



## CORE MESSAGE

The earliest experiences that our children have set the stage for their entire lives. We build a stronger workforce full of talented innovators and inspiring leaders when we prioritize young children and families. We'll lay the groundwork for a stronger state and economy when every child in Montana can reach their full potential.

## TALKING POINTS

- Babies are the most likely age group to suffer from abuse or neglect. In Montana, almost 29 babies out of every 1,000 experience maltreatment – that's almost double the national average.
- Young children who experience maltreatment have a high likelihood of significant and detrimental impacts on their emotional health and cognitive development, with lasting effects.
- The current structure of the child welfare system provides limited resources to address early childhood development and multi-generational trauma.
- A third of children entering foster care each year are under age 3.
- Frequent court hearings, including monthly case reviews, are just one of several important factors that lead to improved results for infants and toddlers in child welfare, such as shorter time to permanency and lower repeat maltreatment rates.
- Research on parent mentor programs in child welfare, has found promising results, including higher rates of reunification for participating parents, lower rates of reentry for children involved in the program, and increased participation in services and court hearings.

### ***Parents for Parents Specific:***

- Programs such as Parents for Parents provide support to families to help improve their success while being involved in the child welfare system.
- Parents for Parents offers a Dependency 101 course which helps parents understand the complexities of the child welfare system; making them more equipped to navigate it.
- Data shows participation in the Parents for Parents program significantly increased parent knowledge of the child welfare system, increased level of trust in CPS, and showed higher compliance with treatment plans and court hearing dates.
- Of parents who participated in Dependency 101, 70% reunified with their children compared to 53% of parents who did not participate in the course.
- Of parents who participated in Parents for Parents and Dependency 101 only 26% had their parental rights terminated compared to 39% who did not participate in the Parents for Parents program.
- Of parents who participated in the Parents for Parents program and Dependency 101, 79% reunified with their children, Compared to 67% who did not participate in the program.
- Parents for Parents peer support is being utilized in states across the country as a promising practice in reducing the number of parents that have their rights terminated.