

**Guide To
Child and Family Well-Being
and
Juvenile Dependency Court
March 2025**



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY



**LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO**

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What is Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB)?

CFWB is San Diego County's approach to empowering children, youth, and families to have the support, connections, and resources they need to be healthy and remain together (without system involvement). The department integrates the First 5 Commission of San Diego, Child Welfare Services, childcare services, and other critical resources to partner with children, youth, and families.

The goal of CFWB is to focus on equity, prevention, and supporting families before foster care becomes a necessary intervention for keeping children safe, and if not possible, safely caring for children should they need to come into care.

The CFWB consists of three primary offices to provide the appropriate support to families:

- Office of Child and Family Strengthening (OCFS)
- Office of Administration
- Office of Child Safety (OCS)

Programs under the Office of Child Safety include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency Response
- Court Intervention
- Ongoing Services
- Specialty Programs
- Placement and Supportive Services
- Youth Strengthening and Shelter Programs

This guide is to help provide information regarding the processes in the Office of Child Safety and Juvenile Court. If you need help or have questions, people and agencies are available. A list of web and phone resources are listed in the back of this book.

Safety Enhanced Together Values

What is the County's CFWB practice framework? The County of San Diego CFWB practice framework—**Safety Enhanced Together (SET) Through Teamwork and Family**

Engagement: In San Diego, Our Families Are SET to Live Well—outlines priorities and guiding principles, creates a decision-making framework, and defines a practice structure to guide work within all levels of CFWB. It is our goal to make safety, permanency, and well-being a reality for all who live in the County of San Diego.

Vision

The vision of CFWB is for every child to grow up safe and nurtured.

Top Priorities

- Safely stabilize and preserve families; and if that is not possible,
- Safely care for children and reunify children with their families of origin; and if reunification is not possible,
- Safely support the development of permanency and lifelong relationships for children and youth.

Relationships with children, youth, and families are the foundation of our work and we strive to build a shared understanding and agreement. We build on a family's existing strengths and use these to decrease danger and enhance safety.



	Value 1: Relationships with Children, Youth and Families Are the Foundation
	Value 2: Collaborative Partnerships with Kinship and Resource Families
	Value 3: Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Full Potential and Develop Lifelong Relationships
	Value 4: Shared Responsibility with Community Partners
	Value 5: A Strong Working Relationship with the Legal System
	Value 6: A Workplace Culture Characterized by Reflection, Appreciation, and Ongoing Learning

How does a family become involved with the Office of Child Safety (OCS)?

A community member calls the Child Abuse Hotline to report a concern about a child's safety. The information reported is reviewed to determine if the concern (allegation) of abuse, neglect or exploitation meets criteria for an investigation.

If the concern meets criteria for assignment, the Hotline will assign the referral to an OCS Emergency Response social worker. If a referral is not assigned, the caller's concern is documented and evaluated out, (does not meet criteria for investigation).

OCS is divided into geographical offices. A referral will typically be assigned to the office closest to where the family lives.

California Law says that if a mandated reporter like a teacher, doctor, or childcare provider "suspects" that a child is being hurt or neglected, they must report it.

Who will meet with the family?

While a family is involved with OCS, it may work with one or more social workers. Social workers are assigned to the following programs:

By law, the social worker is not permitted to identify who made the report.

Emergency Response	Investigates referrals assigned by the Hotline.
Court Intervention	Works with the family to develop a case plan to present to Court.
Ongoing Services	Partners with the family to support case management services for families with an open case.

Additional social worker roles include assignments to Adoptions, Guardianship, Placement and Resource Family Approval Units, and others.

Each social worker's job is to partner with the family to help strengthen it and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect to the child. Sometimes social workers are reassigned unexpectedly.

If at any point you are unsure about who your OCS social worker is, please call the Information Line at 858-514-6995 or Toll Free at 800-344-6000.

What happens during the investigation?

An Emergency Response social worker is assigned to investigate the concerns reported in the referral. Referrals are given a response time to initiate the investigation of either:

- Two- to 24-hour response or,
- One- to ten-day response

People to be interviewed during the investigation may include, but are not limited to:

- The child(ren)
- Siblings
- Parents
- Relatives
- Neighbors
- Non-Relative Extended Family Members (NREFMs)
- School personnel
- Medical professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Law enforcement

Our first goal is to have the child remain safe in the home. If the social worker's assessment is that the child can remain home safely, the social worker might close the referral with no further action or provide community resources. Other possible outcomes include opening a voluntary case or filing a petition to begin Juvenile Dependency Court intervention if it was determined that a child was not safe. The referral allegations will be concluded as unfounded, inconclusive, or substantiated.

What happens when a case is opened?

If concerns for a child's safety are identified in the investigation process and continue to exist afterward, it may be necessary to provide on-going support and intervention by opening a case. OCS works with the family to create a case plan and to identify and build networks of support the family can call on for help. Cases may be opened in the Voluntary Services Program (with or without Court involvement) or in Juvenile Dependency Court.

Voluntary Services

If the family, its support network, and the social worker believe the family can create safety for the child and actively address safety concerns, Voluntary Services (VS) may be provided when:

- The parents are willing and able to participate in services voluntarily to ensure the child's safety.
- The child can remain safely in the home or voluntarily out of the home if services and supports are provided.
- The social worker will work closely with the family to ensure the safety of the child and the well-being of the family.
- The safety concerns for the child can be resolved within six months.

Juvenile Dependency Court

It becomes necessary for the Juvenile Dependency Court to become involved when prior attempts to create safety for a child were not successful, the family is unable or unwilling to create safety, or when abuse/neglect to a child is so significant that Court monitoring is required. Depending on the family's situation, the Court may authorize the child to live in or out of the family's home during this period.

Why was the child removed from the home?

Social workers will carefully assess situations by involving the family, its support network and will use various tools to conduct thorough investigations. If concerns about the child's safety continue, the child may need to be removed from the care of their parents or guardian.

This can happen when:

- A parent/guardian cannot provide proper care or supervision, and/or
- A child is not given the necessities of life, including adequate food, housing, or clothing, and/or
- A child is in physical danger because of neglect, cruelty, sexual exploitation, or physical or sexual abuse by a parent, guardian, or someone else in the home or with access to the child.

