



## When Child Welfare Must Take Your Child from Home

*Information for Parents and Caregivers*

Social Worker Name/Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name/Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

The DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) protects District children from abuse and neglect. We look into reports of abuse and neglect of children and young people age 18 or younger. By law, CFSA can remove children from their homes only with good reason. Then, Family Court must agree with our reasons.

We know that taking children from home is upsetting for them and for you. We want to work with you and help your family.

### Why are you taking my child?

We have good reasons to think your child is not safe at home.

### Where will you take my child?

CFSA has places for children to stay, such as of foster homes. We make sure these places are clean, safe, and caring. Your child may also be able to stay with someone in your family. The social worker will check on your child regularly while he/she is away from you.

### Can you keep my children together?

We keep brothers and sisters together whenever possible. If we have a foster home with enough room for all your children, we will keep all or some of them together.

### What should I do now?

Cooperate with your social worker. He/she will meet with you as your child enters foster care. He/she will explain what you need to do to bring your family back together.

### When can I see my child?

Very soon. You have a legal right to see your child (unless Family Court says you can't). CFSA will have a Family Team Meeting for you within three to five days. You'll be able to set up a visit with your child at that time.

### What is a Family Team Meeting?

It's a get-together to talk about what's best for your child. You and family members you choose will meet with the social worker, supervisor, attorneys, and other helpers. You'll decide what you want to do about concerns about your child's safety. You'll say what kind of help you need. The goal is to make a plan for taking good care of your child. A CFSA Family Team Meeting Coordinator will call you very soon about the best time and place for the meeting.

### Will I need to go to court?

Yes. Family Court must agree CFSA did the right thing in removing your child. Your social worker will tell you the date, time, and place of your first court hearing. It usually takes place within three business days after CFSA removed your child. After that, Family Court will tell you about other hearings in your case.

### Do I need to get an attorney?

You can hire an attorney if you want to. If you need an attorney but can't pay, Family Court will appoint an attorney for you.

### Should I get an attorney for my child?

No. CFSA will make sure your child has an attorney at no cost to you. This attorney will protect your child's legal rights and best interests.

### How long will you keep my child?

That depends on you. Family Court, your social worker, the attorneys, and others must believe you will protect and take good care of your child. To get your children back, you need to show you can and will keep them safe. Your social worker will explain what this means for you.

Have more questions? Please talk to your social worker.

D.C. Child and Family Services Agency § 400 6th Street SW, Washington, DC 20024-2753 § (202) 442-6100 § [www.cfsa.dc.gov](http://www.cfsa.dc.gov)