



New Jersey Courts

Independence • Integrity • Fairness • Quality Service



Children in Court

# Parent's Handbook and Planner



# OVERVIEW



The Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) is New Jersey's child welfare and child protection agency within the Department of Children and Families (DCF). As required by state law (Title 9 and Title 30), DCP&P must investigate all reports of child abuse and neglect.

State law also requires the Superior Court of New Jersey, Family Part to review the decisions and actions DCP&P makes and to oversee DCP&P cases to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Family cases involving DCP&P matters are a part of the Children in Court (CIC) case system. You are involved in CIC because DCP&P filed a complaint with the family court stating your DCP&P case needs court supervision because the children have been or are in danger of being harmed. When a complaint is filed, it becomes the responsibility of the family court to determine what is best for the children.

Involvement with DCP&P and CIC can be overwhelming for parents, children and families. This handbook and planner were written to help you understand the CIC case system, the different roles of people in CIC and to help you keep track of important appointments and court dates. For more information, visit our website at [www.njcourts.gov](http://www.njcourts.gov) and search for family practice division.



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# Descriptions of Hearings

**Order to Show Cause Hearing:** The first hearing, usually on an emergency basis, where DCP&P is asking the court to make decisions about where your child(ren) will live, who will have custody of them and visitation issues. This is not a final decision on whether you have been neglectful or abusive, merely whether DCP&P had the right to take emergency action.

**Return Order to Show Cause:** The second hearing, approximately three weeks after the Order to Show Cause. During the time between the Order to Show Cause and the Return on the Order to Show Cause, DCP&P should have continued to investigate the complaint and could have reached an agency decision on how it proposes to proceed with safety plans, placement options, services and, possibly, investigation findings.

**Fact-Finding Trial:** In this hearing DCP&P must prove you committed an act of abuse or neglect. Both DCP&P and you are given the chance to call witnesses, question or cross-exam the DCP&P worker and present documentary evidence to the court. At the end of the hearing the court will determine whether one or all of the children were abused or neglected.

**Dispositional Hearing:** If the court finds the child(ren) have been abused or neglected, the court then determines what the next step is to reunify the family or to accomplish an alternative goal for the child(ren). This could include the completion of evaluations, parenting classes, counseling or substance abuse treatment.

**Compliance Reviews:** Typically scheduled every two to three months to reassess whether the child(ren) can return to their parent(s)' custody. The court also makes sure visitation is occurring (if ordered) and everyone is participating in all court ordered services.

**Permanency Hearing:** Occurs approximately one year after the complaint was filed. This hearing is only held if the child(ren) are still in an out of home placement (foster care or relative care). The court must determine whether the children can return home at that time or within a short time frame. If the child(ren) cannot be safely returned home, then the court will look to a permanent plan other than the parents, usually kinship legal guardianship (permanent placement with a relative) or adoption. If adoption is approved as the plan, DCP&P will be ordered to file a new complaint asking the court to terminate your parental rights.

## Notes

# Litigation Timeline

## Notes

<b>DAY 1</b>	<b>Order to Show Cause</b> DCP&P files the Verified Complaint and you are given official notice that an abuse/neglect case has been filed against you. Court approves or denies DCP&P actions/requests, you argue against or agree with DCP&P actions.
<b>12-20 DAYS</b>	<b>Return Order to Show Cause</b> Court reviews placement options, checks if safety issues identified at the first hearing are addressed.
<b>30-60 DAYS</b>	<b>Case Management Conference</b> Preparation hearing for the Fact-Finding Hearing where DCP&P attempts to prove abuse/neglect occurred. Your attorney and the DCP&P attorney gather and share evidence, reports for the hearing.
<b>BY 120-180 DAYS</b>	<b>Fact Finding Hearing</b> Hearing where DCP&P must prove abuse/neglect occurred; Court decides if abuse/neglect occurred. Results: Dismissal, Substantiation or Stipulation Dispositional Hearing: Based on Fact-Finding results, court orders the appropriate services/actions.
<b>EVERY 60-90 DAYS</b>	Hearing to inform the court of progress made towards case plan goals.
<b>BY 365 DAYS</b>	Hearing for children in DCP&P custody; DCP&P presents a permanent plan for the child; the court approves or denies the plan. Results: Reunification with parent, Permanency with relatives or Termination of Parental Rights.

