



WHAT IS A THREE-BRANCH APPROACH?

A three-branch approach takes an intentional step back from governing as usual toward improving outcomes for children and families as a shared objective of all three branches of government. This section highlights the role of the executive, legislative and judicial branches and the collaborative structure of the approach.

The role of each branch

Each branch of state government plays an important role in establishing the framework for child welfare policy and practice. Each branch must fully engage in the approach and understand the role of the other branches to ensure strong collaboration. Together, all three branches:

- Develop a coordinated strategic plan to achieve a common goal.
- Implement and monitor the strategic plan.
- Periodically meet to assess progress, address challenges and communicate needs.
- Educate peers on the mission, purpose and goals of the approach.
- Recruit leaders from their respective branch to participate in the larger implementation team.

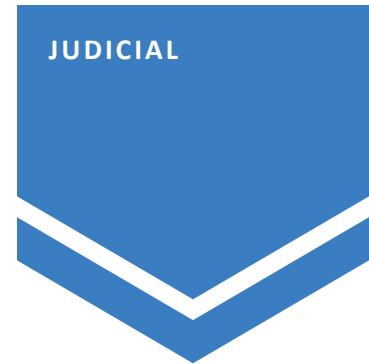


- Potentially lead and staff the three-branch approach.
- Develop a legislative action plan to support the approach’s goals.
- Hold hearings and briefings to educate legislative peers and the public on the three-branch approach’s goals, issues and strategies.
- Enact legislation that supports and promotes the approach’s goals.
- Authorize funding to support and implement the three-branch strategic plan.
- Convene and educate legislative stakeholders and community members in districts.
- Bring knowledge of the state’s political landscape to the team.



- Lead and staff the three-branch approach.*
- Plan and facilitate meetings.
- Coordinate cross-branch communication.
- Align work on the approach with ongoing agency work and gubernatorial priorities.
- Monitor progress toward achieving goals.
- Incorporate the three-branch strategic plan into executive branch policies and practices.

*In most states that have participated in a Three-Branch Institute, the executive branch has led and staffed the initiatives. However, three-branch approaches can be led or staffed by any branch of government, depending on leadership within the branch, state politics, relationships, time constraints or other factors.



- Potentially lead and staff the three-branch approach.
- Develop a judicial action plan to support the approach’s goals.
- Provide judicial oversight.
- Enact rules of the court to support and promote the approach’s goals.
- Embed the initiative’s work into ongoing judicial projects and committees.
- Convene and educate judicial and legal stakeholders, including local model court/ multidisciplinary dependency improvement teams.
- Educate legislative and executive members on the impact of potential legislation and executive branch policies and practices on court processes.

