provide training and increase awareness

The Infants and Toddlers Court team consists of:

- Judge
- Prosecutors representing the county
- Defense Attorney for parent
- Ad litem Attorney for child
- Infants and Toddlers Court Community Outreach Coordinator
- Administrative assistant/case manager
- Child Protective Services Staff
- Treatment/Service Representatives

DRUG COURT CRITERIA:

In the ITC, CPS will refer cases where:

- abuse or neglect has been alleged
- where birth parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) have been identified and located
- the birth parent(s) and or legal guardian(s) wish to not have their parental custodial rights terminated
- the birth parent(s) and or legal guardian(s) are willing to voluntarily enter a collaborative, restorative and therapeutic court-based program
- the birth parent(s) and or legal guardian(s), if admitted, voluntarily consent to the disclosure of treatment protocols of the program
- the birth parent(s) and or legal guardian(s), upon successfully completing

the requirements of the program, will be considered for recommended to the court for permanent custodial restoration

ELIGIBILITY→

- Must meet all eligibility criteria for the FIC
- Parents in CPS cases must always have reunification as a goal. The Infants and Toddlers Court is not a venue for adversarial cases.
- There is no prior history of CPS termination cases.
- Parents must be willing to participate in the program and have voluntary agreed to have their cases adjudicated by the Infants and Toddlers Court Docket.
- The Infants and Toddlers Court Docket does not consider cases involving sexual abuse or criminal matters.
- Participants must not have a currently active mental disorder that would preclude participation in treatment (i.e., florid psychosis, active suicidal ideation, active mania, etc.).
- Participants must not have current physical health problems that require ongoing medical care that interferes with treatment participation.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose and mission of the Infants and Toddlers Court is to achieve improved permanency, safety, and well-being outcomes for abused and neglected infants and toddlers and their families in Harris County; and to preserve and support families where possible. Secondary goals include identifying and addressing key gaps in the continuum of services; increasing knowledge and awareness of infant issues and child abuse by stakeholders; developing a replicable model for expansion to other Family and Juvenile Courts; identifying and utilizing best practices for achieving desired outcomes; reducing parental recidivism and future CPS involvement; building local capacity for achieving desired outcomes; implementing and utilizing data tracking and utilization models to improve overall efficiency; identifying cost-saving measures where possible so as to tie into existing funding streams.

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Hon. Bonnie C. Hellums, Presiding Judge
Associate Judge Meca Walker
247th District Court
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Infant Toddler

Court Team

Harris County

Program Brochure