The social worker will work with the family to identify people who can care for the child with the goal of placing the child in a familiar environment. The social worker will:

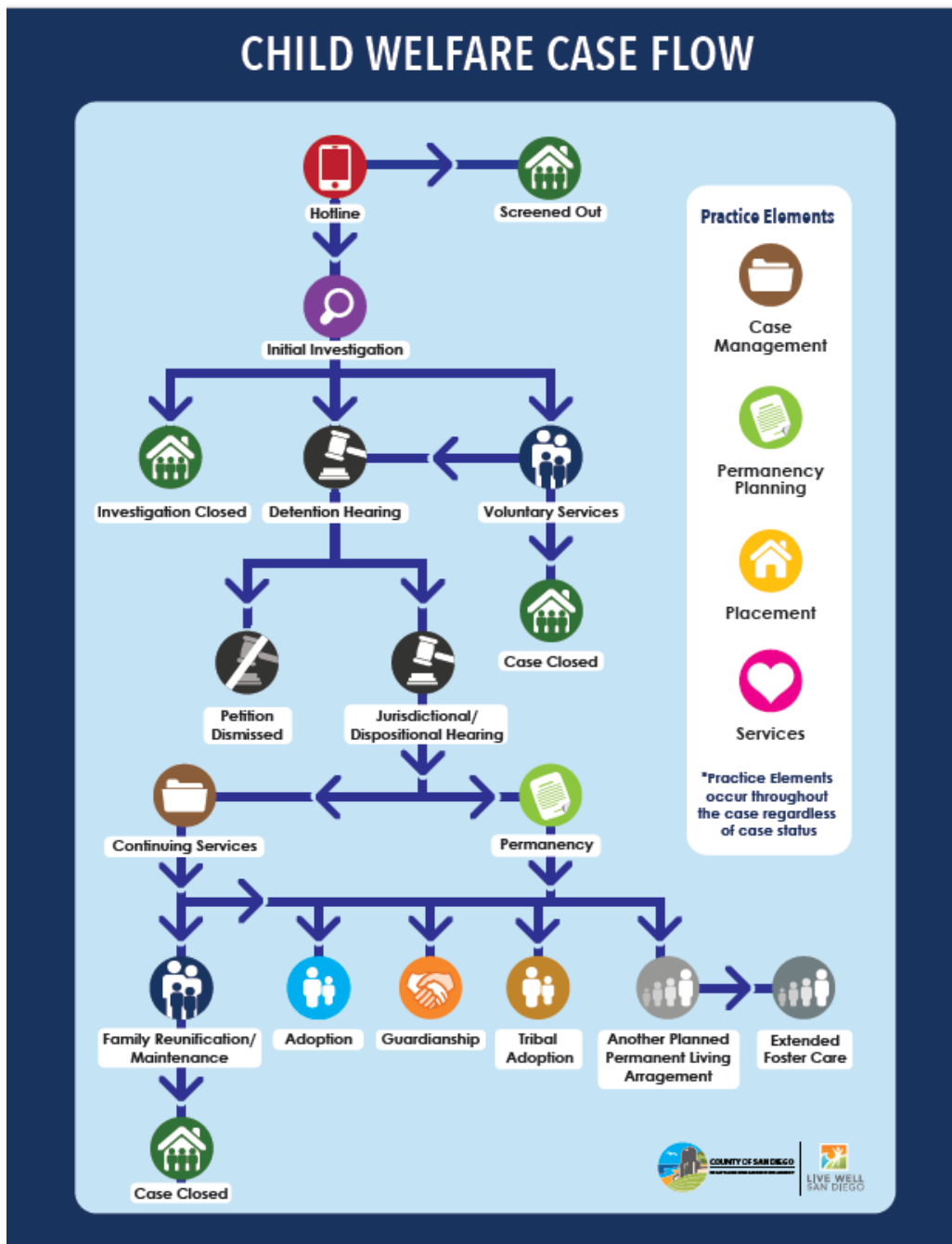
- Obtain information from the family about the child's needs such as medical and mental health needs, daily routines, school information and cultural connections, values or needs important to the family.
- Ask the parents and family's support network to attend a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) to ensure that their voices are heard.
- Ask for the names and addresses of relatives including but not limited to; grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings or stepsiblings, aunts and uncles, cousins, close friends and tribal representatives and search for as many relatives as possible. (See Hearings section for more information on services.)

Where does the child go after removal from the home?

If a child has been temporarily placed out of the parent's home, the social worker will continually reassess if or when the child can safely return home. Until then, the child may be placed in:

- The home of the other parent if the parents are not living together.
- The home of an approved relative or other close friend of the family or support to the child or tribal home (if applicable).
- The home of a community member that is approved as a Resource Family Home (formally known as a foster home).
- Polinsky Children's Center (PCC),
- A Short-Term Residential Treatment Therapeutic Program (STRTP) or Community Treatment Facility (CTF) depending on the child's needs.

The chart shows how a case moves through the CFWB and Court system. Additional information on the Court process found in the next several pages.



Family First

CFWB is committed to the importance of relatives, friends, and the community's role in the family's life.

The law requires social workers to search for relatives and Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) to the fifth degree of kinship, and to send written notification to all relatives and NREFMs located within 30 days of a child's removal from the home (unless a relative's history of family or domestic violence makes notification inappropriate). It's important to provide the social worker with as much information as possible regarding all known relatives and NREFMs to help prevent or reduce the child's disruption or disconnection from loved ones.



Relative and Non-relative Extended Family Member (NREFM) Roles

Relatives and NREFMs provide important family and lifelong connections for a child involved with OCS. Relatives and NREFMs can help with:

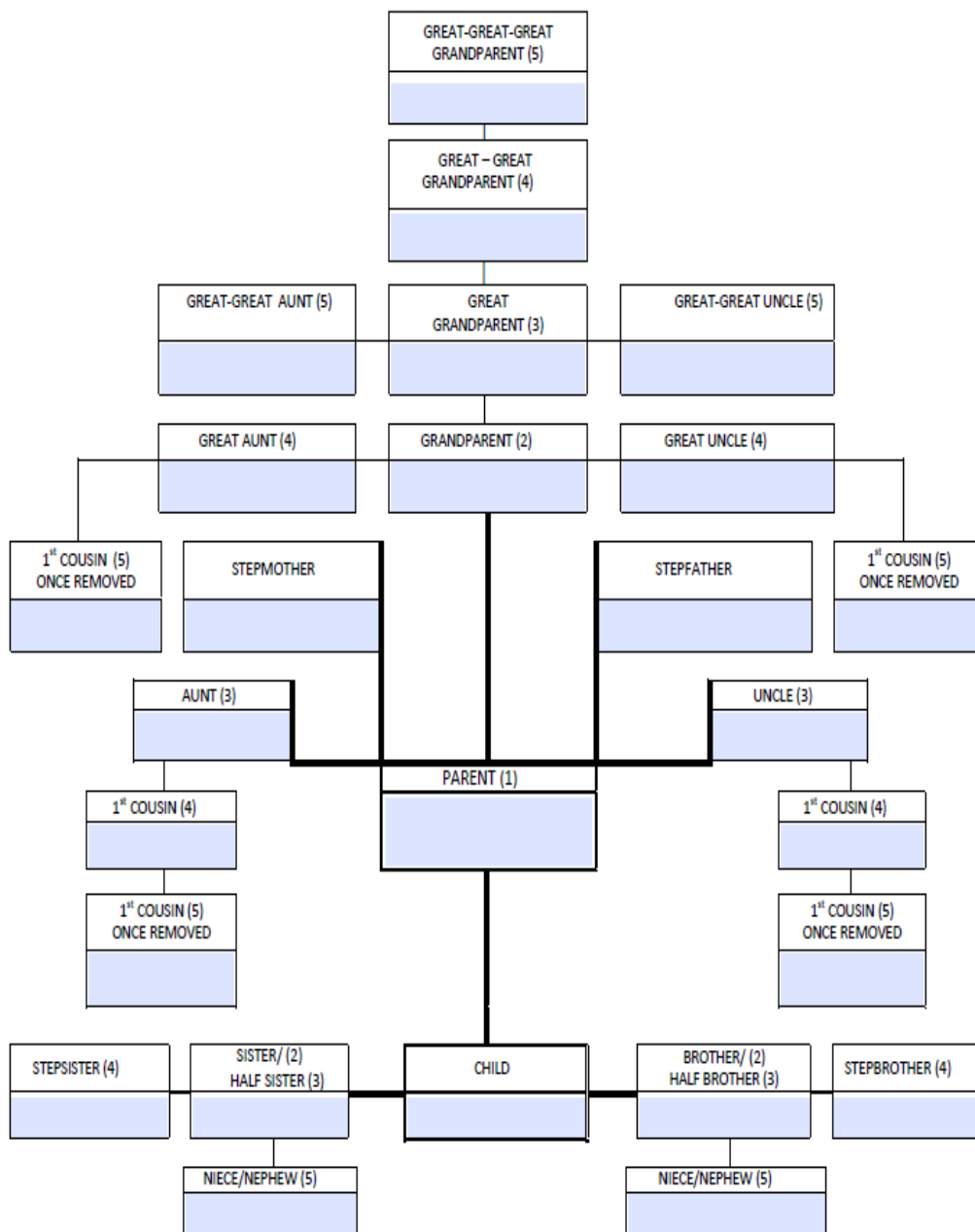
- Providing a home while the parents or guardians receive reunification services designed to reunify them with their child.
- Supervising visits between the child and parent(s).
- Providing transportation for the parent(s) and child.
- Being an active member of the safety network that addresses risks to the child's safety.
- Contacting the child for visits and outings.
- Attending family centered meetings.
- Providing the Court with information on the child by submitting a Relative Information Form (form JV-285).

