# Early Intervention Family Drug Court

**Lead Agency**
Sacramento County Early Intervention Family Drug Court

**Location**
Sacramento, California

**Jurisdiction Served**
1,514,460 (Urban)

**Average Duration of FDC Program**
8 months

**First Date of Operation**
February 2008

**Model**
Pre-filing

**Capacity**
Parents: 306

**Population Served**
1,692 parents
2,588 children

**Parent Demographics**
Average age: 29 years
Female participants: 71.6%

**Child Demographics**
Under age of 1 year: 33.7%
Ages 1-5 years: 40.1%

## Program Overview and Background

The Early Intervention Family Drug Court (EIFDC), implemented February 2008, is Sacramento County’s innovative approach to intervene with intensive Child Welfare, Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD), and Administrative Hearing services before the removal of a child from the home becomes necessary.

The EIFDC serves families participating in Informal Supervision (IS) through Sacramento County Child Protective Services. IS was established to provide voluntary intensive services to children and families who are assessed to be at “high” or “very high” risk of abuse or neglect as determined by the Structured Decision Making (SDM) risk assessment matrix. Juvenile Court petitions are held in abeyance, and children, when safe to do so, can remain in the care of their parents, while the family receives services. The EIFDC was created to be an expansion of standard IS services to make certain that parents have administrative oversight to ensure compliance with the treatment plan by attending administrative hearings and receiving incentives and/or consequences from a Hearing Officer.

Services for these families are specifically designed to mitigate safety and risk factors in order to provide stabilization, enhance safety, increase well-being, and improve permanency outcomes for children. The expected outcome of early intervention intensive services is to meet a broad range of needs for families involved with both substance use treatment and the child welfare system, prevent first entries into foster care, decrease re-entries, and prevent recurrence by linking families to appropriate community resources that will sustain and enhance family well-being. The IS unit works closely with Emergency Response (ER) field social workers, to help facilitate early service delivery to substance abuse screening, assessment, treatment and aftercare.

Sacramento County is one of nine counties in California participating in the 5-year Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, which began October 1, 2014. One of the interventions included the expansion of Prevention
Services. In September 2017, Child Protective Services (CPS) expanded IS and EIFDC services from serving families with children ages 0-5 to 12 years of age. This expansion included an additional IS unit, two recovery specialists and one administrative hearing session.

The administrative oversight offers parents an opportunity to share their successes and challenges with an authority figure that can provide incentives and consequences as necessary. Hearings occur monthly and after six months of successful participation, parents “Graduate” from the program.

The EIFDC’s premise is to intervene with families earlier by providing intensive services and accountability; there by reducing child trauma and the number of petitions filed requiring removal of children from their home.

**SACRAMENTO EIFDC GOALS**

The EIFDC team goal is to:

1. Increase the number of children who can remain safely at home; while parents undergo intensive substance abuse treatment
2. Reduce the risk that infants or other children in the home will be harmed in the future
3. Increase the availability of substance abuse treatment to parents

**TARGET POPULATION & ELIGIBILITY**

Sacramento EIFDC’s target population consists of families participating in CPS preventative services, IS program. The EIFDC child population consists of infants born with prenatal substance use exposure, and other children aged 0-12 years who have been neglected and/or abused due to parental substance abuse.

EIFDC is a voluntary program. Referrals are primarily made through the CPS ER Unit social workers. CPS ER, IS, and EIFDC supervisors determine if referrals are eligible for EIFDC. Parents are eligible as long as they meet the following criteria:

---

**PLC DESCRIPTION**

Center for Children and Family Futures has identified best-practice models from across the nation and designated them as mentor sites called Peer Learning Courts. These exemplary programs are willing to help further education about Family Drug Courts through peer-to-peer technical assistance.

**Peer Learning Courts provide:**

- Consultation
- Site Visits
- Sharing of Program Policies & Procedures
- Peer-to-Peer Virtual Learning Opportunities
- Developing Technical Assistance Action Plans
- Operational Tune-Ups
1. CPS determines the allegation of child abuse or neglect is substantiated and the family meets the CPS criteria for IS
2. The parent’s SUD was a contributing factor in the abuse or neglect of a child
3. The results of the SDM assessment indicate that removal of the child is unwarranted
4. The parent does not have an open dependency court case with another child
5. The parent has not had reunification services or their parental rights terminates within the past two years

**PROGRAM SERVICES**

The process of participation in the EIFDC program typically begins through a CPS ER Hotline call from hospitals or other community agencies reporting potential child abuse or neglect due prenatal substance exposure or parental substance abuse with children ages 0-12 in the home.