### Possible Results After Fact-Finding

- Dismissal- Your case is closed
- Established or Substantiated Findings- Abuse or neglect has occurred; services are ordered to address safety issues.
- Stipulation-You admit to at least one allegation; services are ordered to address safety issues.
- Mediation- Mediation could be ordered to discuss services, visitations, or other disputed issues.
- Reunification- Court determines it is safe for child(ren) to return home.

### Possible Outcomes After Permanency Hearing

- Reunification with parents (child returned to you)
- Permanent placement with a relative
- Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG)- Relative becomes long-term legal guardian for the child
- Independent Living- For youth 16 years and older
- Another planned permanent living arrangement
- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)- If TPR is granted, then the plan for the child would change to adoption. See page 6 for more information on TPR.

# Termination of Parental Rights

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is the legal action taken to end legal and biological ties to your biological or adoptive child.

TPR is final and results in you having no rights or legal authority in decision making for the child. DCP&P pursues the termination of the parental rights of all parents when a child cannot be safely returned to either parent, is not in an otherwise permanent placement with relatives, and when TPR is necessary to achieve an adoption plan for the child.

Termination of parental rights is a serious matter. If your parental rights to your children are terminated, you will no longer have the right to visit with them, speak to them on the telephone, communicate with them by mail, or be told where they are or what is happening to them.

## Notes



# Who Will Be In Court

## Notes

**The Judge** - In New Jersey, child protection cases are heard by family court judges. The judge decides if DCP&P actions are timely and appropriate, requires DCP&P, the parents and attorneys to take actions and makes decisions to keep the child safe.

**Deputy Attorney General** - The DAG is the attorney for DCP&P. The DAG presents DCP&P's position to the court and must prove the state's case.

**Law Guardian** - The law guardian is your child's attorney. The law guardian is independent of DCP&P and will advocate for your child in court.

**Parental Defense Attorney** - You have the right to have a lawyer represent you in DCP&P proceedings. Your lawyer should meet with you before every hearing or mediation to discuss your case, represent your interests in court and help you to understand your rights and obligations.

**DCP&P Caseworker and/or Supervisor** - DCP&P caseworkers or supervisors also must attend court to update the court on DCP&P actions, your progress and the child's well-being. You should be able to meet with your caseworker at court to receive and provide updates.

**Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)** - A Court Appointed Special Advocate is a specially trained volunteer who could be appointed by the court. The CASA volunteer becomes familiar with your family's case and finds solutions and services available to the family that are in the best interest of the child. The CASA volunteer provides a report with recommendations to the court. Anyone who is part of the case can request that a CASA volunteer be provided, but the judge must assign the CASA volunteer to the case.

# Finding a Lawyer

You should begin looking for an attorney to represent you as soon as you are served with a summons to appear in family court OR as soon as you receive the Order to Show Cause and Verified Complaint.

- If you cannot afford to pay for an attorney contact:
- Office of Parental Representation (OPR), a unit in the Office of the Public Defender.
- Attorneys are available to income-eligible parents in child protection cases.
- You must complete a 5A Form, which is the application for an OPR attorney.

To complete this form contact:

- Children in Court staff at your assigned courthouse or,
- Your regional OPR based on the county where you live. The regional offices are listed on page 9.

## **New Jersey Bar Association Attorney Referrals**

Call the New Jersey Bar Association at 732-249-5000 to find your county bar association, and request an attorney referral or visit <https://tcms.njsba.com/PersonifyEbusiness/Default.aspx?TabID=2011> to find your county bar association.

## **Legal Services of New Jersey Family Representation Project**

The Family Representation Project offers advice and legal representation for low-income parents involved in DCP&P cases. Legal Services of New Jersey offers representation in cases that meet their case priorities. For more information, call 1-888-LSNJ-LAW (1-888-576-5529).

