“I will never see premature babies in the same way again.”

- Public Health Nurse

“I’ve become more aware of how much learning is going on ... as the baby negotiates his or her daily life.”

- Social Worker

“I now spend more time looking at what mom is doing right, rather than what I think she is doing wrong.”

- Foster Parent

Special Start Training Program Staff

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Department of Social Services
The Special Start Training Program was developed to address the unique developmental needs of babies that are born sick or premature. The training is designed for professionals and caregivers caring for newborns who were hospitalized in the neonatal intensive care unit at birth and are now at home.

This relationship-based training teaches principles of brain development, assessment, and developmental strategies that support both infants and their caregivers. It emphasizes collaboration between professionals, caregivers, and community as they support the infant and the family. Building on the strengths of the infant during interaction with:

**What is the Special Start Training Program?**

- Infants born prematurely.
- Infants born with special needs.
- Infants born at term who are not behaviorally well-organized.
- Infants exposed to substances or HIV in the womb.

**What Does this Training Provide?**

This training will provide caregivers with practical new tools and techniques to improve medical and developmental outcomes for these babies. Participants leave able to:

- Understand newborn communication.
- Interpret the unique cues of a recovering, sick and/or premature infant.
- Identify and minimize an infant’s distress during handling.
- Promote stability in autonomic, motor, state, and self-regulatory abilities.
- Help families to alter the environment to support the infant’s development.
- Maximize the caregiver’s contribution to the baby’s development.
- Identify developmental strategies for organizing sleep and feeding behaviors.

- Discuss new research related to the unique developmental needs of these infants.
- Identify how the brain development of a premature infant impacts behavior.