The ER Intake Unit generates a referral and assigns an ER worker to respond. The ER worker conducts an in-person investigation, engages the parent/caregiver to determine the safety threats and current harm to the child and protective capacities of the parent using SDM Safety and Risk Assessment tools. The ER social worker determines if the allegation is substantiated and evaluates the family for IS and EIFDC programs.

If a parent meets eligibility criteria, the ER social worker meets with the family to explain the IS and EIFDC program. If the parent agrees to participate in IS and the EIFDC program, the court petition is drafted and reviewed with the family. The necessary consent agreements and case plans are reviewed and signed by the parent.

At that time, a referral to Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) System of Care (SOC) is made for AOD assessment and linkage to the most appropriate level of treatment. Once the assessment is completed, the participant is linked to a Specialized Treatment and Recovery Services (STARS) Recovery Specialist. The Recovery Specialist uses Motivational Interviewing techniques to engage with the parent, provide recovery support, adjust the recovery plan as needed, monitor

**OPERATIONS: HIGHLIGHTS**

**Parenting & Family Strengthening Programs**
- Celebrating Families!
- Making Parenting a Pleasure
- Nurturing Parenting Program
- Systemic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)
- Family Spirit
- Parenting in Recovery
- Incredible Years

**Substance Use Treatment & Related Support Services**
- Specialized Treatment and Recovery Services (STARS) Program
- Helping Women Recover
- Helping Men Recover
- Beyond Trauma
- Women Escaping a Violent Environment (WEAVE)
- Motivational Interviewing
- Intensive/Coordinated Case Management Service

**KEY PARTNERS AND AGENCIES**

**Child Welfare, Substance Treatment & Services for Children**
- Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services
drug testing, and complete the twice monthly reports to the court and CPS worker. The CPS caseworker oversees case management, safety, well-being, and monitors the CPS concerns and ensures that effective linkages are created with community agencies.

A major strength of the EIFDC is the regular communication between the CPS worker, STARS Recovery Specialist, EIFDC Administrative Hearing, and other personnel as needed.

As long as the parent continues to comply with the case and treatment plans and the child is not placed at significant risk necessitating his/her removal, a case remains with IS and a petition is not filed with the Juvenile Court. Compliance review hearings are conducted at 30, 60, 90, 120, 150 and 180 days. A collaborative pre-court meeting is held 30 minutes prior to the administrative hearing, where agency staff (CPS, Recovery Specialist, and Administrative Hearing Officer) convenes a case staffing ensuring effective coordination and integration of services among the network of providers. The EIFDC is approximately a six-month program corresponding to the IS program, however, given the needs of the children or families, services may be extended.

Parents who are successful (e.g., compliant with case and treatment plans) attend the EIFDC commencement ceremony signaling the completion of the treatment components of the case and acknowledging the parent for their success in their sobriety. The commencement is a celebration of their accomplishments, where parents bring their children and family together, to acknowledge that they are on their way to a lifelong change and positive functioning. Parents are encouraged to continue in aftercare services including recovery support, and ongoing Family Resource Centers and/or faith-based supports, as part of their substance free journey.

**KEY OUTCOMES**

Between February 2008 and September 2016, Sacramento County EIFDC served a total of 1,843 parents and their 2,921 children. The number of parents enrolled in EIFDC has remained consistently around 250 since the 2011/2012 fiscal year. The comparison group for EIFDC was comprised of 100 parents and their 184 children.
• **Remain at Home** - EIFDC aims to prevent child removals by providing intensive services to families while holding a dependency petition in abeyance. Children of parents in EIFDC who started the program in home were significantly more likely than children of parents in the comparison group to remain at home throughout case closure (86.5% versus 69.9%, respectively)

• **Reoccurrence of Maltreatment** - Children of parents in EIFDC were significantly less likely than the comparison group to experience repeat maltreatment within 12 months (4.1% versus 9.2%, respectively)
  - Rates of repeat maltreatment for EIFDC were lower than Sacramento County (10.8%) and California (9.5%) during the 2015 calendar year

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN VISITING SACRAMENTO COUNTY EIFDC?**

**Day and Time of Court Hearings:**

Wednesdays

9:15 AM – 9:55 AM – Calendar/Review of the scheduled cases

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM – 1st session

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM – 2nd session

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM – 3rd Session*

*Graduation occurs on the last Wednesday each month at the 1:00 pm session.

**Hosting Availability:**

2-3 times per year

**Visitor Capacity:**

10 visitors

**Nearest Airport:**

Sacramento International Airport (SMF)
This project was supported by Grant #2016-DC-BX-K003 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.