## **Notes**



# Office of Parental Representation Contacts

## Notes

### **Capitol Region - Burlington, Hunterdon and Mercer Counties**

210 S. Broad St. - Fourth Floor  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
Tel: 609-599-6900 | Fax: 609-599-6899

### **Central Region - Middlesex and Monmouth Counties**

928 Livingston Ave. - Second Floor  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902  
Tel: 732-545-1530 | Fax: 732-545-2216

### **Southern Region - Camden, Cumberland and Salem Counties**

2 Riverside Dr. - Fourth Floor  
Camden, NJ 08103  
Tel: 856-614-2100 | Fax: 856-614-2202

### **Shore Region - Atlantic, Cape May and Ocean Counties**

5914 Main St., Suite 104  
Mays Landing, NJ 08330  
Tel: 609-909-2780 | Fax: 609-909-2793

### **Northern Region - Essex, Passaic and Union Counties**

31 Clinton St., Twelfth Floor  
Newark, NJ 07102  
Tel: 973-792-1820 | Fax: 973-792-1837

### **Northwest Region - Morris and Somerset Counties**

2170 Headquarters Plaza  
Morristown, NJ 07960  
Tel: 973-656-4488 | Fax: 973-656-4496

### **Northwest Region - Sussex and Warren Counties**

314 Front St.  
Belvidere, NJ 07823  
Tel: 908-475-1789 | Fax: 908-475-5647

### **Northeast Region - Bergen and Hudson Counties**

438 Summit Ave. - Fifth Floor  
Jersey City, NJ 07306  
Tel: 201-217-5953 | Fax: 201-217-5964

# You and Your Lawyer

**Your relationship with your lawyer is very important.** You should make every effort to make the relationship with your attorney work to your advantage.

**Be honest with your lawyer.** Keep your lawyer fully informed of your case and your progress. If there are things that you do not want DCP&P to know you should inform your lawyer that you do not want that information shared.

**Show all documents to your lawyer.** Share any documents that are relevant to your case (evaluations, case plans, visitation schedule) with your lawyer.

**Review court documents with your lawyer.** Take time to discuss and review the order to show cause and complaint filed in your case as well as court orders with your lawyer.

**Maintain contact with your lawyer.** Make sure that your lawyer has your current contact information. Return phone calls from your lawyer as soon as possible.

**Ask your lawyer to explain.** If you have any questions about your case, ask your lawyer to explain.

**Discuss your case with your lawyer.** Talk to your lawyer about how you would like your case to be resolved.

**Always talk with your lawyer** before signing any documents about your case.

## Notes

# Your Child's Lawyer

## Notes

The law guardian is your child's attorney. The law guardian will tell the judge what your child wants and helps your child understand what happens in court. The law guardian supports your child's wishes and protects his or her interests in the court proceedings and in dealing with the other parties to the case.

The position of the law guardian will depend upon the facts of the case and the wishes, interests and needs of your child. The law guardian has an investigator who helps to prepare the case by gathering and reporting information. The investigator and/or law guardian will visit your child and interview school personnel, caregivers, health care professionals, and other people involved with your child and family. The law guardian can advocate for your child to receive needed services, including financial support for the child's caretakers.

The law guardian and the investigator are employees of the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender (OPD) and are independent of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). A law guardian is appointed by a family court judge at the beginning of each case. In most cases, the law guardian will remain your child's lawyer until your child is returned to your care, or safely placed in a permanent, stable family situation or if there is a termination of parental rights proceeding on behalf of your child.



# Courtroom Basics

**DO ARRIVE ON TIME.** If you are late or fail to attend, the judge could decide your case in your absence.

**DO SHUT OFF ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES.** When entering the courtroom, remove all hats and turn off cell phones and pagers.

**DO BRING RELEVANT DOCUMENTS WITH YOU.** Bring your court notices with you. If you have any documents to present to the judge, you should give them to your lawyer.