Importance of a child's connection to tribal community

It is in the best interest of an Indian child that the child's membership in the child's Indian tribe and connection to the tribal community be encouraged and protected. See Indian Child Welfare Act information on page 27 for more information.

Degrees of Kinship

The chart shows family members identified by their degree (in parenthesis) to the child.



Resource Families

Resource Families are individuals, couples, or families that the County determines to have successfully met the application and assessment criteria necessary for providing care for a child or Non-Minor Dependent (NMD) who is under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court, or otherwise in the care of a county child welfare agency or probation department.

Resource Families provide an important and necessary service to the community and play an important role in a child and family's life during their involvement with OCS and Juvenile Court.

They care for and embrace children and youth of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and abilities until they can reunify with their families or reach permanency.



Resource Families work together with OCS social workers and service providers involved with a child or youth and family, nurture the child or youth by respecting and supporting connections to the child's family, community and culture, and encourage the family's participation in the child or youth's medical, educational or other activities when safe to do so.

Become a Resource Parent Foster & Adoptive Resource
Family Services 1-877-792-KIDS (5437)



Resource Family Approval

Any adult at least 18 years of age can apply for Resource Family Approval (RFA) regardless of age, sex, race, religion, color, political affiliation, national origin, disability, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, actual or perceived sexual orientation, medical condition, genetic information, citizenship, primary language, immigration status, or ancestry.

Any relative, close friend of the family (NREFM), interested in placement of a child into their home will go through the RFA process. This streamlined process provides the same information and training to all caregivers, and helps in providing children and families with safety, permanency and well-being. Once a relative or NREFM expresses interest in placement, a RFA social worker will be assigned to guide them through the RFA process.

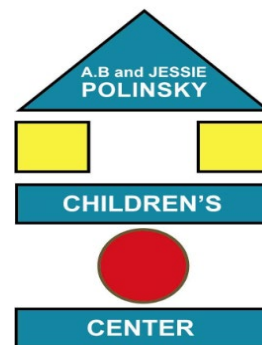
Resource Family Approval Process includes:

- An applicant must complete, sign and submit a Resource Family Application form RFA-01 A, and provide supporting documentation.
- Applicants should be in good physical and mental health as verified by a health screening performed by a health professional issued not more than one year prior to the date of application.
- If a child is placed in the home of a relative or NREFM as an emergency placement prior to full RFA approval, the relative/NREFM must:
 - complete, sign, and submit the Resource Family Application.
 - live scan (fingerprint) within five business days of the child being placed in the home.
 - complete the RFA approval.
- Applicants will participate in a family evaluation, which includes a comprehensive assessment of the applicant's personal history, family history, and family dynamics.
- Applicants must participate in a home environment assessment which includes an inspection of all areas of the home, outdoor activity space, and storage areas to determine whether there are conditions in the home that affect the health, safety, and well-being of a child or nonminor dependent.
- Applicants must consent to a background check assessment.
- Applicants must complete pre-approval trainings as required by OCS.
- Applicants will complete any other activities, as determined by the County, related to an applicant's ability to achieve permanency with a child or NMD or to help determine the applicant's ability to be approved as a Resource Family.
An applicant may apply to be a Resource Family regardless of their immigration status.

Resource Family Approval does not guarantee the placement of the child in your home. Placement decisions are based on each child's needs and best interests and are not appealed through the grievance process. If you disagree with the social worker's placement decision, discuss it with the social worker's supervisor and your attorney.

Polinsky Children's Center

The A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center (PCC) is a ten-day temporary shelter care facility operated by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency. In certain cases, a child may stay longer at PCC to ensure their needs and safety are met. PCC provides trauma informed care for children, ages birth to 17 years, who have been separated from their families due to child abuse or neglect.



San Pasqual Academy

San Pasqual Academy (SPA) is a residential education campus designed specifically for youth in foster care, for 12–17-year-olds and NMDs up to age 19. SPA provides a stable, long-term placement that connects youth to transitional housing and post-emancipation services. SPA, similar to a Resource Family placement, also offers a support system for the youth, including individualized education, independent living skills, work readiness training, therapeutic services, extra-curricular and enrichment activities, family connections and relational permanency.



Tribally Approved Homes

A Tribally Approved Home (TAH) is a home licensed or approved by an Indian child's tribe or agency for foster or adoptive placement of an Indian youth. TAHs are not subject to state approval standards, nor are they subject to RFA requirements. A TAH is an authorized placement for an Indian youth only when approved by that specific Indian youth's tribe. If there is a sibling set which includes a youth that is not a member of the tribe approving the TAH, the home must be approved under RFA standards.

Medical Examinations

For each child in placement (Court or voluntary status), the child must receive a medical and dental examination within 30 days of their initial placement.

Children staying at PCC undergo a medical examination conducted by a pediatrician within seven calendar days of arrival at PCC. A timely initial physical exam at PCC is important to assess the child's health and well-being while in temporary care. This allows clinic staff to immediately identify medical needs/risks and treat as needed. The exam also helps to keep other children and staff safe from potential health risks. As a ten-Day Temporary Shelter Care Facility, PCC has limited time to schedule the appointment and repeated no-shows, cancellations, or reschedules may add to the delay.

The social workers will advise the parent that they have the right to be present for the initial medical exam at PCC and request their signature on the 04-24P Consent to Treat form. If the parent signs, they must initial where indicated on the form that they either wish to be present or waive that right.

