



National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare Training and Technical Assistance Materials

The National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW) is a national resource center providing information, tailored, expert consultation, training and technical assistance to child welfare, dependency court and substance use treatment professionals to improve the safety, permanency, well-being and recovery outcomes for children, parents, and families. NCSACW resources help agencies and professionals develop or enhance policies, practices, and procedures that improve child and family outcomes and promote their social and emotional well-being. NCSACW also researches, compiles, and shares examples of successful programs with other jurisdictions to expand best practices in communities across the country. Technical assistance services are free.

To learn more about NCSACW view [Who We Are Informational Motion Graphic](#) or visit our website at <https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/>

Contact Us: To request or learn more about tailored technical assistance services please email NCSACW at ncsacw@cffutures.org or call toll-free at 1-866-493-2758.

Recommended Resources

Building Collaborative Capacity Series: How to Develop Cross-Systems Teams and Implement Collaborative Practice

NCSACW developed the Building Collaborative Capacity Series to provide states and communities with strategies to create cross-systems collaborative teams, communication protocols, and practice innovations. These strategies aim to improve screening, assessment, and engagement to best serve families affected by substance use disorders (SUDs) and child welfare service involvement.

Module 1 – Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Developing the Structure of Collaborative Teams to Serve Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders

Module 1 describes how to establish and facilitate the structure of a multi-system collaborative team and identify the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Module 2 – Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Addressing Values and Developing Shared Principles and Trust in Collaborative Teams

Module 2 highlights how to identify the shared values and principles among participants of collaborative teams and to use those principles as building blocks for a collaborative effort to improve policy and practice for families affected by substance use disorders.

Module 3 – Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Practice-Level Communication Pathways and Information-sharing Protocols

Module 3 describes how to develop communication pathways and information-sharing agreements to guide the sharing of important information across the systems. It highlights the client-level information needed among the various partner agencies, addresses confidentiality considerations,

and provides strategies for developing protocols.

Module 4 – Setting the Collaborative Foundation: Establishing Administrative-Level Data Sharing to Monitor and Evaluate Program Success

Module 4 describes how collaborative initiatives can develop administrative-level information-sharing processes, monitoring, and evaluation to jointly track families across systems and evaluate program success.

Module 5 – Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Developing Screening Protocols to Identify Parental Substance Use Disorders and Related Child and Family Needs

Module 5 provides an overview of the screening tools and processes that child welfare, substance use treatment, healthcare, and other community-based agencies can use to identify parental substance use disorders and related challenges faced by children and families. It also describes the key steps that collaborative teams can take to develop a comprehensive screening protocol.

Module 6 – Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Establishing Comprehensive Assessment Procedures and Promoting Family Engagement into Services

Module 6 outlines assessment tools and procedures to determine the nature and extent of parental substance use disorders and family needs and risks. It highlights the role of the collaborative partners in monitoring assessment results and describes strategies for family engagement into services.

Module 7 – Frontline Collaborative Efforts: Developing and Monitoring Joint Case Plans and Promoting Treatment Retention and Positive Family Outcomes

Module 7 describes how cross-systems collaboratives can jointly develop and monitor family case plans that are mutually supportive and considerate of the needs and requirements placed on the family by each involved system. It also offers strategies to promote family engagement into treatment and case plans, treatment completion, and positive family outcomes.

A Collaborative Approach to the Treatment of Pregnant Women With Opioid Use Disorders: Practice and Policy Considerations for Child Welfare, Collaborating Medical, and Service Providers

Provides an overview of the extent of opioid use by pregnant women, the effects on the infant, evidence-based recommendations for treatment approaches, an in-depth case study, and a guide for collaborative planning.

Drug Testing in Child Welfare

Brief 1: Considerations for Developing a Child Welfare Drug Testing Policy and Protocol

This resource offers key steps for child welfare agency policymakers to consider when developing a drug testing policy for child welfare practice.

Brief 2: Drug Testing for Parents Involved in Child Welfare: Three Key Practice Points

This resource provides practice considerations to help child welfare workers implement drug testing into their daily practice.

Family-Centered Approach Modules

Module 1: Overview of a Family-Centered Approach and Its Effectiveness

Module 1 provides an overview of family-centered treatment and how it differs from traditional SUD treatment. This module highlights the benefits and effectiveness of a family-centered treatment approach and provides a series of steps that communities can take to implement it.

Module 2: On the Ground—Family-Centered Practice

Module 2 dives deeper into the family-centered approach ingredients highlighted in Module 1 and offers "on the ground" practice examples and strategies from selected family-centered practitioners across the country who have successfully implemented a family-centered approach.

