

Safe and Secure Baby Calendar (SSBC) Core Components

1. Judicial Leadership

The judicial officer keeps everyone focused on achieving timely permanency and resolving issues that bring families into the system.

2. Court Social Workers

The Specialized Court Social Workers coordinate services and resources for infants and their families within the community.

3. Valuing Birth Parents

The SSBC responds to the needs of birth parents and the wide variety of stressors present in the parents' lives.

4. Foster parents are invited to all SSBC hearings and are encouraged to play a mentoring role with young bio-parent(s).

Safe and Secure Baby Calendar (SSBC) TEAM

Michael B. Forte
Chief Judge

Lia Stuhlsatz
Associate Justice

Ron Pagliarini
Chief of Staff

Julie Connolly, LCSW
SSBC
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Christine Munroe, MSW
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Jess Karten, BSW
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RHODE ISLAND FAMILY COURT



SAFE and SECURE BABY CALENDAR



PURPOSE:

The Safe and Secure Baby Calendar (SSBC) seeks to serve parents of new babies (zero (0) to eighteen (18) months) who may have been in the system themselves as juveniles, have mental health issues, housing insecurity, domestic violence exposure, a substance use history without present active use, and/or lack of parenting skills and natural supports.

The baby need not be a first child, i.e. a previous guardianship or voluntary termination, does not preclude admission. However, a parent may not have other open, active cases on the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) calendar, subject to some exceptions.

Anyone (judicial officer, attorney, hospital personnel, social worker, service provider, etc.) can refer a parent for intake as long as the DCYF petition has been open for less than six (6) months and the case plan goal is reunification. Transfer from the regular calendar to the SSBC is ultimately the decision of the original presiding justice.

Minor parents may participate if assisted by a guardian ad litem.

BENEFITS:

The SSBC provides services and support in an environment that encourages participants to ask questions and be actively involved in the progress of their case. DCYF workers, court personnel, attorneys, and service providers are encouraged to collaborate with participants to develop a case plan that will help strengthen the family. Case plan tasks will be graduated based on the priorities of each individual case.

As a SSBC participant, you will be eligible to receive many services that this specialty calendar was designed to provide, including

referrals and support for you and your child, additional visits (minimum three (3) times weekly), assistance with transportation when needed., and inclusion in all medical appointments for the child.

Participants also have the benefit of sharing their experiences with parents in similar circumstances.

Priority is given to community-based services and/or Department of Health programs which can remain in place when case is closed to DCYF.

COURT APPEARANCES:

The SSBC meets on Monday.

At the court session, parents go before the SSBC judicial officer and talk about their progress, how services are going, visits with the child (or children), pediatrician appointments, and compliance with other court orders. These parents receive the extra support from staff and other SSBC participants that they need to continue to grow and become strong, healthy role models for their child(ren.)

At each appearance, participants are expected to dress and behave in an appropriate manner.

Basic baby items, diapers, books, and “sleep swaddles for safe sleep” are made available to participants at court hearings (based on donations.)

RESTRICTIONS:

While the final decision for admission to the court rests with the judicial officer, the following issues generally preclude participation:

- Those facing criminal child abuse or neglect charges related to their DCYF petition are generally not eligible;
- Those with sex offender allegations and/or adjudicated status are not eligible; and/or
- Parents with severe cognitive limitations or significant mental health concerns generally do not meet the criteria.

EXPECTATIONS:

- All participants must admit to **DEPENDENCY** as a condition of joining the program.
- As one part of the case plan, participants may be asked to cooperate with an infant-parent assessment conducted by the Brown Center for the Study of Children at Risk.
- Participants must cooperate with their assigned SSBC staff and sign all necessary releases.
- Participants are expected to complete their case plan and achieve reunification within twelve (12) months of joining the SSBC.