

Administrative Office of the Courts
Washington State Center for Court Research

**EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT PROGRAM:
Performance Management and Quality
Improvement Plan**

Statewide Plan

2021

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Data Performance Management Plan

Early Childhood Court Program

Purpose

The purpose of the Data Performance Management Plan is to provide context, framework, and the major steps for developing and managing a performance and quality improvement support structure for Early Childhood Courts (ECC) in Washington State. ECCs were established by the 2021 Washington State Legislature that codified into law a standard of practice aligned with the ZERO TO THREE [Safe Babies Court Team](#)TM approach, a community engagement and systems-change initiative focused on reducing trauma and improving how courts, child welfare and child-serving organizations work together to serve young children and their families involved in the child welfare system.

This plan provides clearly defined activities for monitoring whether ECCs' performance is aligned with the core components of the law (RCW 2.30.100). The ECC Data Analyst/Quality Assurance Manager, the Washington State Center for Court Research, and the Data & Evaluation Advisory Board will help ECCs to develop, maintain, and update their local planning, and to problem solve gaps and barriers to data collection, monitoring and reporting of the performance.

The basis for the ECC's Data Performance Management Plan is the updated Public Health Performance Management Framework¹ that was developed to help public health systems use data to manage their performance. Although the latter was not specifically developed for child welfare and court settings, it can be applied to ECC because of three reasons: (1) child maltreatment is identified as a public health issue that affects young children, families, and communities across generations²; (2) the Division of Violence Prevention within the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) promotes a public health approach around reduction of child abuse and neglect; and 3) recent shift to bridging public health and child welfare together through common language and shared practical tools for translating practices into improved child and family well-being³.

ECC Performance Management Framework

Figure 1 depicts the framework elements and their proposed associations as applied to ECCs in Washington State. The objective of this framework is to ensure that information is available to ECC sites to understand, monitor, assess, and compare their performance across sites as well as with state and national benchmarks, and identify opportunities for improvement in management and service delivery. At the heart of this framework is balancing the value of ECCs being responsive to their local cultural context while encompassing the core components of the of Safe Babies Court TeamTM approach. This is to ensure that the data performance plan is flexible and can adapt to local needs rather than taking a "one size fits all" approach.

The framework is composed of the following four elements: 1) Performance standards; 2) Performance measurement; 3) Reporting progress; and 4) Quality improvement. The description of each element is below.

¹ Retrieved from the [Public Health Foundation \(PHF\) website](#)

² Merrick, M., Latzman, N., (January 31, 2014) "Child Maltreatment: A Public Health Overview and Prevention Considerations" *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* Vol. 19, No. 1, Manuscript 2.

³ <https://www.astho.org/StatePublicHealth/Creating-a-21st-Century-Legacy-Toward-Thriving-Families/10-21-20/>

1. Performance standards

This element will help ECCs determine “*Where do they want to be?*” Performance standards will be developed based on the site-level program goals, objectives, and targets. Although these program goals and targets will be guided by [Safe Baby Court Team](#) (SBCT) approach to allow for benchmarking, they will be closely matched to ECCs’ local culture to be meaningful and relevant to clients, program activities, and staff.

Performance indicators will be developed in a transparent way, with input from Community Coordinators, community advisory teams and with assistance from the ECC Data Analyst/Quality Assurance Manager, the Washington State Center for Court Research, and ECC Data & Evaluation Advisory Board. A table detailing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) at the state level (measured and reported statewide) and locally relevant (measured and reported at a local level) will be developed and regularly evaluated to ensure that each indicator is 1) clearly tied to the program’s goals and objectives and 2) has a strong research-based rationale. An example of the table template containing several KPIs, embodied in the Safe Babies Court Team™ approach (e.g., safety, permanency, placement stability, and well-being) is included as an Appendix at the end of this document⁴.

⁴ This list might be slightly modified depending on the local needs of the sites.