If you sign the form that you wish to be present for the exam, your social worker will give you a PCC phone number to call, or PCC may call you to arrange to be present for the exam. If a parent does not make themselves available to attend the scheduled examination within seven days, the exam will be conducted in the parent's absence.

Indian Health Council's Child Assessment Center

The Indian Health Council (IHC) Child Assessment Center (CAC) provides services to Native American children who are registered and are residing in the IHC's service area. Native American children who are not registered at IHC should be seen at PCC. IHC Services include:

- Medical evaluations for new arrivals or change of placements,
- Coordination of any necessary follow-up medical appointments and
- Transportation services to foster homes/resource families.

Visitation

It is the parents' or legal guardian's legal right to visit their child unless a Court orders no visitation. Safe visitation is a necessary and valued part of family-centered services and is one of the most important parts of case planning because of the connection between visitation and reunification. The social worker will work with the caregivers' and/or family's support network to help create a visitation plan.

Unless a "no contact" order is issued by the Court, the social worker can arrange visitation and contact between parents, siblings, grandparents, relatives and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). It is important to identify people in the support network who can assist in supervising or facilitating contact. Talk to the assigned social worker to inform them of your wishes to arrange a visitation.

The Court will review the recommendations and make visitation orders. At later hearings, the Court may change visitation orders. For example, the Court may permit more frequent, unsupervised, or overnight visits when it is safe to do so. If a parent does not visit regularly or does not follow visitation guidelines needed to keep the child safe, visits may be restricted.



Regular, positive visits are the best way to maintain a relationship with the child and work toward reunifying.

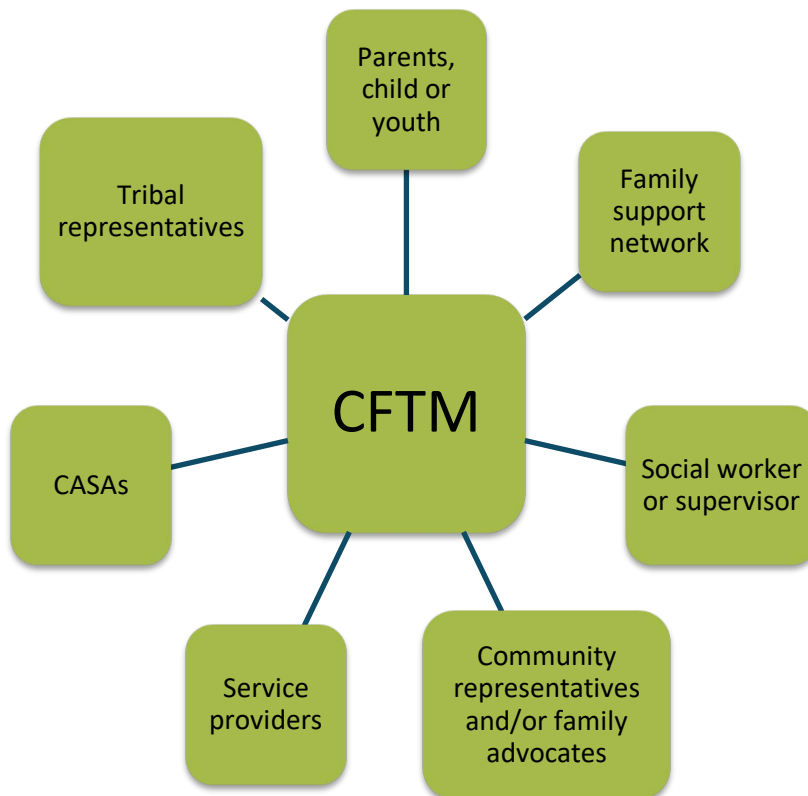
Family Centered Meetings

Family-centered meetings (FCMs) are held to discuss safety, placement, visitation, case planning or other important decisions about an investigation or case. Safety Mappings or Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs) are some examples of FCMs that may be held during your involvement with OCS. For CFTMs, a 04-29CFT Release of Information form needs to be signed by the parent or youth for every provider that is at the CFTM.

CFWB believes:

- All families have strengths.
- Families are the experts on themselves.
- Families deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Families can make well-informed decisions about keeping the child safe and supported.
- Family involvement in decision-making produces better outcomes.
- A team is often more capable of creative and high-quality decision making than an individual.

Who should attend FCMs?



Safety Mapping Meeting

A Safety Mapping Meeting is a process of gathering and organizing information to reach a joint understanding and agreement about how to keep your child safe. A safety mapping meeting might be scheduled for ongoing safety planning, to lift visitation restrictions, or to talk about progress on a case plan.

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM)

A CFTM is designed to help make decisions about the child's and family's needs, placement, transition, and/or permanency plan.

A CFTM can help make shared decisions when:

- A child has been removed from their home and a plan is needed for the child and family.
- A change in the child's placement is required or requested.
- A child may be returning home.
- A permanent plan for a child's needs to be made or changed.
- Service and support planning is needed
- to address the youth's mental health and well-being needs.
- If a placement in a treatment facility should be assessed.



A parent or guardian, or any family member involved in a child's case, can request a CFTM to talk about the child's placement or the family's service plan. Contact the assigned social worker to request a CFTM.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) is a multi-purpose tool developed to assess well-being, identify social and behavioral needs, and support collaborative decision-making for service and case planning.

The CANS helps to:

- Identify strengths that can be leveraged for positive change.
- Determine what needs to be worked on to resolve safety concerns.
- Explore what educational needs your child may have.
- Identify any supports or services the family may need.
- If applicable, support placement decisions.
- Develop a comprehensive plan to support safety, permanency, and well-being.

The CFTM members work together to determine the strengths and needs of the child, parents, and caregivers. During the CFTM, the results of the CANS will guide the making of the case plan. When implemented together, the CANS, CFTM, and case plan can improve the experience of families involved in the foster care system.

To complete the initial CANS assessment, the social worker will:

- Interview the child, parent, caregiver, and any others with relevant information to guide the CANS discussion.
- Conduct an in-person conversation with the child (age three and older) to determine potential strengths and needs.
- Gather additional information from case documents and reports.
- Complete and submit a CFTM referral to complete the CANS conversation (the CFTM may also cover other topics). Notify CFT members of any urgent intervention required. Any potential score of three requires an immediate or urgent intervention in the areas of:
 - Behavioral/Emotional Needs
 - Life Functioning
 - Risk Behaviors

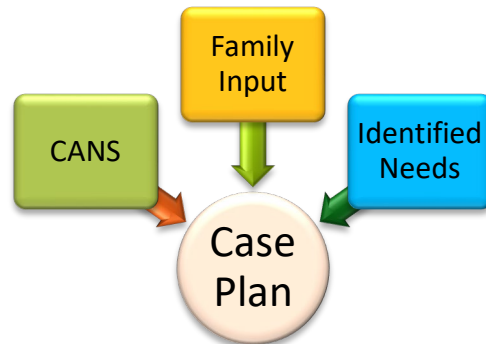
The CANS assessment will be updated for all children and youth in an open case at least every six months after the Jurisdiction/Disposition Hearing.

Case Plans

A case plan is based on the results of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS). The case plan outlines how you can resolve the difficulties that brought your family to the attention of CFWB and achieve a sufficient level of care. Case plans are updated every six months. The assigned social worker reviews and provides the parent or guardian with a copy of the case plan.