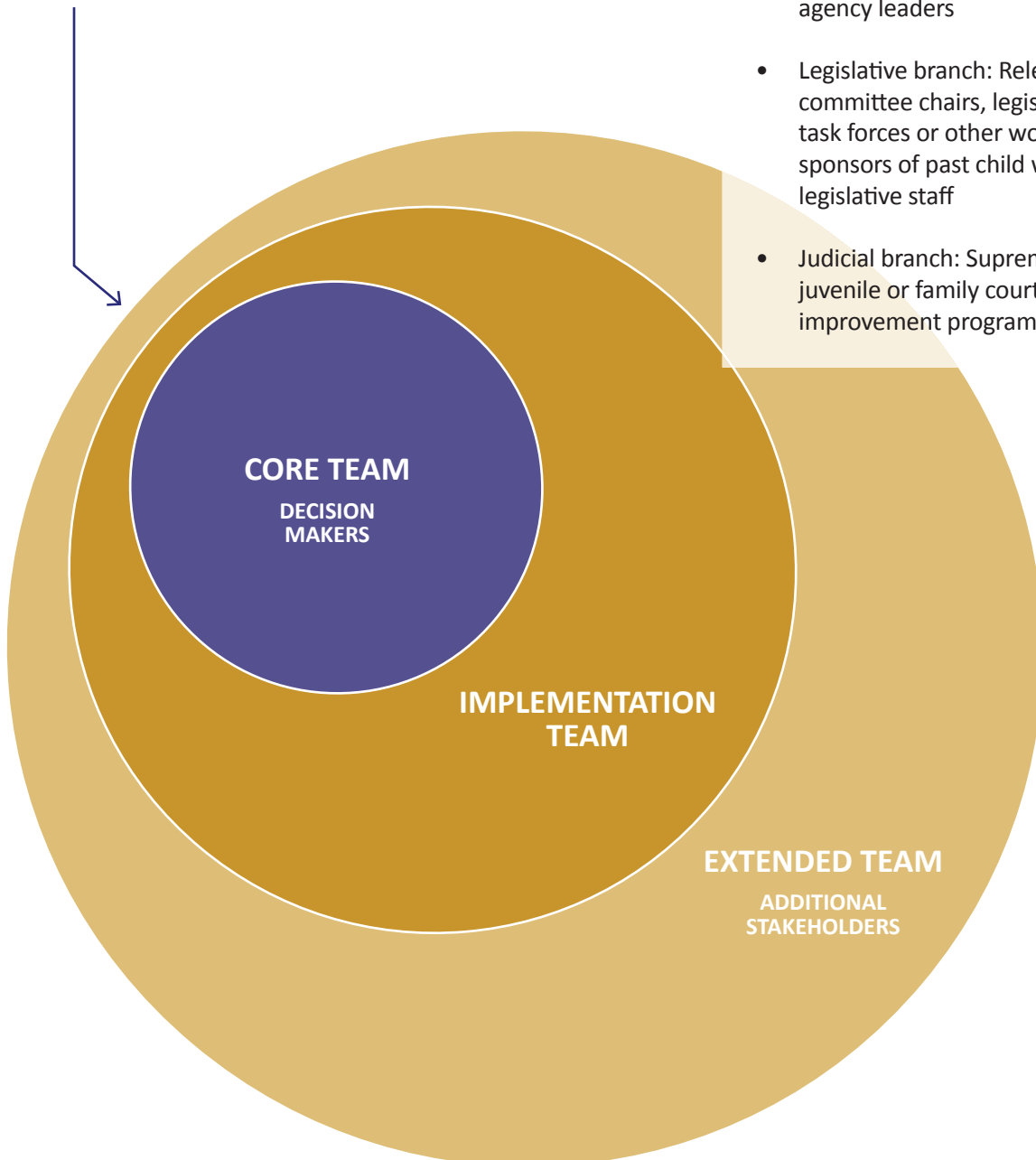
Collaborative structure

A successful three-branch approach involves three groups: a core team of decision makers, an implementation team and an extended team of additional stakeholders. Each team has critical responsibilities in developing, implementing and overseeing a coordinated strategic plan.

THE CORE TEAM

WHO?

- Executive branch: Governor’s office, state agency leaders
- Legislative branch: Relevant legislative committee chairs, legislators engaged in task forces or other work on child welfare, sponsors of past child welfare legislation, legislative staff
- Judicial branch: Supreme court justices, juvenile or family court judges, court improvement program representatives





THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

WHO?

- Additional leaders from the executive branch (e.g., human services, health, education, criminal justice, public safety, workforce and behavioral health).
- Additional legislators, including members of appropriations, health, education, human services and other committees; legislative staff; and legislators who may be foster parents, former foster youth, adoptive parents, social workers, law enforcement or medical professionals.
- Additional judicial branch representatives.
- City and county officials.
- Tribal child welfare leaders, tribal council representatives.
- Birth families, foster youth or alumni, kinship care providers and foster parents.
- Private-sector service providers.
- Community-based organizations (CBOs).

THE EXTENDED TEAM

WHO?

- Advocates and constituents (when appropriate).
- Supervisors and staff representing the frontline perspective.
- Business leaders and other private-sector representatives.
- Legal representatives of children, parents and families.
- Representatives of the faith community.
- Child and family policy or research organizations.
- Representatives of higher education and workforce training programs.
- Media representatives.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

- Identify shared goals and outcomes for children, families, communities or the child welfare system.
- Develop a coordinated strategic plan to achieve a common goal.
- Participate in and monitor implementation of the strategic plan.
- Provide leadership and encouragement and model three-branch collaboration for all involved in implementing the plan.
- Periodically assess progress, address challenges and communicate needs with other branches.
- Educate peers on the mission, purpose and goals of the approach.
- Recruit leaders from the branch to participate in the implementation team and extended team.
- Lead work groups to address specific elements of the strategic plan.
- Develop a plan to communicate the vision, mission and goals of the plan to the broader community.

WHEN AND HOW OFTEN DO THEY MEET?

- Meet regularly (monthly or biweekly) in person or virtually.
- Communicate regularly by email or phone.
- Participate in regular, issue-specific work group meetings.



THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

WHAT DO THEY DO?

- Assist with development of the strategic plan.
- Assist with implementation of the strategic plan.
- Participate in issue-specific work groups.
- Demonstrate the value and behaviors of a three-branch approach to the broader group.
- Help communicate the vision, mission and goals of the strategic plan to the broader community.

WHEN AND HOW OFTEN DO THEY MEET?

- Meet regularly (quarterly, bimonthly) in person or virtually.
- Communicate regularly by email or phone.
- Participate in regular, issue-specific work group meetings.

THE EXTENDED TEAM

WHAT DO THEY DO?

- Build broad understanding of and buy-in for the strategic plan.
- Provide perspective on the strategic plan and its implementation.
- Help communicate the vision, mission and goals of the strategic plan to the broader community.
- Help implement the strategic plan.

WHEN AND HOW OFTEN DO THEY MEET?

- Convene at the outset of the initiative, and then as needed to build broad buy-in for the strategic plan.
- Participate in issue-specific work group meetings.
- Communicate regularly by email or phone.