Module 3: Collaboration to Support Family-Centered Practices at the County and State Level

This final module highlights the state- and local-level leadership and collaboration required to successfully implement the family-centered practice lessons presented in Module 2. This module describes collaborative efforts and policy-level activities such as priority setting, data collection and evaluation, tapping existing and new funding streams, and other collaborative strategies to ensure the implementation and sustainability of a family-centered approach.

Medication-Assisted Treatment Resources

Medicated-Assisted Treatment in the Courtroom: A Bench Card for Judicial Professionals Serving Parents and Children Affected by Opioid Use Disorders

Provides information on MAT to judicial professionals and their collaborative partners serving families affected by opioid use disorders. Included in this resource is an overview of MAT, information on frequently used medications for MAT, questions to facilitate discussions with court participants and links to additional resources with a focus on special populations receiving MAT.

Medicated-Assisted Treatment in the Courtroom: A Primer for Judicial Professionals Serving Parents and Children Affected by Opioid Use Disorders

Provides an overview of MAT, such as the benefits and risks, barriers to treatment, language considerations, and the importance of collaboration. Highlights include the unique needs of special populations (e.g., pregnant women, parents involved with child welfare, parents with co-occurring disorders).

Opioid Use Disorder and Civil Rights Video and Webinar Series

NCSACW, together with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), created this training series to inform child welfare and court professionals about federal disability rights protections that apply to certain parents with an OUD/SUD who are also involved with child welfare.

- **Part 1: Civil Rights Protections for Individuals with a Disability: The Basics** Provides information on protections for qualified individuals with a disability in the child welfare

system and federal disability rights laws.

- [Part 2: Civil Rights Protections for Individuals with an Opioid Use Disorder](#) Examines SUDs and OUDs as a disability while analyzing federal disability rights protections for individuals receiving MAT.
- [Medication-Assisted Treatment and Common Misconceptions](#) Offers an in-depth look at MAT while noting common misconceptions about treatment. Highlights strategies that inform effective child welfare and court practices.
- [Child Welfare Case Staffing: Social Worker and Supervisor \(Video\)](#) Depicts a child welfare worker and supervisor staffing a case involving a mother receiving MAT while pregnant. Covers misconceptions regarding MAT and how the mother may be protected under federal disability rights laws.
- [Child Welfare Case Staffing: Child Welfare Court Case \(Video\)](#) Depicts a hearing between a judge, a child welfare worker, and attorneys. The court and child welfare professionals discuss visitation for a mother receiving MAT.

Stigma

[Disrupting Stigma: How Understanding, Empathy, and Connection Can Improve Outcomes for Families Affected by Substance Use and Mental Disorders](#)

Stigma affects the attitudes and actions of healthcare and treatment professionals; child welfare and court professionals; social service agencies and workers; as well as family, friends, and most notably, the person with the SUD. Negative attitudes create barriers for parents seeking help and exacerbate existing disparities in treatment services and outcomes. This brief supports cross-system collaborative teams in their work to reduce stigma in interactions, expectations, and policies affecting families. It provides several strategies to fight stigma and facilitate engagement with parents and family members affected by SUDs.



National Family Treatment Court Training and Technical Assistance Program

The expansion of Family Treatment Courts (FTCs)¹ has created a growing need for training and technical assistance to assist state, local and Tribal jurisdictions to build the capacity to develop, enhance, and sustain FTCs. Children and Family Futures (CFF) is a leader in the FTC field providing training, technical assistance, and evaluation to FTCs across the nation for the past 20 years.

Through federally- and foundation-funded projects, the National FTC Training and Technical Assistance Program provides support to states, state and local courts, units of local government (e.g., child welfare, mental health, juvenile, and criminal justice), tribal governments, and community agencies interested in implementing family treatment court practices.

Contact Us: To learn more about technical assistance services or if you have a question, please email ftc@cffutures.org or call toll-free at 1-866-493-2758. Our website is: <https://www.cffutures.org/family-treatment-courts-focus/>.

Foundational Resources

Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards

The FTC Best Practices Standards published by the CFF (2019) and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals provide local jurisdictions, states, tribes, and funders with clear practice guidance to improve outcomes for children, parents, and families affected by substance use and co-occurring disorders who are involved in child welfare. The FTC Standards reflect the rigorous research and rich practice experience from treatments courts, dependency court, child welfare, SUD treatment, mental health treatment, children's developmental services, and related health, educational, and social services. The eight FTC standards are interdependent and intended to be followed in whole as much as possible. States are using the FTC Standards to develop, or update, their own statewide standards that guide local FTC practices.

