

# Zero to Three Court

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## Zero to Three Court is for

- **Infants and children up to 3 years of age; may include older siblings**
- **Foster care cases identified as soon as removal**

## Principles of Zero to Three Court:

- **From birth, babies feel, remember, learn, and communicate**
- **Their brains are resilient and they can heal from early maltreatment with the right services and treatment**
- **Adults who care for them influence all of their experiences**
- **The court can play a central role in securing critical services for these infants/babies/toddlers.**

## Leadership

- **Leadership provided by local Family Court Judges**
- **Local Community Coordinator has expertise in child development and focuses on facilitating cross-systems dialogue on the child's needs**

## Elements

- **Court Team is comprised of:**
  - **Parents & birth families**
  - **Primary health care providers**
  - **Attorneys representing children, parents, child welfare system**
  - **Guardians Ad Litem (CASA)**
  - **Mental health professionals**
  - **Substance abuse treatment providers**
  - **Early Intervention Specialists (Healthy Start; public health nurses)**

## Members of Court Team, cont'd

- **Dentists**
- **Domestic violence service providers**
- **Local leaders at government agencies serving children and adults**
- **Representatives from colleges/universities**
- **Members of foster parent organization**
- **Children's Advocates**
- **Early Head Start and childcare providers**
- **Court Improvement Project staff**
- **Volunteer community leaders**

## Concurrent Planning

- While reunification is major goal, reducing changes in placement is also goal, so caregivers are quickly identified (kin or non-related foster parents) who are willing to become permanent families if reunification is impossible.
- Goal is to make sure child gets a permanent home as quickly as possible

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## First Placement = Last Placement

Ideally, the foster placement or relative care taker is found that may have potential to be permanent, so child does not have to change placements. Every move is a trauma to the child's developing brain, as well as exacerbating attachment issues

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## Frequent meetings

- In regular foster care cases, the Hawaii statute requires court hearings occur every 6 months. In the Zero to Three Court:
  - Family Team (service providers, attorneys, and child welfare agency staff) meets monthly to review all open cases (The Judge is not present)
  - Court holds hearing every month: total of two meetings a month
  - Family is at every meeting – both foster care and birth parents

Therefore, the attorneys and the Judge see every child and family every month

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## Increased Parent And Foster Parent Involvement

- Parent(s) included in all assessments – pediatrician appointments, mental health appointments, developmental screenings, etc.
- Foster parents are more involved with birth parents, acting as mentors to parents

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## Child-Focused Services

- Comprehensive developmental, medical, and mental health services incorporated into case plan
- Medical home is established
- Frequent assessments for symptoms of development delay are done over time
- Complete listing of services included in family's case plan and included in judicial orders

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## Parent Visitation Enhanced

- More frequent visitation or “family time” – multiple times per week
- Visit coaching: helping parents to respond more appropriately to child, learn how to interact more positively, engage in parenting activities
- Different locations – parents' home, foster parents' home
  - Hawaii's Zero to Three Court works with the Consuelo Foundation Parents' Resource Center and its new ABC Program (“Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up”) which provides home-based attachment support.

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## ABC Program

- Works with the primary caregiver of the child in their home.
- There are 10 sessions that teach hands on, nurturing caregiving
- This intervention has been shown to lower children's stress and facilitate a more secure attachment, which is so crucial in those first years of life.
- Video feedback is used in the sessions to highlight specific examples, show teaching clips, and help caregivers see subtle details of interactions with their children.

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## Mental Health Services

The Honolulu Zero to Three Court Team is working toward ensuring mental health services/intervention for both parent/care giver & child

- Parent-child relationship is assessed through EPSDT
- Utilize parenting education programs that have been found effective for maltreating parents
- Parent-child psychotherapy provided when necessary
- Development of a continuum of community-based services

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## For further information

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