**DO USE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE.** While addressing the court, you must use appropriate language. Address the judge as “Your Honor” and speak directly to the judge, not to the other party.

**DO WAIT FOR A COPY OF THE COURT ORDER.** After each party has presented his or her side, the judge will make a decision and issue an order. The order will contain important information about your case, including services that DCP&P must provide and the tasks you must complete.

**DO NOT EAT IN THE COURTROOM.** Do not bring any food or beverages into the courtroom.

**DO NOT BRING CHILDREN WITH YOU TO COURT** unless you have been told to do so by the judge. Children who are in placement are entitled to attend all court hearings and are encouraged to attend their permanency hearings to share their interests and wishes with the court in person. For more information, see the Youth Participation in Court definition in the glossary.

## Notes

# What to Expect if Your Child is in an Out-of-Home Placement

## Notes

**Visitation Plan:** Unless you are restricted from doing so by a court order, you are encouraged to visit with your child as often as possible on a regular schedule. Visiting regularly with your child has many benefits for you and your child, including improving the likelihood of reunification and continuing the important bond between parent and child.

**Case Plan:** You should be involved in the development of your case plan with your caseworker to identify needs and issues that must be addressed to make sure your child can safely return home.

**Services:** Your caseworker will assist you to identify services that are needed to address safety issues preventing reunification. You can expect your caseworker to connect you with services, help you get to and from your appointments and help with funding services, if applicable. Services should address your specific needs and you are encouraged to communicate with your case worker regularly about your needs as well as the quality and helpfulness of any services you receive.

**Concurrent Planning:** In most cases, DCP&P is required by law to provide the necessary support to safely reunify you with your child. DCP&P is also required by law to make a permanent plan for your child within a specific timeframe, starting from the first day of placement, in case DCP&P cannot safely return your child to you. In the first year your

child is in out of home placement, DCP&P prepares alternative permanent plans, also known as a permanency plan, for your child at the same time that DCP&P works to reunify you with your child. This dual planning is called concurrent planning. DCP&P could continue concurrent planning after the first year depending on your progress with case plan goals and services. If you do not take part in the services offered and do not maintain regular visits with your child, DCP&P will consider a permanency plan other than reunification. The permanency plan could be placing the child permanently with relatives/family friends or proceeding with the steps to legally free the child for adoption. See ASFA on page 18 for more information on these timeframes and requirements.

**Reasonable Efforts:** In most cases, New Jersey law requires DCP&P to make “reasonable efforts” to help families stay together or be reunified. Unless your child’s safety is at immediate risk or

# What to Expect if Your Child is in an Out-of-Home Placement

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unless a court determines reasonable efforts are unnecessary, prior to removal, DCP&P must make reasonable efforts to prevent the placement of your child in out of home care.

If your child is unable to remain in your care, DCP&P must prove that reasonable efforts were made to prevent your child's placement and must make reasonable efforts to address concerns to safely reunify you with your child or make another permanent arrangement for your child. "Reasonable efforts" are usually services and supports provided to the family. This includes the caseworker's consistent efforts to encourage, assist and advocate for you and your family to access and use appropriate services. Reasonable efforts must be tailored to the specifics of your case.

"Reasonable efforts" by DCP&P could include, but are not limited to:

- DCP&P Identifying family problems, arranging and funding services to help your family stay together, assessing extended family and friends as supports to your family or as alternatives to placement, arranging visitation with parents and siblings, providing services to speed your child's safe return home and providing services to achieve another permanent plan in a timely manner in the best interest of your child.

"Reasonable efforts" services offered could include:

- Family therapy, parenting classes, drug and alcohol abuse treatment/counseling, respite care, parent support groups, home visiting programs, child care, homemaker services, individual, group, and family counseling, health-care services, behavioral health evaluation and treatment, vocational counseling, transportation expenses, anger management treatment, housing services and referrals to social service agencies.

Your lawyer can request services from DCP&P for you and your children. You should talk to your lawyer about services that you need.

