

Section 1 - Attachment and Bonding Overview

“Safeguarding the physical safety of infants and toddlers in foster care is not enough. It is important to also address the attachment and mental health needs of young children in foster care...young children in foster care face two big challenges: forming a positive attachment relationship with their substitute caregivers and maintaining an attachment relationship with their biological parents. Both goals are extremely important to the child’s short-term and long-term mental health.”

- Beth Troutman, Ph.D.

Attachment is the profound and lasting connection established between a child and caregiver in the first several years of life. It strongly influences every component of the human condition - mind, body, emotions, relationships, and values. Without a strong attachment, children can fail to develop a secure base from which to take risks necessary to develop competency and confidence. By understanding this basic human need, judges can take steps to support a child’s attachment with their caretaker and birth parents. Judges can ensure children and parents have opportunities to heal, strengthen or even develop a positive attachment. These connections provide one of the mitigating factors that can help children overcome the deleterious effects of maltreatment.

This section provides two primary resources overviewing attachment and bonding. Three additional resources offer information on abandoned infants, brain development in the attachment process, and the analysis of “sibling attachment.”

- I. A succinct article outlining the fundamental concept of the attachment relationship with the caregiver. (See, *Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, 2011*).
- II. What are the potential consequences of child/parent separation on attachment? This article provides steps to reduce attachment disruptions, highlighting parent/child placements, concurrent planning, and the effective use of visitation. (See, *Troutman, B., 2011*).