Depending on the areas needing attention, the case plan may include:

- Counseling (individual or group)
- Parent education
- Substance use treatment
- Intimate partner violence counseling



Case Plan Timelines

If the child is in an out-of-home placement, there are strict time limits on how long reunification services can be provided. The time starts from the date the child is removed from the parent's care. The parent should consult with their attorney to determine exact dates. Generally, a parent will have up to 12 months of reunification services if the child is three years or older when removed from the home.

If the child was under three years old or has a sibling under the age of three when removed, a parent is entitled to receive only six months of reunification services. However, if a parent is making progress on their case plan, the Court can consider allowing more time for reunification. After the time allowed for reunification services ends, the Court must either return the child to the parent or order a permanent plan.

Completing Case Plans

The social worker will meet with the parent monthly to review progress in meeting the case plan objectives. The Court will review the parent's progress and the child's situation at least every six months. If the parent can demonstrate an increase in skills to protect and safely care for the child, the Court may terminate jurisdiction. If the parent and social worker can show the Court it is highly likely the parent will be able to safely care for the child after receiving additional services, the Court may order six more months of services. In most cases, the Court cannot order more than 18 months of reunification services. If the parent is unable to demonstrate new skills to protect the child, the Court may terminate services and select a permanent plan for the child.

Indian Child Welfare Act

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law passed in 1978 to protect and preserve Indian tribes. ICWA imposed minimum procedural protections for Indian children involved in the dependency system or facing removal from parental custody in other ways.

Welfare and Institution Code (WIC) 224 describes California's commitment to protecting the essential tribal relations and best interest of an Indian child by promoting practices in accordance with ICWA and other applicable laws that are designed to protect placements that reflect the unique values of the child's tribal culture and is best able to assist the child in establishing, developing, and maintaining a political, cultural, and social relationship with the child's tribe and tribal community.

Efforts include placing children in homes with extended family members or other Indian or tribal families. If there are none available, ensuring the child is placed in a resource home dedicated to promoting the child's connections to their extended family, tribal culture and tribal community.

ICWA:

- Protects the best interest of Indian children.
- Promotes the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by establishing minimum standards for the removal of Indian children from their families, and the placement of Indian children in resource or adoptive homes that reflect the unique values of their culture; and
- Aids Indian tribes in the operation of children and family services programs.



Inquiry into a child's possible Native American heritage should be conducted for every family served by CFWB during initial contact (including contact with the Child Abuse Hotline) and throughout the life of the case, especially when the child is removed from the home and placement is being considered or is imminent. Native American heritage inquiry includes, but is not limited to, asking the child, parents, legal guardian, Indian custodian, extended family members, others who have an interest in the child, and the party reporting child abuse or neglect (WIC section 224.2 (e)).

Tribes may choose to participate in planning regarding the child, including placement decisions and participation in Juvenile Dependency Court hearings. In some cases, the tribe may assume control over the child's case. If you are a tribal member, your tribe might intervene and decide to have the case heard in their tribal court system. Alternatively, the tribe may take part in the Juvenile Dependency Court hearings about the child's case.

ICWA Inquiry

Throughout the family's involvement with OCS and Juvenile Dependency Court, social workers will ask questions like those listed below to gather information and determine if ICWA applies.

- Is the parent or child a member of an Indian tribe or an Alaska Native community?
- Is anyone in the family a member of a tribe?
- Is any family member or ancestor on any of the following rolls?
 - 1906 Final Roll
 - Roll of 1924
 - California Judgment Roll
- If no relatives are members of a federally recognized tribe, does the parent or child have Native American, Alaska Native, or American Indian ancestry?
- Is there anyone in the family who may have more information about the child's Native American, Alaska Native, or American Indian heritage?
- Has anyone in the family lived on a reservation or Rancheria, or in a predominantly Indian community?
- Has anyone in the family attended an Indian school?
- Has anyone in the family received medical care at an Indian Health Clinic because they have American Indian, Native American and/or Alaska Native ancestry?
- Has anyone in the family ever received other benefits or services from a tribe or the federal government due to their Indian status (examples: scholarships, grants, Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)?
- Does anyone in the family speak the language of a tribe?
- Does anyone in the family vote in tribal elections, attend tribal meetings, or otherwise participate in a tribe's political activities?
- Does anyone in the family participate in a tribe's cultural or religious activities (examples. Pow-Wows, dances, etc.)?

If you think the child or the family might have Native American, American Indian, or Alaskan Native heritage, please tell the social worker immediately.

Juvenile Dependency Court

Juvenile Dependency Court is a division of the San Diego Superior Court and hears cases regarding children who are abused or neglected. Juvenile Justice Court hears cases for youth charged with offenses. The Juvenile Court also hears adoption, emancipation and other cases. Juvenile Court matters are confidential and are not open to the public. Juvenile Dependency Court provides oversight of all CFWB dependency cases.



Juvenile Dependency Court Goals

- Ensure a child's safety.
- Preserve or reunify families whenever possible.
- Ensure that social workers arrange for all the services the family needs to help reunify with the child.
- Minimize the number of places where a child lives while removed from their family.
- Provide a safe and permanent home for the child if the child cannot safely return home.
- Ensure information about the family and child is shared with the professionals who will help support their needs.
- Ensure that the child's medical, mental health and educational needs are met.
- Give families a fair and accessible place to solve problems and protect their right to a fair and speedy trial.

Attending Court

There are three Juvenile Dependency Court locations: Meadow Lark, East, and North. All Courthouses conduct in-person hearings. Remote appearances may be available if you cannot attend in person. For information on how to attend remotely, contact your attorney.



Security

Everyone must go through a security check to enter the Courthouse. Weapons and dangerous items are not permitted in the Courthouse and will be confiscated by a Sheriff's deputy. If you refuse to submit to a search, you will be denied entry.

Parking

Parking at the Courthouses is free to the public.

Check In for Hearing

Check in at the reception desk to obtain your department (courtroom) number. A CFWB Court Officer at the department will note your attendance. Waiting times for hearings can vary, and it is advised to plan for a long waiting time. Your attorney or social worker may meet with you before the hearing to discuss your case. Inform the social worker if anyone will need accommodation for persons with disabilities or interpreter services during the hearing.

Who Attends Court

By law, only the following can attend Juvenile Dependency Court hearings:

- Parent or guardian
- Incarcerated parent(s) they wish to attend)
- The child or NMD
- De Facto parent(s)
- Indian custodian or the tribe/tribal representative (for ICWA cases)
- CASA (if one is appointed)
- Testifying witnesses
- CFWB social worker
- The parties' attorneys
- Adult relatives of the child or NMD



(if

Important: For anyone else, admission to the courtroom for the hearing is with the Court's discretion.

Children and Youth

By law, any child who is the subject of a Juvenile Court hearing is entitled to be present at the hearing. Additionally, every child four years of age or older must be transported to Court on the day of the detention hearing unless the minor's attorney has waived the child's presence. A child may be excused from attending their Court hearing for any of the following reasons; the child is under four years of age (unless ordered to appear, or wants to attend), or the Court finds that the child's attendance would be detrimental to the child (the Court should excuse the child only for the portions of the proceedings which the Court finds to be detrimental), the child chooses not to attend, is physically unable to attend or the child's attorney waives the client's presence.