## Notes

# Family Team Meetings

## Notes

Whether your child is home with you or in out-of-home placement, you are strongly encouraged to request and participate in family team meetings (FTM). The purpose of the family team meeting is to increase your involvement and your family's involvement in your case planning.

FTMs focus on your strengths and past successes to improve the likelihood of having successful outcomes for you and your family. Your voice and input is important in the development of your family's case plan.

With FTMs, from the beginning of your case, you have the opportunity to build a support team, which can include interested family members, friends, resource parents, and others you and your family chose to invite, such as teachers and therapists.

Your support team can be involved in the decision-making process and in developing a plan to best meet the needs of your family. The team can develop assigned tasks and timeframes to formulate goals and build solutions. The safety, protection and well-being of children must always be maintained.

DCP&P attempts to hold a FTM before or within 45 days of a child's out-of-home placement. Three additional FTMs are done within the first year of placement. For

children who remain in placement after the first 12 months with a goal of reunification, at least three additional FTMs should occur within the year. For children with a goal of other than reunification who remain in placement after the first 12 months, at least two additional FTMs a year will be held. You can request a family team meeting at any time.

# Child Placement Review Board

Child Placement Review (CPR) boards are groups of county volunteers that review the cases of all children under DCP&P supervision who are placed in out-of-home living arrangements. The CPR board conducts a detailed review of your child's case once your child has been in care for 60 days, discusses the arrangements that DCP&P makes for your child and then reports information and recommendations to the court. This is done in a meeting format that is less formal than a court hearing with a judge. You will be notified when the CPR board reviews your child's case and you will have the chance to attend and speak at the review, with an opportunity to voice any concerns you might have about your child's placement and needs. Relatives, foster parents, and others who are interested in the case have the right to attend the review and/or to submit written information to the CPR Board. All should be encouraged to participate.

## Child Welfare Mediation

Child welfare mediation is a meeting where a neutral person, a mediator, helps parents, caseworkers, attorneys and resource parents discuss issues and reach agreements concerning your child and your case. Anyone interested in the child's well-being can attend, which could include relatives, CASA volunteers and the child, if appropriate. With few exceptions, whatever is said in mediation is kept confidential. During mediation, you and the other participants have an opportunity to express their opinions about what is best for the child.

Anyone involved in your case can request mediation at any point. A judge must approve the request. The judge also can order mediation if the judge feels mediation is best to resolve issues. The judge will sign an order that says everyone involved in the case must attend at least one session. Most sessions are one to three hours long.

If the judge orders mediation in your case, you will receive a referral order from the judge giving you the date, time and place of your mediation session. If an agreement is reached, it will be presented to the judge for approval. If approved, the agreement will become an enforceable order of the court.

## Notes



# Child Abuse and Neglect Law

## Notes

Under New Jersey state law, an “abused or neglected child” is a child under 18 years of age whose parent or guardian:

1. Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical injury by other than accidental means which causes or creates a substantial risk of death, or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of physical or emotional health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.
2. Creates or allows to be created a substantial or ongoing risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.
3. Commits or allows to be committed an act of sexual abuse against a child.
4. A child whose physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as the result of the failure of his parent or guardian, as herein defined, to exercise a minimum degree of care (a) in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, medical or surgical care though financially able to do so or though offered financial or other reasonable means to do so, or (b) in providing the child with proper supervision or guardianship, by unreasonably inflicting or allowing to be inflicted harm, or substantial risk thereof, including the affliction of excessive corporal punishment; or by any other acts of a similarly serious nature requiring the aid of the court.
5. A child who has been willfully abandoned by his parent or guardian, as herein defined.
6. A child upon whom excessive physical restraint has been used under circumstances which do not indicate that the child’s behavior is harmful to himself, others or property.
7. A child who is in an institution and (a) has been placed there inappropriately for a continued period of time with the knowledge that the placement has resulted in or could continue to result in harm to the child’s mental or physical well-being or (b) who has been willfully isolated from ordinary social contact under circumstances which indicate emotional or social deprivation.

# Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)

New Jersey changed some of its laws and policies related to families with children in foster care to comply with the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act.\*

These changes speed up how things work when children are placed into foster care. Generally, when children are first placed in foster care, DCP&P is required to help the family get their children returned home.

If a child remains in foster care for 12 months, DCP&P must decide whether it thinks the child can return home. In most cases, if the family cannot be reunited after one year, DCP&P must make plans for the child to be adopted or placed in another permanent home, such as with a relative.

At the end of 12 months in foster care, the law requires that there be a court hearing (permanency hearing) to set a plan for the child's future. If it is decided that the child should not go home and should be placed for adoption, DCP&P will file a complaint to terminate parental rights.

When parents' rights are terminated, parents and children lose their right to all contact with each other, including visits, letters and phone calls. Under current law, they can only stay in touch if the child's adoptive parents allow it. The law says that DCP&P must file its case within 15 months from when the child entered foster care. A judge then decides whether the parents' rights should be terminated.

These timeframes give you a limited amount of time to get your children back. It is very important for you to cooperate with court orders so that your children can be returned as quickly as possible. It is also very important for DCP&P to act quickly to provide you and your family with the services you need after a child goes into foster care. If DCP&P does not provide services right away or does not provide the services you think you need, you should contact your case worker to create a service plan that helps your family quickly. You also can ask your lawyer to request mediation with DCP&P.

## Notes

\*See also Legal Services of New Jersey, Looking Out for Your Legal Rights, New Laws Affect Families With Children in Foster Care, Jan-Feb 2000.

# Child Placement Bill of Rights

## Notes

Under New Jersey state law, a child placed outside his home has the following rights appropriate to the individual circumstances of the child's physical or mental development:

- Placement outside the home only after reasonable efforts have been made to enable the child to remain at home.
- To place the child with a relative.
- To place the child in an appropriate setting in his/her own community.
- To place the child in the same setting with the child's sibling if the sibling is also being placed outside their home.
- To visit with the child's parents immediately after the child has been placed outside his/her home and on a regular basis thereafter, and to maintain contact with the child's parents.
- To visit with siblings on a regular basis and maintain contact with them;
- To placement in the least restrictive setting appropriate to the child's needs and conducive to his/her health and safety.
- To be free from physical or psychological abuse and from repeated changes in placement before the permanent placement or return home of the child.
- To receive adequate, safe and appropriate food, clothing, housing and adequate and appropriate medical care.
- To have a placement plan reflecting the child's best interests and designed to facilitate the child's permanent placement or return home.

# Important Numbers

## Addictions Hotline of NJ

Information and treatment referrals for substance abuse.  
1-800-238-2333

## Child Abuse Hotline

Any person with reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected has the legal responsibility to report it to DCP&P. Calls can be made anonymously.  
1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873)

## Children's System of Care

Services for children and teens with emotional and behavioral health care challenges.  
1-877-652-7624

## Domestic Violence Hotline

Information about local domestic violence services.  
1-800-572-SAFE (1-800-572-7233)

## Family Helpline

Trained volunteers of Parents Anonymous who provide support for parents feeling stressed and referrals to local resources.  
1-800-THE-KIDS (1-800-843-5437)

## Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ)

Family Representation Project-Advice and legal representation for low-income parents involved in DCP&P cases.  
1-888-LSNJ-LAW (1-888-576-5529)

## New Jersey Hopeline

Statewide peer support and suicide prevention hotline.  
1-855-NJ-HOPELINE (1-855-654-6735)

## NJ 2-1-1

24/7 referral service for various community resources such as housing, professional agencies, utility assistance programs, family financial and emotional support, emergency preparedness, and basic needs. For more information, go to [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org).  
211 or 1-877-652-1148  
Text your Zip Code to: 898-211 or Email: [info@NJ211.org](mailto:info@NJ211.org)

## Notes

# Important Numbers

## Notes

### **NJ Bar Association Automated Helpline**

Contact the State Bar Association to find out the number for your county bar association if you need help finding a lawyer. 732-249-5000

### **NJ Helps**

Statewide social services for food stamps, cash assistance and health insurance. For more information, go to [www.njhelps.org](http://www.njhelps.org).

