UCLA **Pritzker Center**
For Strengthening Children and Families

Helping Our Parents Excel: Compton's Infant and Toddler Dependency Court Program

Study Overview:

1. **Implementation:** HOPE Court core components will be documented through key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys of Court personnel and other professionals involved in the program.
2. **Outcomes**: Case-level administrative data will be used to examine and compare case-level outcomes for families whose dependency cases were served
3. in HOPE Court.
   Family and Community Impact: To understand the community's experience of the HOPE Court, primary data will be collected from families with closed dependency cases, community-based service providers, and other local key informants.

Evidence suggests that children are most likely to experience child maltreatment and are most impacted by social-emotional trauma during the first three years of life.[1] Placement into foster care is one strategy often used to mitigate threats to child safety, yet it can have profound detrimental effects on family relationships and infant mental health.[2] Dependency court responses to child maltreatment typically aim to modify parental behaviors and increase access to behavioral health care and parenting education resources. However, these responses often overlook structural factors that profoundly influence parenting and contribute to disproportionate foster care involvement and disparate case outcomes among Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized families.[3]

Specialized approaches to child welfare court proceedings emerged to reduce the amount of time infants and toddlers spend in foster care, increase family reunification, and prevent children from reentering foster care. The Safe Babies Court Team (SBCT) model is an innovative, evidence-based, health equity intervention for families with children under the age of 3 receiving child welfare intervention in response to concerns of maltreatment or neglect.

Launched in 2023, Los Angeles County's Helping Our Parents Excel (HOPE) Court strives to be culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and deeply embedded within the community to address the unique needs of families in Compton and Carson, California. Recently, the Honorable Judge Ashley Price engaged the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families to conduct an evaluation of the program.

Study Aims

1. Describe the core components of the HOPE Court, Los Angeles County's specialized dependency court for infants and toddlers;
2. Document challenges, strengths, and opportunities to sustain and strengthen the program;
3. Identify trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive strategies embedded within HOPE Court proceedings; and
4. Determine whether the program is achieving its intended effects among children and families.

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[1]Mackie, J. F., Foti, T. R., Agu, N., Langenderfer-Magruder, L., & Marshall, J. (2020). Early childhood court in Florida: Qualitative results of a statewide evaluation. Child Abuse & Neglect, 104, 104476.
[2]Miranda, M., Molla, E., & Tadros, E. (2019). Implications of foster care on attachment: A literature review. The Family Journal, 27(4), 394-403.
[3]Klevens, J., & Metzler, M. (2019). Bringing a health equity perspective to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. In Re-visioning public health approaches for protecting children, 197-220.