



DC Child and Family Services Agency

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Family Resource Guide



Rights and Responsibilities

As a parent, what rights do I have when CFSA gets involved with my family?

You have the right . . .

- To be treated with respect and courtesy. We must help you fairly without regard to your age; race; national origin; creed; gender; sexual orientation; lifestyle; or physical, mental, or developmental disability. If you think we have acted with intolerance or prejudice, you have the right to file a claim with the DC Office of Human Rights, 202-727-4559.
- To privacy. Under law, CFSA cannot give out information about your family or your case except to others working on your case.
- To know what's going on and to get clear, honest answers to your questions.
- To decide whether to take part in our investigation of alleged child abuse/neglect. However, it is in your best interest to cooperate and let your voice be heard. If you don't, we may seek help from the police or court.
- To decide whether to take part in a family assessment or to have CFSA serve your family while you stay together at home. While you may refuse some services, cooperation can open new pathways to help for your family.
- To a court hearing within 72 hours if we remove your child from home.
- To have an attorney with you at any time. If CFSA takes your case to court, you should get an attorney. If you cannot pay for an attorney, the court will appoint one for you. The court will appoint a different attorney for your children.
- To raise concerns with your social worker and then, if necessary, to higher levels within CFSA. At any time, you may ask to speak to your social worker's supervisor, manager, or administrator. If discussion with these officials doesn't help, you may call the CFSA Ombudsman at 202-727-7040.
- To information about other ways to get the help you need if CFSA cannot help your family.

As a parent, what responsibilities do I have when CFSA gets involved with my family?

You will help your children and yourself when you:

- Cooperate with the social worker and others helping you. Meet them halfway.
- Are honest about your circumstances.
- Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers.
- Follow your case plan, take part in required services, and use that help to improve your family situation.
- Go to meetings about your case, including court hearings when the court is involved.
- Do everything you can to improve your family situation.

[As a child or youth, what rights do I have when CFSA gets involved with me?](#)

In 2013, the *Foster Youth Statements of Rights and Responsibilities Amendment Act* became law in the District of Columbia. The law requires developing a comprehensive set of rights and responsibilities for youth in foster care, providing that information to youth, and ensuring social workers and others are knowledgeable about the information. We expect final rulemaking publication in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations during 2014. Then, every child and youth involved with CFSA will get a copy. CFSA will also post it on the website.

Meanwhile, you always have the right to raise concerns with your social worker. If that doesn't help, you may talk to staff at higher levels within CFSA. At any time, you may ask to speak to your social worker's supervisor, manager, or administrator. Or you may call the CFSA Youth Ombudsman who is a problem solver just for youth involved with CFSA. You can reach the Youth Ombudsman in two ways: email yo.bud@cfsa.dc.gov or call 1-855-874-3273.

Role of the DC Child and Family Services Agency

In the District, CFSA has the responsibility and legal authority to protect child victims, and those at risk, of abuse and neglect throughout the city. District law requires response to reports of abuse and neglect of children and youth up to age 18. The District is one of the few jurisdictions in the nation that allows youth to remain in foster care, if necessary, to age 21.

Like public child protection agencies across the nation, CFSA protects children through four basic functions.

- **Take and Investigate Reports:** CFSA Child Protective Services is the gateway to the local public child protection system. CPS takes reports of known or suspected abuse and neglect of youngsters up to age 18 in the District 24 hours a day 365 days a year at 202-671-SAFE. When a report indicates a child has suffered abuse or neglect as defined in law or is at risk, CPS must respond to (1) engage the family in assessing their needs and accepting community-based services or (2) investigate to determine whether the report is true or false. Social workers look into reports of child abuse and neglect by parents, guardians, or others acting in a parental capacity wherever they occur in the District.
- **Strengthen Families:** Child welfare is unique in that serving our primary clients—children—means helping their parents. When CFSA identifies child victims of abuse or neglect, trained social workers from CFSA or private organizations under contract to CFSA step in to keep children safe by working with their families. We connect families to services that will help them overcome long-standing difficulties that endanger their children. Over 60 percent of our cases involve social workers monitoring the safety and well being of children at home.
- **Provide Safe, Temporary Homes for Children:** When a family home (or other living environment) presents too much danger, CFSA has the authority to remove children to safe settings. We must then seek agreement from the District's Family Court. Often, relatives take children who cannot be safe at home. CFSA recruits, trains, and licenses foster parents and also

licenses, monitors, and maintains contracts with group homes (and other safe places) for children.

Children develop best within the bonds of a family. For that reason, removal of children from home is usually temporary. The goal is to help parents resolve crises and overcome difficulties so children can go home safely. However, when parents are unwilling or unable to protect their children, CFSA and Family Court seek permanent alternatives for children.

- **Ensure Children Have Permanent Homes:** Everyone needs a family. CFSA recruits and trains people willing to adopt. Most local youngsters hoping to leave the child welfare system for an adoptive home are age 8 or older. Many want to be adopted with their brothers and sisters. People who adopt through CFSA are usually eligible for financial and other support. Legal guardianship is an option for relatives who want to provide a permanent home for children without legally terminating their parents' rights. People interested in fostering or adopting in the District may call 202-671-LOVE.

Behavioral Health Resources

CFSA offers behavioral health services only to children, youth, or families already on our caseload. We do not directly provide these services but partner with the DC Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) to access these services. DBH's mental health clinicians on-site at CFSA conduct early mental health screenings for children and youth entering or re-entering foster care, mental status examinations for parents or guardians, and consultations with Child Protective Services during investigations as needed. Through DBH, we access individual and family therapy and community support services for people on our caseload. Among these services are the following.

- **Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP):** Program works best for children ages 0-6 who have experienced some type of trauma. Therapists work with the child and parent to help them understand the impact of the trauma and relationships needed for recovery. Trauma may include:
 - Abuse/Neglect
 - Serious illness
 - Homelessness
 - Death of a family member
 - Violence within the family, community, or school
- **Functional Family Therapy (FFT):** Short-term intervention for children/youth ages 10-18 and their families.
- **In-Home and Community-Based Services:** Time-limited intensive mental health intervention for children/youth ages 6-21 to prevent removal from home or detention.

- **Multisystemic Therapy (MST):** Intensive family counseling that targets children/youth ages 10-17 with complex behavioral issues. Treatment focuses on assisting parents in building supportive social networks to ensure long-term change.
- **Multisystemic Therapy for Problem Sexual Behaviors (MST-PSB):** Individualized and comprehensive treatment for children/youth who have sexually offended using intensive family therapy. Treatment focuses on recognizing and addressing denial and/or minimization.
- **Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT):** Short-term coaching for parents with children ages 2-6 that teaches skills to improve a child's behavior.
- **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy:** Treatment for children/youth ages 4-18 and their parents/caregivers to develop coping strategies; reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, or acting-out behavior; and enhance safety, growth, parenting skills and communication.

When CFSA social workers have children with needs the DBH network cannot meet, they go through CFSA's Clinical Services Unit within the Placement Services Administration to receive services purchased via contracts. Current providers (which are subject to change) are:

- API Associates
- Crawford Consulting
- Dr. Getachew (bilingual/French)
- JMD Counseling
- Amelia Misseliedes (bilingual/Amheric)
- Dr. Abyssinia Washington

When families CFSA serves at home (no removal of children to foster care) may need mental health services, they must call the DBH Access Helpline (1-888-7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357) to schedule an assessment.