

Early Childhood Court

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

What is an Early Childhood Court?

The Early Childhood Court (ECC) is a specialized court program designed to assist families with infants and toddlers, ages 0-3, who are navigating the child welfare court system (also known as dependency court).

How is the ECC different from a regular dependency court?

Parents can choose between being in the ECC or the regular dependency court. The difference is that the ECC provides individual support for families with the help of the Community Coordinator, whose job is to help families navigate the challenges of child welfare involvement by accessing the resources and community support needed for families to reunify.

With the ECC, you're not alone. In the ECC, you'll meet with a dedicated team, including the Judge or Commissioner, your lawyer, a DCYF social worker, and others committed to bringing your family together. Parents are encouraged to include supportive people in Family Team meetings and Court Hearings, including family members, elders, friends, and service providers.



*ECCs meet more frequently than regular dependency courts because our **goal is to collaborate with parents to help them reunify with their children.***



"You just feel like everybody is there for you in that room, like everybody wants to see you win."

- ECC Parent



ECC Family Support



The **ECC Team** will meet with you **monthly** so you can share your needs and concerns, allowing them to be addressed more quickly during a Family Team meeting or Court Hearing.



Court Hearings and Family Team Meetings alternate **every other month**.



In **ECC Court Hearings**, Judicial Officers focus on listening to you, celebrating progress, and addressing barriers to reunification.



Family Team Meetings are conversational, family-centered, and support communication between parents and caregivers.



The **ECC Community Coordinator** connects with parents one-on-one to get to know you and your family's specific needs.



The entire court team - from the judicial officer to the case workers - is focused on creating a **supportive environment**.



ECCs offer **specialized referrals** for services that are responsive to each family's identity and culture.



As possible, ECCs can provide **diapers, toys, and other baby supplies** for your home, and occasionally can help with paying important bills. Please speak with the Community Coordinator to learn if these resources are available in your community.

For more information, please contact:

Emily Nicewonger
enicewonger@ccyj.org

Morgan Silverman
msilverman@ccyj.org

Becca Guest
bguest@ccyj.org