### **NJ Housing Resource Center**

Affordable housing for NJ residents. For more information, go to [www.njhousing.gov](http://www.njhousing.gov). 1-800-NJ-HOUSE (1-800-654-6873)

### **NJ Mental Health Cares**

Statewide behavioral health information and referral service. 1-866-202-HELP (1-866-202-4357)

### **Reach NJ**

Statewide substance abuse referral and information service. For more information, go to [www.reachnj.gov](http://www.reachnj.gov) 1-844-REACH-NJ (1-844-732-2465)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

National Hotline for treatment referral and information. For more information, go to [www.samsha.gov](http://www.samsha.gov) 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

### **State of NJ, Department of Community Affairs Housing Assistance Programs**

Oversees programs that prevent homelessness and help people move out of temporary shelters and into stable, permanent housing. Programs include: family self-sufficiency, homelessness prevention, shelter support/ emergency housing grant, Section 8 Housing Voucher, State Rental Assistance Program, Section 8 Single Room Occupancy-Moderate Rehabilitation, Section 8 Homeownership Program. For more information on these programs, call 609-292-4080 or email [customer.services@dca.nj.gov](mailto:customer.services@dca.nj.gov)

### **Statewide Parent Advocacy Network**

Provides support to parents and caregivers and advocates for their rights. 1-800-654-SPAN (1-800-654-7726)

# Glossary

## **5A Application (aka Application for Assignment of Counsel)**

This is an application to have an attorney appointed to represent you in the hearings. You **MUST** complete the form in order to have legal representation. This form is to be completed at your first court hearing and again if DCP&P files a termination of parental right complaint against you.

**Adolescent Worker** A DCP&P case worker who primarily works with youth to provide services to help them become stabilized, independent and functional adults.

**Adoption Worker** Provides continued services to help find an adoptive home for a child in DCP&P custody, where a judge has decided that the Division should prepare for the child's adoption. The adoption worker continues to simultaneously work with the parents to provide services to resolve safety issues preventing the child from returning home.

**Concurrent Planning** A process of working towards one permanency goal (typically reunification) while at the same time working towards an alternative permanency goal and plan to move children/youth more quickly to a safe and stable permanent family.

**DODD Removal (aka Emergency Removal)** The removal of a child from the custody of his or her parents on an emergent basis without parental consent and without a court order.

**Independent Living** A program available to youths 16 years of age who are not able to safely return home or have not been adopted which provides various support services to help prepare youth for adulthood.

**Intake Worker** DCP&P caseworker responsible for initially responding to and investigating allegations of abuse and neglect. Intake workers are typically assigned to work with families for the first 60 days of a case from the date of a family's referral to DCP&P.

**Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG)** Kinship Legal Guardians have the same rights and responsibilities as biological parents. In KLG, the children are placed with a relative, but parents retain their rights to visit their children and must give their consent to any name change or adoption. Parents can petition the court for the return of the children if they meet certain conditions.

## Notes

# Glossary

## Notes

**Legal Orphan** Child whose parents' rights have been terminated and who are waiting for adoption.

**Permanency** A child having a permanent living arrangement in a safe and stable environment with caring, loving and supportive family that will remain involved with the child throughout the child's life.

**Permanency Worker** DCP&P Caseworker who receives a case once the intake worker and supervisors have determined the case needs DCP&P supervision. The permanency worker is responsible for helping the family meet its case plan goals by providing access to services, making necessary referrals, continually assessing safety and needs, arranging visits between parents and children, if the children are in DCP&P custody, advocating for the needs of the family, providing services to stabilize the family and working on alternative permanency plans for the child in case the child is in placement.

**Placement** Refers to the status of a child being under the physical and legal custody of DCP&P.

**Resource Parent** Also known as a foster parent; Trained, licensed members of the community who provide a home for children who have been abandoned, neglected or abused and who temporarily are not able to live at home. During the time that children live in a resource home, the resource parents provide the same care that the children's own parents would provide.