Voice of the Child and Youth

If the child or youth attends the hearing, the Court will inform the child or youth of their right to participate and address the Court if they choose to do so. For any concerns regarding the child or youth's Court attendance, contact the social worker.

Children's Waiting Rooms

Children's Waiting Rooms are available in each Courthouse for children under the age of 16. Waiting rooms are staffed by volunteers, have limited capacity, and are on a first-come, first-serve basis, and can fill up quickly (East and Vista are the busiest locations).

Children's Waiting Room Guidelines:

- Capacity varies depending on location.
- Per Court policy, only the parent or legal guardian or social worker can sign the child or youth in; stepparents and resource parents cannot sign the child or youth in.
- The parent or legal guardian or social worker will need to complete the registration form and wait until staff have reviewed the form and have accepted the child or youth into the room.
- Adults are not allowed to stay in the Children's Waiting Rooms.
- The Children's Waiting Rooms do not accept children or youth that are sick or have any other contagious illness.

The Meadow Lark location has a Youth Center for teens and private spaces where they can speak with their attorney. The youth's CASA typically accompanies the youth in the waiting room; however, the social worker will need to ensure supervision is arranged when the youth is in the waiting room.

Courthouse	Hours
East and North	Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Meadow Lark	Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. only

Juvenile Court Hearings Overview

Detention Hearing

The first hearing is called the Detention Hearing. At this hearing:

- The social worker will have submitted a report to the Court and will provide copies to all attorneys and parents.
- The Court will:
 - Appoint attorneys for all parties (each parent and child), or a parent can retain a private attorney.
 - Review the petition (the document describing the reasons the child is believed to be at risk for abuse or neglect).
 - Address parentage to identify the legal parent of each child.
 - Decide if the child should be removed from or remain in parental custody.
 - Decide if CFWB made a “reasonable effort” to keep the child with the parents.
 - Ask about possible Indian heritage from the parents and any relatives in attendance.
 - If the child is removed, the Court will decide where the child should live (or be “detained”), make visitation orders, and tell the parents about voluntary services that may help them get their child returned to their care.
- Attorneys for all parties will provide information to the Court.

Jurisdiction Hearing

The Jurisdictional Hearing is normally set within 15 Court days of removal if the child is detained or within 30 days after the petition is filed. At the Jurisdiction Hearing the Court decides if the allegations in the petition are true. There are three ways this can happen:

1. The parents agree the petition is true (this means they agree with what the petition says).
2. The parents disagree with the petition and “**submit**” to the petition (meaning they let the Court decide if it’s true or not).
3. The parents dispute or “**contest**” the petition and a trial is set. After the parties’ attorneys present evidence to the Court, it will rule whether the petition is or is not true. If the petition is found to be true, the Court will proceed with the Disposition Hearing.

Disposition Hearing

At the Disposition Hearing, if the Court decided the petition is true, the Court will decide what should happen to help reunify the family, including where the child will live and what services will be offered to the family. If all parties agree, the Disposition Hearing can be held immediately after the Jurisdictional Hearing (same day) or it can be set for a later date.

The Court can:

- Let the child live with a parent under the supervision of the social worker and the Court and order family maintenance services or,
- Order that the child remain in the home of a relative, family friend, or other Resource Parent and offer the parents **family reunification services**.

The Court will also:

- Order parent(s) to comply with a case plan. This plan is developed by the parents and the social workers together (see page 23). Parents are encouraged to begin working on their case plan as soon as possible to resolve safety concerns so the child can return to their care more quickly.
- Order a concurrent plan. Concurrent planning is the process of working toward reunification and, at the same time, establishing an alternative plan for permanency services. In some serious situations, the Court might not order reunification services at all and will set a hearing within 120 days to determine a permanent plan.

Although the goal in most cases is to provide services, it is possible for the Court not to order family reunification services, such as:

- The child or a sibling has been seriously abused or killed.
- The Court removed another child from the parent for similar reasons, and/or did not reunify with a child.
- The parents have serious ongoing substance use problems and have resisted or failed treatment in the past.

Six-Month Review Hearing

At this hearing, the Court wants to know:

- How the child is doing, and
- That the parents have shown they can provide safety for their child and whether they have made progress on the objectives of their case plan.

If the child lives with a parent, the Court can:

- Close the case, or
- Keep supervising the child and providing family maintenance services.

If the child does not live with the parent, the Court can:

- Return the child to a parent if the parent is making enough progress with the case plan and order family maintenance services, or
- Keep the child out of the home and order more family reunification services.

If the child was under three years old (or part of a sibling group with a child under three) when removed from the parents, the Court can stop reunification services at this Court hearing if the parents are not making the changes needed so their child can safely return home.

If the child has already been placed with the parent, the Court can decide to close the case or keep the case open with family maintenance services to ensure the child's safety.

12-Month Permanency Review Hearing

If the child has not yet been placed home, the Court can decide to return the child home and provide family maintenance services to ensure the child's safety.

If it appears a child may be able to return home in a short period of time with more services, then the Court can order additional reunification services.

If the parents have not made progress or shown they can safely care for their child, the Court will end reunification services so a permanent plan can be selected for the child at a 366.26 Hearing.

18-Month Permanency Review Hearing

This hearing is held 18 months from the child's removal date if the Court continues reunification services at the 12-Month Hearing. At this hearing, the Court must decide if the child can safely go back to the parents.

If the child is returned to the parents, family maintenance services will continue, and the Court will set another hearing in six months.

If the child is not returned, the Court will end reunification services and set a 366.26 Hearing to select a permanent plan for the child.

In rare cases, the Court may order that reunification services continue to the 24-month review period. The Court must find that doing so would be in the child's best interest and one or more of the parents were either:

- making progress in residential substance abuse treatment
- a minor parent or a non-minor dependent
- incarcerated, institutionalized, or deported and,
- Making significant progress in creating a safe home for the child.

24-Month Hearing

This hearing is held in rare cases if the Court ordered further reunification services at the 18-month hearing.

The Court must decide if the child can safely return to the parents. If the child is returned, the family will receive family maintenance services, and the Court will set a hearing in six months.

Nonminor Dependent Hearing

Nonminor Dependent (NMD) is the term used for a dependent or ward eligible for Extended Foster Care (EFC). EFC is available to youth 18-21 years old who were under a foster care placement order at age 18.

The goals for EFC are to:

- Extend time to assist NMDs in preparing for a successful transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency through education and employment opportunities.
- Help NMDs maintain a safety net of support while experiencing independence in a secure and supervised living environment.

NMD hearings for EFC youth are held every six months. NMDs continue to have legal representation, but parents are no longer parties to the hearings and do not have counsel. Hearings may be attended by anyone the youth invites.

Other Hearings

Pre-Trial Settlement Conference

A Pre-Trial Settlement Conference (PSC) may be held for parties to resolve legal issues, reach an agreement and avoid a more formal contested hearing (trial). An agreement reached at the PSC is presented to the Court for a final decision. If an agreement is not reached, the case can go to trial to resolve the legal issues.

