

Section 3 - Child Development Overview

“All children have the right: to be happy, thriving, self-actualized, educated, healthy, and content; to have the opportunity to reach their full potential as individuals capable of healthy relationships and productive lives; and to have a fair chance in life with opportunities for healthy, balanced, and well-rounded development.”

***- Mission and Guiding Principles for
Pennsylvania’s Child Dependency System***

As foundational as the issue of “safety,” child development is core to all that occurs within dependency court proceedings. Understanding the typical stages through which children develop and grow as well as the potential impact of trauma on that development is critical to the courts' decisions about child safety, well-being, and permanence.

This section provides six primary resources, seven additional resources, and a laminated child development at-a-glance chart. New to this section are several articles that provide information on gender diversity, key terms and definitions, and links to peer-reviewed resources.

- I. This two-part resource emphasizes responsive relationships, resilience through protective factors, and the use of science in child welfare cases to reduce stress for children. (See, *Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016*)
- II. This resource provides critical information for a dependency judge that explains the impact of stress on a child’s developing brain, the lasting adverse effects of stress, and a child’s developmental need for available, supportive adult relationships. (See, *National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005*)
- III. A well-written, informative article that is heavily cited regarding the effects of abuse and neglect with specific recommendations for judges emphasizing the necessity of prevention programs. (See, *Putnam. F. W., 2006*)
- IV. This three-page informational sheet provides material regarding the impact of trauma on infants and practical strategies for judges overseeing these cases. (See, *Wotherspoon, E., Hawkins, E., & Gough, P., 2009*)

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- V. This research-based resource covers topics of gender diversity among students, support individuals for families, general facts, definitions and terminology, and risk and resiliency factors in schools regarding the health and well-being of LGBTQA+ youth. (See, *American Psychological Association, Divisions 16 and 44, 2015*)
- VI. This resource provides questions and answers covering key areas regarding transgender individuals, gender identity, and gender expression. (See, *American Psychological Association, 2011*)