Family Drug Court National Strategic Plan

In March 2017, the National Strategic Plan for Family Drug Courts (FDCs) was released outlining a coordinated national strategy to enhance and expand the use of FDCs to reach more children and families. Developed by CFF in partnership with Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

¹ FTCs can be called a variety of different names including family drug courts, family dependency treatment courts, family recovery courts, family drug treatment courts, and family healing to wellness courts

(OJJDP) with the valuable input of many diverse stakeholders, the Strategic Plan outlines the vision: *Every family in the child welfare system affected by parental/caregiver substance use disorders will have timely access to comprehensive and coordinated screening, assessment, and service delivery for family's success.* The three primary goals to achieve this vision are: 1) ensure quality implementation and that every court operates with fidelity to the FDC model, 2) expand the reach of FDCs to keep families together and reduce child maltreatment, and 3) continue to build the evidence base about what works for FDCs through the next wave or generation evaluation and research.

Virtual Learning Opportunities

Family Treatment Court Practice Academy – Recommended Videos

The FTC Practice Academy offers web-based training events to enhance, expand, and sustain FTCs. Each academy includes a pre-recorded video, live conversation, and team discussion guides. There are over 60 virtual events across a range of topics and developmental stages of FTC implementation.

Beyond a Program: Family Treatment Courts – Collaborative Partnerships for Improved Family Outcomes Practice Academy

Proven. Positive. Effective. FTCs have advanced their practice since beginning operations almost three decades ago. An FTC is a juvenile or family court docket for cases of child abuse or neglect in which parental substance use and often co-occurring mental disorders are contributing factors. The first FTCs, developed in the mid-1990s, and inspired by the collaborative, multidisciplinary approach of the adult treatment court model, built upon the key components of adult treatment courts, practice experience in child welfare, and direction from model dependency court guidelines.

When state or local leaders consider whether a new FTC could better serve families, they must first: 1) gain foundational knowledge of the FTC model and Best Practice Standards, 2) learn the similarities and differences to the adult treatment court model, and 3) decide where it fits in the community's continuum of care for families affected by SUDs. This Practice Academy course provides "FTC 101" basics for interested jurisdictions, new FTC team members, and teams that want to revisit foundational FTC concepts.

Why Quality Legal Representation Matters for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorders

Although all legal professionals serve an important role on an FTC team, parent attorneys play a critical role to ensure reasonable efforts are made on behalf of families affected by substance use disorders to have access to quality services to prevent removal and support timely reunification and permanency. FTC teams and their parent attorney partners can work together toward a shared vision of accountability for families involved in the FTC and child welfare system. This Practice Academy course: 1) provides an overview of the important role parent attorneys play in family dependency cases, 2) highlights key principles and best practice strategies to provide early and quality legal representation, leading to improved child welfare outcomes, 3) includes conversations from legal professionals at the national, state, and local levels who are working collaboratively to ensure reasonable efforts are made for families, 4) identifies key next steps for FTC teams to partner with quality legal representation as a key stakeholder in the collaborative.

Putting the Pieces Together: Applying a Family-Centered, Problem-Solving Approach to Family Treatment Court Staffing and Court Hearings

This Practice Academy course discusses key components of a family-centered, behavior-focused, problem-solving approach in FTC pre-court staffing and court hearings. Model FTCs treat the parent, child, and the family unit as a whole — allowing families to break the cycle of substance use, child abuse, and neglect — while paving the way for healthy, stable home environments where children can thrive. This course makes the abstract concepts concrete, illustrating how teams can apply these principles at FTC pre-court staffing and court hearings to improve outcomes for families in all FTC models (integrated, parallel, and hybrid).

Putting the Pieces Together: Harnessing the Power of Parenting Time to Strengthen the Parent-Child Relationship and Support Reunification Efforts in Your Family Treatment Court

This Practice Academy course discusses quality parenting time as well as how to objectively measure and track progress in strengthening the parent-child relationship to support the family and inform decisions about parenting time expansion and reunification. Parenting time is an essential component of reunification efforts for children in out-of-home care, and FTC teams have the opportunity and responsibility to encourage safe and frequent parent-child interactions that support bonding and attachment.