Trials (Contested Hearings)

A hearing is contested when one or more parties disagree and wish to have a further hearing to present, cross-examine, and/or receive additional testimony or evidence. Contested hearings are also known as “trials.”

Special Hearings

Special hearings may be held for various matters such as parentage, placement, ICWA, de facto parent applications, or when a party wants an existing Court order made or changed before the next regularly scheduled hearing.

Dual Jurisdiction Hearing

Dual Jurisdiction cases involve youth who are either dependents alleged to have committed crimes, wards alleged to have child protective issues, or youth alleged to be in both circumstances.

366.26 Hearing Selection and Implementation

120 Days from the Order Terminating Reunification Services

If the child is not reunified, the Court will end reunification services and set a hearing to select a permanent plan.

If a child cannot return home safely at the end of the reunification period, the Court will set a 366.26 Hearing to select a permanent plan for the child.

The options for permanency include:

- Adoption
- Tribal Customary Adoption (for ICWA cases)
- Guardianship
- Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Post Permanency Planning Hearing

Monitor Placement Plan

If the child remains involved with the Court after a permanent plan is selected, the Court will schedule hearings every six months. Before these hearings, the social worker provides a report to the Court regarding the child and family. The Court reviews the progress being made to finalize the permanent plan, the child's placement, and the services the child is receiving.

Types of Permanent Plans

Adoption

- Child is adopted
- Parental Rights are terminated
- Adoptive parents have all the rights and responsibilities of a parent

Tribal Customary Adoption

(ICWA cases only)

- Child is adopted
- Parental rights are not terminated
- The child's tribe must agree to the plan

Guardianship

- Parental rights are not terminated
- Guardian becomes legally responsible for the child
- The Court may order visitation rights to the parent
- Parents can file a motion requesting termination of guardianship and return of child as their situation changes

Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative

- The child remains a dependent of Juvenile Court and is placed with a relative
- The relative must be an approved resource parent

Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

- A youth 16 years or older remains a dependent of Juvenile Court and is placed in a resource family home or STRTP
- CFWB continues to search for a more permanent plan

Common Juvenile Dependency Legal Terms

Term	Definition
Appeals/Writs	Requests for a higher Court to review the Juvenile Court's decision. Talk to your attorney about how to file an appeal or writ.
De Facto Parent	The current or recent caretaker of a child who has been found by the Court to have assumed, on a day-to-day basis, the role of a parent to the child. Caregivers will sometimes apply for de facto status so they can exercise certain rights.
Concurrent Planning	The process of working toward reunification and, at the same time, establishing an alternative plan for permanency. The caregiver agrees to facilitate reunification and is prepared to provide the child with a permanent home if reunification fails. WIC section 366.21 makes it clear that planning for permanency does not conflict with providing reasonable services for reunification.
Parties	The parents, child(ren), CFWB, and, if any, the CASA, the Indian custodian, and/or the child's tribe.
Paternity (also called parentage)	Identifying the legal and/or biological parent(s) of the child, and/or determining the parent's status as alleged, biological, or presumed.
Petition	The document that describes the reason(s) the child is believed to be at risk for abuse or neglect.
Proceedings	Court hearings in which a judge makes decisions regarding the child and family.
Visitation Orders	The Court's orders granting or denying visits for the parents, siblings, and others, and determining whether visits will be supervised or unsupervised, liberal or structured, or scheduled for specific dates and times.
JV 220	Juvenile Court Application forms that CFWB and Probation staff are required to complete and file with the Court when requesting authorization to administer psychotropic medications to a dependent youth or ward of the Court.

Attorney Appointments



The Juvenile Dependency Court appoints attorneys to represent children and youth who are the subject of a dependency case and their parents. An attorney will safeguard your rights and represent you in your efforts to regain custody and control of your child. The attorney works for you and helps you through the Court process.

In San Diego County, Children's Legal Services (CLS) represents children, youth and NMDs, and Dependency Legal Services (DLS) represents parents. Parents also have the option of retaining a private attorney. If parents choose to represent themselves, the Court will determine if they have made a knowing and intelligent waiver of counsel.

The Juvenile Dependency Court process is not familiar to most people because hearings are closed to the public. Although adults may represent themselves, DLS attorneys are professionally trained to protect parents' legal rights and present their position and interests effectively in Court. If in doubt about your parental rights, it helps to have an attorney guiding you through the process.

Attorneys are typically appointed at the Detention Hearing. To request an attorney, go to the Juvenile Dependency Court business office where the case is being heard, or contact the assigned social worker for assistance with an attorney request.

If the Court appoints an attorney for you, you will be charged for the attorney's services. You may ask for a Court hearing at the end of the case if you cannot pay for your legal services and the Court will consider your income when establishing these fees. You can hire your own attorney at any time. You may consider contacting the California State Bar Association or the San Diego County Bar for a list of attorneys who may represent you at low cost.

What if there are concerns about an attorney?

California law says you can expect your attorney to:

- Return your telephone calls
- Be on time for Court
- Represent your wishes
- Protect your legal rights

If you feel your attorney is not following the law, you can make a complaint by contacting the attorney's supervisor at the phone numbers listed below.

Dependency Legal Services (DLS): (619) 398-2726 or (619) 398-2727

Children's Legal Service (CLS): (858) 221-0404

If you cannot resolve the complaint with the attorney and their supervisor, you may submit a written complaint at the business office at the Juvenile Dependency Court that handles the case. The Presiding Judge or Assistant Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court will review the complaint, forward a copy to the attorney and their supervisor and send a letter to you stating that the matter has been brought to the attention of the attorney and their supervisor.

What questions should I ask the attorney?

- What happened at today's hearing? What is going to happen at the next hearing?
- What is the best way to reach you?
- What do I need to bring to Court?
- What can I do to reunify with my child, and how much time will I have?
- How long will it take to get to the end of my case?
- What can I do to make the process go faster?
- What should I do if I have a problem with reaching a goal on my case plan?
- Do I have visitation rights? Can my child see any other relatives or siblings?
- What should I do if I have a problem during one of my scheduled visits?
- How can I keep in touch with my child?
- Can I still attend parent-teacher conferences at my child's school and be involved with my child's education?



Court Appointed Special Advocate

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are volunteers who speak up on their assigned child's behalf and help them through their time in the dependency system. CASAs gather information from Court documents, social workers' files, and educational, medical, and therapy records. They speak with the child, parents, family members, attorney, school officials, health care providers, social workers and other professionals involved in the child's life. They also visit with the child at least once per month and use the information they gather to make recommendations to the Court on what the child needs to be happy and successful at every stage of the dependency process.

CASA's undergo extensive background checks and receive 35 hours of training prior to serving as a CASA. Active CASAs commit to at least 12 months of service and must spend time with their child or youth monthly. Under guidance and support from their Voices for Children Advocacy Supervisor, CASAs prepare their own Court reports and attend hearings to advocate for the best interests of the child or youth.



For general questions regarding the CASA program, contact the Voices for Children main line at 858-569-2019.



Addressing Concerns With CFWB

CFWB takes your concerns seriously.

