

## Safe and Secure Baby Court

### Core Components

1. A **Specialized Court Social Worker** is assigned to each family to provide additional support and resources.
2. Frequent court appearances to monitor progress and identify gaps and/or barriers to reunification so that challenges can be addressed as needed.
3. A minimum of three visits per week scheduled for parents and children.
4. This specialty court also offers a **specialized parent/child assessment** through The Brown Center to identify parenting strengths and service needs on a case-by-case basis.
5. **Baby supplies** provided as needed.

## The Safe and Secure Baby Court

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Associate Justice

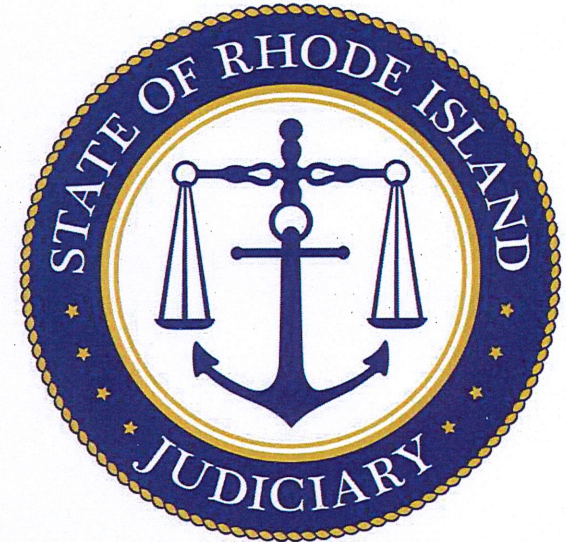
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## RHODE ISLAND FAMILY COURT



## SAFE and SECURE BABY COURT

Garrahy Judicial Complex  
5<sup>th</sup> floor-Courtroom 5J  
One Dorrance Plaza  
Providence, RI 02903



## **PURPOSE/ELIGIBILITY:**

Safe and Secure Baby Court (SSBC) seeks to serve parents of new babies (0-18 mos.) 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.

Their baby need not be their first child, i.e. a previous guardianship or voluntary termination, does not preclude admission.

**ANYONE** can refer a parent for an intake as long as the DCYF petition has a case plan goal of reunification including Judges, attorneys, DCYF, services providers, hospital personnel and even the parent themselves. Case transfers from the regular calendar to the SSBC calendar are ultimately the decision of the original presiding justice.

Minor parents may participate if assisted by a guardian.

## **BENEFITS:**

Through a strength-based, teamwork approach, the Safe and Secure Baby Court (SSBC) seeks to fast-track safe reunification with individualized safety plans and frequent court check-ins. DCYF workers, SSBC social workers, attorneys, and service providers are encouraged to collaborate with

participants to develop a case plan that will help strengthen the family. Case plan tasks can be adjusted based on the priorities and progress of each individual case.

SSBC provides services and support in an environment that encourages participants to ask questions and be actively involved in the progress of their case and during court hearings.

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

## **RESTRICTIONS:**

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

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

## **COURT APPEARANCES:**

- Safe and Secure Baby Court meets on Mondays from 9:00AM to 4:00PM in the Providence Courthouse.
- At the Court session, parents go before the Safe and Secure Baby Court judge and talk about their progress – how services are going, visits with the child (or children), pediatrician appointments, and compliance with other Court orders.

## **EXPECTATIONS:**

- All participants must admit to **DEPENDENCY** (on an amended petition if applicable) as a condition of joining the court.
- As one part of the case plan, all participants must cooperate in a timely manner with an infant-parent assessment conducted by a Ph. D. with training/experience in infant and parent mental health upon joining the court. This assessment/evaluation works in coordination with the overall case plan developed by DCYF and SSBC.
- Participants are expected to cooperate with their assigned SSBC Social Worker and sign all necessary releases.