The Judge's Role in Prevention: Implementing Plans of Safe Care

This video featuring Judge Peggy Walker draws on her experience as the presiding judge of the Douglas County Georgia FTC and discusses the judge's role in improving systems of care for infants with prenatal substance exposure and their families, implementing Plans of Safe Care, and preventing family separation. The video provides practical, experience-based guidance that professionals from child welfare, courts, substance use disorder treatment and other family-serving agencies can use to improve the health and well-being of infants and their families affected by substance use disorders. This video includes a supplemental resource

Family Treatment Court Briefs

Leading Change Brief Series: Key Lessons to Empower State and Local Leaders Seeking to Improve Systems Serving Families in the Child Welfare System Affected by Substance Use Disorders

The Leading Change brief series synthesizes the experiences of the six Statewide System Improvement Program (SSIP) awardees (from October 2014 through September 2019) into three briefs, each filled with relevant considerations and challenges for those who want to lead systems change in their states and communities. The first brief provides context of the current state of FTCs in the country, an overview of the SSIP initiative, and opportunities for systems change; the second focuses on state leadership toward change; and the third is focused on leadership and change at the local level.

SSIP demonstrated that systems change can happen from the "top-down" and "ground-up." Whether change is directed from state agencies or starts from the local grassroots level, leaders at all levels can be catalysts for larger change at multiple levels and across multiple systems. The most powerful and lasting changes occur when state and local leaders, bound by a shared vision, partner and work together in new and supportive ways.

Family Treatment Court Strategy Brief Series: Strong Families

Children and Family Futures, in partnership with Casey Family Programs, developed a series of three briefs on FTCs. These briefs provide information to child welfare and other key stakeholders about the FTC model and best practices evidence and strategies to improve outcomes for all families affected by a parent's substance use disorder. The first brief provides an overview of the FTC model including necessary components, outcomes, and model types. Brief 2 examines practice-level strategies and evidence to ensure comprehensive service delivery and improved outcomes for child welfare affected by a parent's substance use disorder. The third brief highlights FTCs as a catalyst for systems change by outlining strategies to integrate FTC best practices into larger systems of care.

Quality Improvement Center for Collaborative Community Court Teams

The National Quality Improvement Center for Collaborative Community Court Teams (QIC-CCCT) served as a national initiative to assist infants and families affected by SUDs and prenatal substance exposure. The Children's Bureau funded the initiative, which was operated by CFF and its partners—the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), Advocates for Human Potential (AHP), the Tribal Law and Policy Institute, and the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. CCCTs worked alongside a Change Team that included senior-level Change Leaders with experience in court-centered community collaborative practice, and an Evaluation Liaison to help demonstration sites build or expand performance monitoring and program evaluation capacity.

Plans of Safe Care: An Issue Brief for Judicial Officers

Judicial officers hear a broad variety of dependency matters from a unique vantage point. This often requires insight and education in areas beyond the law such as substance use, mental health, and infant health and development. This briefing paper is intended to assist judicial officers presiding over collaborative community court teams better understand Plans of Safe Care (POSC), and their role in implementing POSC and bringing together community partners to improve systems for infants with prenatal substance exposure and their families.

Reasonable and Active Efforts, and Substance Use Disorders: A Toolkit for Professionals Working with Families in or at Risk of Entering the Child Welfare System

A toolkit for professionals working with families in or at risk of entering the child welfare system. The QIC-CCCT developed the Reasonable Efforts, Active Efforts and Substance Use Disorders Toolkit to help address some of the challenges presented in making reasonable and active efforts and related judicial findings in cases involving substance use. The toolkit provides definitions, statutory requirements, examples of reasonable and active efforts, and a resource guide for further reading.

Final Program and Evaluation Briefs

The Program Summary Brief focuses on implementation strategies, accomplishments, and lessons. The Evaluation Summary Brief highlights quantitative cross-site evaluation findings. Both briefs help collaborative partners improve systems and services for infants and parents affected by prenatal substance exposure.

Prevention and Family Recovery Initiative

Prevention and Family Recovery (PFR), funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Duke

Endowment, strived to advance the capacity of FTCs and their partner agencies to provide and sustain a comprehensive family-centered approach for children, parents and families affected by parental substance use disorders and child abuse and neglect. PFR helped eight established FTCs integrate and institutionalize evidence-based parenting services and developmental and therapeutic services for children into their larger systems of care.

Prevention and Family Recovery Briefs and Case Studies

CFF produced a series of PFR briefs and grantee case studies that highlight cross-cutting lessons and experiences from the round 1 PFR grantees about providing a comprehensive family-centered approach for families affected by parental substance use disorders and child abuse and neglect. These briefs and case studies provide valuable insight about the practice and policy changes needed for a FTC to shift from being an independent, adult-focused program within the court to an integrated cross-systems collaborative centered on the whole family.

Prevention and Family Recovery Knowledge Application Series

CFF produced the Putting Ideas into Action: Knowledge Application Series highlighting the Round 2 grantees' progress and challenges in implementing a family-centered approach. The series provides strategies for FTC teams and stakeholders to design, implement, sustain, and evaluate systems change initiatives that advance a family-centered approach.