



Michigan's Early Childhood Courts

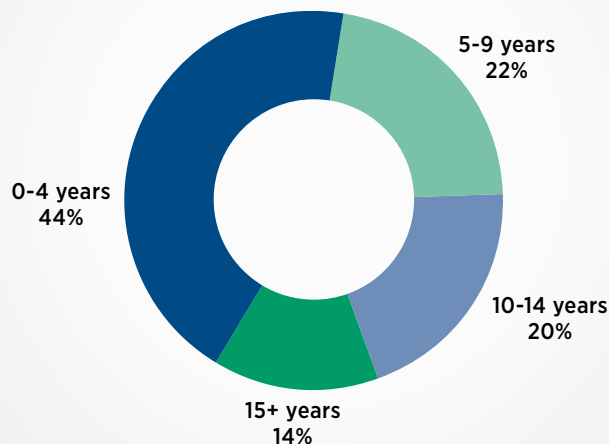
Together we can ensure families stay together and receive the supports they need to THRIVE.

Michigan's Early Childhood Courts (ECC) are specialized problem-solving courts to support infants and toddlers, along with parents and siblings, who have experienced maltreatment and are in the child welfare system.



Young children enter the child welfare system at a higher rate than any other age group.

Children Entering the Foster Care System (Percentage by Age)



* Children under the age of 5 entering foster care are disproportionately Black or Multiracial

Families are facing child welfare involvement and removals due to:

- ✓ TRAUMA
- ✓ POVERTY
- ✓ COMMUNITY DISPARITIES

Early Childhood Courts use a team-based approach driven by attachment theory and the science of early brain development:

- Using **proven interventions** like Infant Mental Health for significant positive impact on child development and future outcomes.
- Building on consistent relationships, **support parents** so they can improve social emotional health of their infants and young children.
- By **minimizing developmental delays, reducing time in care, and preventing multiple entries** into foster care, engagement with ECC can break generational cycles and benefit babies, toddlers, their families, communities and taxpayers.

Michigan's Early Childhood Courts will improve outcomes for babies and their families.

69.6% of children were reunified

18.7 months in out-of-home care.

18.8% returned home within 12 months.

Stacks, A.M., Wong, K., Barron, C., & Ryznar T. (2020), Child Abuse & Neglect

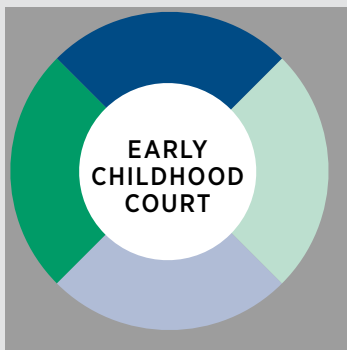
31% of parents show an increase in emotional responsiveness, and

43% show an increase in reflective functioning.

Stacks, A.M., Barron, C., & Wong, K. (2019) Infant Mental Health Journal Child Abuse & Neglect

Preliminary findings based on a 2019 research evaluation conducted in the Wayne County Early Childhood Court shows **relationship-based interventions improve parenting quality.**

Michigan's Early Childhood Courts will require leadership and teamwork from many partners.



- COLLABORATION
- ATTACHMENT
- EQUITY
- HONORING THE FAMILY'S VOICE

- **Support and buy-in** from leadership across the courts, MDHHS child welfare directors, and Children's Mental Health Service Provider (CMHSP) directors.
- **Trained ECC teams** consisting of parents and professionals including child protection specialists, foster care specialists, infant mental health clinicians, attorneys, jurists, and the community coordinator.
- **Collaboration** with community partners from different sectors to establish a comprehensive set of best practices and **services** that cater to the needs of all families including health, child welfare, early care and education, and other relevant human services and family-support programs.
- **Utilization of policy and practice reforms** at the national, state, and local levels to ensure fairness and equity for families with young children.
- **Legislation and policies** that show commitment to the sustainable expansion of Early Childhood Courts.

Every family should have access to all needed resources and the opportunity to stay together when facing barriers. Without equitable services and early interventions, families may face unnecessary disruptions leading to further damage to the family unit.



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