**Resource Home** A licensed home where children who are in DCP&P custody reside under the care of resource parents.

**Resource Family Service Worker** A DCP&P case worker who assists with recruiting, licensing, training and offering supports to resource parents. Resource Workers also assist other DCP&P caseworker with finding appropriate resource homes for children who are in DCP&P's care and custody.

**Verified Complaint** DCP&P prepares this document listing the reasons they are asking for the court to be involved with your family. The complaint is not evidence, only a filing document to bring the matter before a judge. Parents have the opportunity to challenge the information contained in the complaint.

**Youth Participation in Court Protocol** A Policy that provides youth with the opportunity to participate in court, providing them with a meaningful contribution to the decisions that affect their lives.

# Acronyms

**AOO** Administrative Office of the Courts

**APPLA** Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**CARI** Child Abuse Record Information

**CASA** Court Appointed Special Advocate

**CHEC** Comprehensive Health Evaluations for Children

**CHRI** Criminal History Record Information

**CIC** Children in Court

**Note:** New Jersey's designation for all dockets relating to abuse and neglect cases, including voluntary and involuntary cases of termination of parental rights, adoption and kinship guardianship.

**CICIC** Children in Court Improvement Committee

**CPR** Child Placement Review

**CPRB** Child Placement Review Board

**CSOC** Division of the Children's System of Care; **Note:** Under DCF.

**CWM** Child Welfare Mediation

**DAG** Deputy Attorney General

**DCF** Department of Children and Families; **Note:** DCP&P and CSOC are divisions of the above.

**DCP&P** Division of Child Protection and Permanency

**Note:** Under Department of Children and Families (DCF)

**DPCP** Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships (under DCF)

**Note:** Under Department of Children and Families (DCF); The DPCP is meant to enhance DCP&P by supporting community-based, outcome-focused initiative to strengthen families through training and direct services in order to prevent child maltreatment and avoid the need for foster care services.

## Notes



# Acronyms

## Notes

### Docket Types (Case Types in Family Court)

**FN** Child Abuse or Neglect Docket

**FC** Child Placement Review Docket

**FG** Termination of Parental Rights Docket (Guardianship)

**FL** Kinship Legal Guardian Docket

**FA** Adoption Docket

**FJ** Juvenile Delinquency/ Cases in Juvenile Court

**DOL** Division of Law (Deputy Attorneys General for DCP&P)

**FDM** Family Division Manager

**IAIU** Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (under Central Operations of DCF)

**NJ CPAC** New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council

**OTSC** Order to Show Cause

**PJ** Presiding Judge

**TPR** Termination of Parental Rights

### DCP&P Investigation Results

#### Substantiation

Results of a DCP&P investigation where gathered evidence indicates the child has been abused or neglected. Substantiated findings are reported to the Child Abuse Record Information

(CARI) system where information regarding their Substantiation will remain on a lifetime child abuse registry.

#### Established

Results of a DCP&P investigation where gathered evidence indicates a child is an abused or neglected child but the acts committed or omitted do not warrant a finding of substantiation.

#### Not Established

Results of a DCP&P investigation where gathered evidence does not indicate a child is an abused or neglected child but evidence indicates that the child was harmed or placed at risk of harm.

#### Unfounded

Results of a DCP&P investigation where gathered evidence does not indicate that a child is an abused or neglected child and evidence indicates that the child was not harmed or placed at risk of harm

# Notes

# Notes

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# Important Contact Information

DCP&P Caseworker	NAME	PHONE
DCP&P Supervisor	NAME	PHONE
Local DCP&P OFFICE	ADDRESS	PHONE
MY ATTORNEY	NAME	PHONE
MY COURTHOUSE	ADDRESS	PHONE
MY DOCKET NUMBER		
JUDGE		



**STUART RABNER**  
CHIEF JUSTICE

**GLENN A. GRANT**  
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COURTS

CN 12545 - AUGUST 2020