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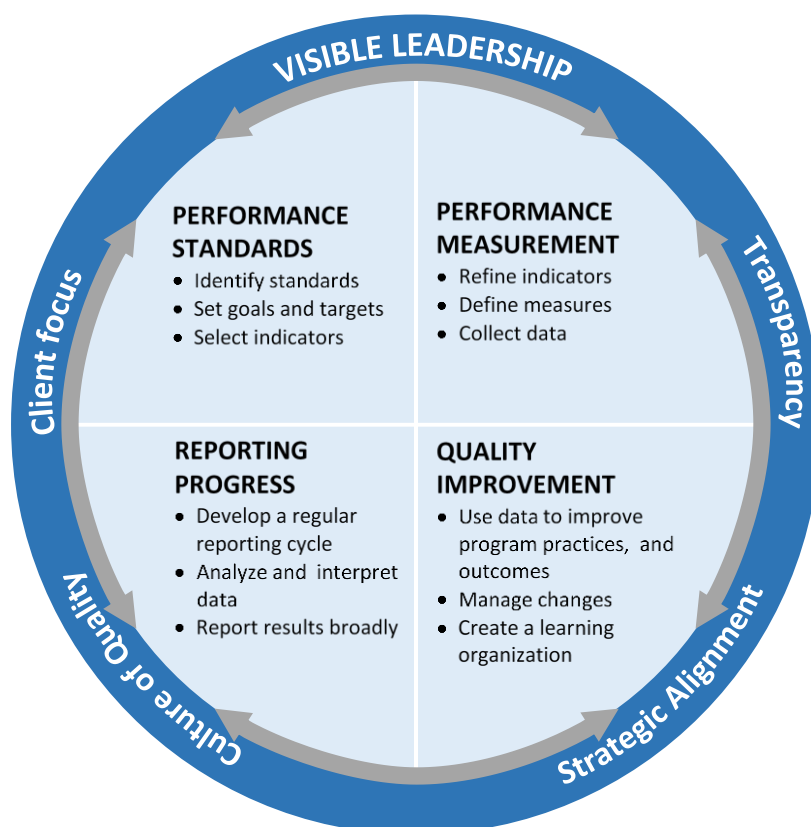


Figure 1: ECC Performance Management Framework, as adopted from the updated Turning Point Performance Management System Framework (Public Health Foundation, 2015).

2. Performance measurement

This component will help ECCs determine “*How do they measure what they are achieving*” and “*What types of data they need?*” This quadrant is about development, application, and use of measures for each KPI (established in Performance standards phase). It is critical that ECCs regard a performance measurement as an integral part of their data performance plan and not as an adjunct to the plan. Performance measures are a tool for tracking ECCs’ progress in achieving safety and permanence for children in a fair and timely manner. Yet, without appropriate measures, the sites cannot assess the effectiveness of ECC practices.

Each ECC site will develop a court-specific strategic plan for performance measures. For example, ECCs will need to decide how to conceptualize and measure child well-being (one of the current KPIs, see Table 1 in the Appendix). The child development research shows that child well-being is a complex construct and should be assessed across multiple child developmental domains—education, health, social behavior, psychological/ emotional development, and relationships⁵. Further, assessing well-being requires evaluating the child in context. For this reason, any assessment of child well-being is incomplete without information about the child’s family and home environment⁶. The choice

⁵ [2016-61ConstructsMeasureChildWellbeing.pdf \(childtrends.org\)](#)

⁶ [Assessing Well-being in Child Welfare](#)

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At the state level, interactive visual tools/dashboards that show statewide and local site summary data will be developed. These tools will be regularly (quarterly) updated. Annually, a static summary report of program performance will be compiled and presented to the State team, judicial and child welfare leadership, active community teams, and other relevant stakeholders.

4. Quality improvement

This component will help ECCs determine “*How will they improve?*” This quadrant is about establishment of a continuous deliberate process for ECC’s self-assessment capacity – ability to track their own progress, diagnose what they need to improve, and use that information to make improvements, identify, document, and replicate positive results.

Quality improvement activities conducted by ECCs will be accomplished through a number of methods which may include, but are not limited to:

- Analyze data
- Engage in the thoughtful discussion of data with a focus on understanding what is working and what is not working at staff meetings at least quarterly
- Identify an area(s) for improvement
- Identify potential solutions & select a solution to test
- Determine whether the ability to make change in the process lies within the team’s control
- Determine whether the desired improvement can be measured
- Identify who is responsible for making the change and collecting the data
- Implement the change
- Collect data

Through this process ECCs will be able to evaluate their Quality Improvement activities, motivate program staff, and be more responsive to the needs of children and families of all races and ethnicities, and particularly from underrepresented and/or marginalized communities (i.e. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who come before them. Assistance and support for this process will be provided by the ECC Data Analyst/Quality Assurance Manager, the Washington State Center for Court Research, and the state team.

