

### The “why” behind the Community Coordinator role in the Safe Babies approach:

- The science of early development shows that the first three years of life are a critical window of opportunity for promoting children’s health and well-being.
- Safe, stable, and nurturing care is the foundation of early childhood development, helping young children recover and heal from past negative experiences.
- In the traditional child welfare system, when children are removed from home, they and their parents experience the trauma of separation, a court process that can be adversarial and punitive rather than collaborative and resiliency building, and services that can be uncoordinated and do not meet urgent needs.
- Too often, the families of children who come to the attention of the child welfare system and are at risk of removal do not receive appropriate services and supports that sufficiently build protective factors, with the children’s developmental needs remaining unidentified and unaddressed.
- Missed opportunities to intervene in an effective and timely way to support children’s developmental health during the critical period of early development can lead to negative, long-term physical, psychological, and behavioral outcomes.
- There are also opportunities frequently lost in terms of strengthening families to prevent maltreatment recurrence, including with siblings or subsequent children, and to promote family health and well-being.



### The Community Coordinator is a unique role that addresses these systematic gaps by:

- Building linkages across systems so that services are better aligned and coordinated
- Providing a consistent and strong voice for the urgent developmental needs of infants and toddlers, including the critical role of early caregiver–child relationships
- Elevating the parental voice throughout the child welfare process

Community Coordinators in the Safe Babies approach have **essential 'community level' and 'family level' functions** that promote best practices in family engagement, promoting protective factors, trauma-responsive care, and cross-sector collaboration. These functions are primarily realized through the Community Coordinator's role in supporting frequent, quality Family Team Meetings and the Active Community Team. Additionally, the Community Coordinator is a **key member of the Site Implementation Team**, which provides the necessary leadership and oversight for effective implementation and sustainability of the Safe Babies approach.

Essential Functions	Practices
<b>Community Level</b>	
<b>Managing Active Community Team Meetings</b>	Collaboratively leading Active Community Team (ACT) meetings with the Judge and Child Welfare Leadership
	Coordinating, planning, and facilitating communications with ACT participants, such as arranging for special guests, preparing task-oriented agendas, sending out invitations, and distributing meeting minutes
<b>Building Community Partnerships that increase coordination, alignment, and integration of services and supports</b>	Communicating effectively about the Safe Babies approach to community partners, including new professionals, parent leaders, and parent partners/peer mentors
	Reaching out to traditional and non-traditional services and supports to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify available and/or needed assessments, evidence-based services, and supports (concrete resources) for infants, toddlers, and their families supported by the Safe Babies approach</li> <li>Share information about the Safe Babies approach and the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and their families</li> <li>Develop partnerships and connections that support strong referral linkages, program alignment, and peer-to-peer learning</li> </ul>
	Compiling timely, comprehensive information gathered from outreach about available and/or needed assessments, evidence-based services, and supports (concrete resources) for infants, toddlers, and their families supported by the Safe Babies approach
	Sharing information about available and/or needed assessments, evidence-based services, and supports (concrete resources) for children and families supported by the Safe Babies approach with the Family Team and ACT
	Participating in other local or state initiatives that focus on advancing community capacity to address the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families

Essential Functions	Practices
<b>Community Level</b>	
<b>Advancing Equity across the early childhood system</b>	Facilitating discussions in ACT meetings focused on disparities and strategies to promote equity
	Seeking out information about racial and ethnic disparities to share with partners (e.g., current research, policy, evidence-based services, and best practices)
	Sharing Safe Babies approach data separated out by race and ethnicity during ACT meetings to identify discriminatory practices and policies across systems
<b>Mobilizing Cross-Sector Collaboration</b>	Cultivating partnerships to advance a common vision of systems that equitably meet the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and their families, within the ACT and beyond
	Utilizing data trends and de-identified information from the Safe Babies approach database about challenges and barriers for families to inform strategic planning by the ACT
	Soliciting input from ACT members and other key community members/partners to identify actionable, collaborative solutions to improve systems
<b>Building Community Capacity to meet the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and their families</b>	Identifying community/workforce training needs by reviewing data about gaps in knowledge or services/supports in the community with the ACT
	Assisting the ACT in identifying cross-system community/workforce training needs for professionals, parent leaders, parent/peer mentors, and resource caregivers to increase workforce skills and competencies in core areas related to the Safe Babies approach
	Reaching out to local, state, and national experts to arrange, coordinate, advertise, and host community trainings
<b>Promoting Continuous Quality Improvement</b>	Identifying and interpreting data (e.g., from the Safe Babies approach database and anecdotal family challenges) to assess needs and assets in knowledge or services/supports availability in the community
	Communicating to the ACT any data/reports that capture service/system gaps and barriers that children and families may be experiencing

Essential Functions	Practices
<b>Family Level</b>	
<b>Managing Family Team Meetings</b>	Communicating effectively about the Safe Babies approach to community partners and new professionals, caregivers, parent leaders, and parent/peer mentors joining the Family Team Meeting
	Assuring that all necessary people are invited to attend FTMs, are provided with task-oriented agendas, and receive written and clearly outlined summaries of goals after each meeting
<b>Engaging Family and Their Supports in the Safe Babies Approach</b>	Ensuring alignment with the Safe Babies approach standards for program intake
<b>Empowering Parents in the Case Process</b>	Explaining to parents who the ongoing points of contact will be to ensure they understand the court and child welfare process
	Explaining the purpose of FTMs and Safe Babies approach hearings to parents and caregivers
	Helping parents understand what is being said and what they are being asked to do (e.g., modeling the use of plain and simple language) during FTMs and hearings
	Providing opportunities for parents to voice their thoughts, ideas, and concerns and to advocate for themselves and their children during FTMs
	Modeling use of a strengths-based approach to FTMs
	Modeling methods to provide parents and caregivers choices in the case planning process during FTMs, such as the timing or location of services
<b>Facilitating Collaborative Problem Solving</b>	Ensuring that parents and caregivers are prepared in advance of the FTMs
	Encouraging real-time information sharing among family members, their supports (peer mentors, resource/kin caregivers), and the professionals on the Family Team
	Promoting shared decision-making during FTMs

Essential Functions	Practices
<b>Family Level</b>	
<b>Facilitating Access to Systems and Supports</b>	Prompting discussions during FTM about barriers to services, resources, and supports for the family (FTMs)
	Exploring with the FTM participants, and offering recommendations for, services and supports that promote protective factors <sup>1</sup> and address social determinants of health for the family
	Mobilizing the Family Team to support parents in receiving information, guidance, and assistance to remove barriers and facilitate access to needed services, resources, and supports
<b>Advancing Equitable Infant/Toddler Health and Development</b>	Creating opportunities during FTM for discussions, as well as for the framing and/or redirection of discussions, to focus on young children’s individualized and specific developmental (physical and emotional) needs, including the critical importance of a healthy attachment relationship
	Sharing information during FTM about infant and early childhood mental health and early childhood development services and supports for families
<b>Advancing Equitable Family Health and Well-Being</b>	Creating opportunities during FTM for discussions, as well as for the framing and/or redirection of discussions, to focus on the individualized, specific, and comprehensive needs of the family
	Reinforcing a strengths-based, healing approach that builds protective factors during all communication with families
	Sharing information during FTM about community-based services, resources, and supports, as well as current research, policy, and best practices, that are pertinent to parents’ needs

<sup>1</sup>Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d.). Protective factors to promote well-being and prevent child abuse & neglect. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>