Additional Elements

For the Data Performance Management framework to be successful, all four components of the framework (four parts in the circle in Figure 1) must be client-centered and supported by visible leadership that is committed to a culture of quality, they must regularly take into account customer feedback, and enable transparency about performance. This can be achieved by fostering an environment in which all professionals involved in ECCs increase their awareness of different forms of bias, trauma and the adversity that often accompanies poverty, housing and employment instability, and behavioral health challenges.

APPENDIX

Table 1 provides a template and a sample for developing a list of performance indicators, performance measures, data sources and data collection methods associated with each measure. This template was developed with ECC sites in mind. Our hope is that this template will help each ECC develop an in-depth understanding of their local goals, identify performance measures, determine what is needed to obtain data for each measure, and how to report findings in a way that is easily understood by various target audiences.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE OF POTENTIAL INDICATORS, MEASURES, AND DATA SOURCES

Performance Indicator	Goal direction	Measure	Data sources	Data collection strategies
Placement stability	Increased stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of placements Type of placement Distance from biological parent(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records (Zero-to-Three database) Court data Court team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members Focus groups/interviews with participants
Adult services	Increased access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service needs and service referrals Service access and inclusiveness (what does race data say about who the site is serving?) How long is it taking to access services? Understanding/acceptance of treatment goals Services received Service participation Satisfaction with services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records Court team members Participants Court hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members Focus groups/interviews with participants Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings
Child services	Increased access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service needs/service referrals Service access and inclusiveness (what does race data say about who the site is serving?) How long is it taking to access services? Services received Service participation Receiving early intervention services/how long is it taking for children to access EI services? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records Court team members Participants Court hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members Focus groups/interviews with participants Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings
Case length		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time in foster care (days) Time in Program (days) Time necessary to complete program (days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records Court team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members
Family engagement	Increased family buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of court hearings Total number of family team meetings Where do family team meetings take place Understanding/acceptance of treatment goals Increased trust/sense of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records Court team members Court hearings Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members Focus groups/interviews with participants Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings Observations of program activities
Housing status	Improved housing status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing status/type of housing at program entry and program exit Length of time at current address Number of places lived in the last year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records Court team members Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members Focus groups/interviews with participants
Employment status	Improved employment skills/status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment status at program entry and exit Length of time at current employment Job skills (self-reported or staff-reported) Number of places worked in the last year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records Court team members Court hearings Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of participants records Interviews with team members Focus groups/interviews with participants Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings

TABLE 1: SAMPLE OF POTENTIAL INDICATORS, MEASURES, AND DATA SOURCES

Performance Indicator	Goal direction	Measure	Data sources	Data collection strategies
Family relationship	Improved family functioning/relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit coaching • Family visitations frequency • Contact with siblings • Visitation quality/parent-child interaction during family visitations • Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program records • Court team members • Court hearings • Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of participants records • Interviews with team members • Focus groups/interviews with participants • Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings
Permanency	Faster time to reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency outcome • Time to permanency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program records • Court team members • Court hearings • Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of participants records • Interviews with team members • Focus groups/interviews with participants • Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings
Child well-being	Improved well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s health • Children’s medical care • Children’s safety • Screening of infants in five developmental areas: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child development scores • Child scores on the Attachment/Relationships scale • Children’s health measures: health Care Use, Insurance Coverage, Place of Care, and Overall Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of participants records • Interviews with team members/their perceptions of children’s well-being • Focus groups/interviews with participants • Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings
Adult well-being	Improved well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased mental/physical/dental health outcomes • Support system/participants build a supportive community (relationship skills) • Family empowerment/belief in self, self-worth, self-esteem • Increased contextual resilience • Agency/Capacity building • Problem-solving skills • Hope for a better future/Vision and plan for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program records • Court team members • Court hearings • Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of participants records • Interviews with team members • Focus groups/interviews with participants • Hope assessment • Direct observation of team meeting and status hearings