If you have a concern about a CFWB investigation or case, discuss it with the social worker to create a plan for resolving it as soon as possible. If, after speaking with the social worker, your concerns have not been resolved, call the social worker's supervisor. If the matter remains unresolved, you can call the social worker's and supervisor's manager first, then their chiefs of agency operations, and then the deputy director.

Who Do I
Talk to
About
Concerns?

After giving the staff an opportunity to resolve the concerns you are still not satisfied with how the complaint has been handled, call the **Office of the Ombudsman** at (619) 338-2098.

The Office of the Ombudsman investigates concerns and conducts internal reviews related to CFWB policy, procedure and social work practice. **Important: Office of the Ombudsman cannot change Court orders.**

Resource Parent Ombudsman

(877) 792-KIDS (5437), option 2

The Resource Parent Ombudsman is dedicated to responding to caregivers' questions about visitation, policy and procedures, transitions of children when they leave a Resource Family home, or issues with social worker communication. Applicants who are going through the Resource Family Approval process to become caregivers to dependent children also may contact the office if they are facing any challenges or concerns.

HHSA Business Assurance and Compliance

(619) 237-8571

If the Ombudsman is not able to take care of your concern, you can contact the office of Business Assurance and Compliance. It is a County office but not part of CFWB. It can also investigate concerns about CFWB and its practice.

California Foster Youth Ombudsperson

(877) 846- 1602 or fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov

If you are a foster youth and want to elevate your concerns while in foster care, please contact the California Foster Care Ombudsperson.

Keeping a written record

It is helpful to have specific information when you make a complaint. Keep a written record of all contacts you have with your social worker, including the day and time of phone calls, meetings, letters, etc. This is generally a good idea even if you don't have a complaint as it helps keep information organized. It is also helpful to write down what happens during parent-child visits. You always have the option to share your concerns with your attorney.



Requesting CFWB Records

To obtain copies of your CFWB records, you must submit your request in writing. Please note that it can take up to 90 days to fulfill a request for records. The request must include the following:

- Your name, current mailing address and telephone number.
- The name and date of birth of the child who is the subject of the records.
- Your relationship to the child.
- The purpose of your request and the information you are seeking.
- Whether you are seeking the records for a Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) Grievance Hearing.
- A copy of your driver's license or other form of valid government issued photo identification.

Mail your requests to:

Health and Human Services Agency Child and Family Well-Being
Attention: CFWB Legal Services Unit
8965 Balboa Avenue,
San Diego, CA 92123
858-616-5950

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can a parent have their child removed for using drugs or alcohol?

A: Yes. If there is a concern that a child has been harmed or is in danger of being abused or neglected as a result of the parent's drug or alcohol use, the child could be removed. If a parent is using drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, the baby may be born prematurely or with medical problems. In those cases, it is unlikely the hospital would release the baby to the parent. However, the social worker will partner with the parent and support network to create safety for the baby.

Q: Can a child be removed from the parent if they are homeless?

A: No. A child cannot be removed *only* because they are homeless. However, if homelessness is contributing to a child being abused or neglected, the child could be removed from the parent's care. The social worker will check to see if the parent is trying to use resources, such as homeless shelters and food banks, etc. In using community resources, it shows the social worker that the parent is trying to provide for their child. It is important for the parent to make every effort to ensure the family is safe.

Q: Is spanking considered to be physical abuse?

A: Reasonable and age-appropriate spanking to the buttocks with an open hand that leaves no bruise, or any other kind of injury is not considered physical abuse.

Q: Who can remove a child from their parent?

A: Law enforcement officers can remove a child without a social worker being involved if they believe that the child is being abused or neglected. If a CFWB social worker believes a child is being abused or neglected and it is unsafe for the child to remain at the home, the social worker can remove the child and place the child in temporary protective custody. If a parent is not present when a child is removed, the law enforcement officer or social worker will notify the parent as soon as possible that the child has been placed in protective custody. Every effort will be made to find the parent. It is important to inform the social worker or law enforcement officer about the child's needs, such as allergies, prescribed medication or necessary medical equipment or kinds of treatment. It is also very important to tell the social worker about relatives or family friends who may be willing and able to care for the child.

Q: If a parent is receiving financial assistance, will their aid stop when a child is removed?

A: Every case is different, and this is a hard question to answer. Contact your eligibility worker, employment worker or social worker as soon as possible.

Q: If the child is placed in foster care, who is responsible for the foster care payments?

A: Parents are responsible for the cost of their child's foster care. The Department of Child Support Services is responsible for collecting this debt.

Q: Does a parent have choices about their child's future?

A: Yes. Once assigned to a family, the social worker will ask the parents what they would like for their child including what would happen if they were unable to parent in the future. A parent has the right to develop a plan for their child's future care. If at any point you decide you cannot care for your child, you can ask the social worker and the Court to consider arranging for permanent care through adoption or legal guardianship. Ask the social worker about these alternatives.

Q. If a child is removed, do they still attend their school?

A: Social workers will advocate for the child to remain in the school of origin when it is reasonable, safe, and capable of meeting the child's needs.

Q: Are language services available?

A: All families have the right to language-appropriate contact and written material in their primary language. If the social worker does not speak your language, you have the right to an interpreter, including a Sign Language interpreter at no cost. Interpreters are also available to assist during Court proceedings. Ask the assigned social worker for services in your primary language.

Foster Youth Bill of Rights

A Guide to Your Rights in Foster Care

Personal Rights

You have the right to live in a safe, comfortable home where you are treated with respect and have:

- Adequate amount of clothing and healthy food
- Clothing, grooming, and hygiene products that respect your culture and ethnicity
- A private place to keep your things
- A phone you can use to make private calls (unless a judge says you may not have a phone)
- A caregiver who has special training on trauma and ways to help you

You have the right to:

- Go or not go to religious services and activities of your choice
- Participate in cultural, racial, ethnic, personal enrichment, and social activities
- Fair and equal access to all available foster care services, placements, care, and benefits

No one can:

- Lock you in a room or a building unless you are in a Community Treatment Facility (CTF)
- Make you stay in Juvenile Hall because they can't find a home for you
- Use law enforcement as a threat or retaliation
- Abuse you physically, sexually, emotionally, or exploit you for any reason
- Punish you physically for any reason
- Look through your things unless they have a reasonable or legal reason
- Treat you unfairly because of your race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental or physical disability, HIV status, or membership in an Indian tribe

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)

You have the right to protect your SOGIE. You have the right to:

- Live in a home or short-term residential therapeutic facility (STRTP), or CTF based on your gender identity
- Be called by your chosen name and gender pronouns
- See a doctor or counselor who is gender affirming
- Have clothing, grooming, and hygiene products that respect your gender identity and expression
- Have a caregiver, social worker or probation officer, and lawyer who have been trained on SOGIE and how to care for LGBTQ+ youth
- Keep your SOGIE information private

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

If you are a member, or could be a member, of a federally recognized Indian tribe, you have the right to:

- Live in a home, STRTP, or CTF that maintains the social and cultural standards of your tribe and tribal community
- Live in a home with your relatives or extended family or a home that is licensed, approved, or specified by your tribe
- Live in an Indian foster home that is licensed or approved, or a facility that is approved by your tribe or an Indian organization that meets your needs
- Live in a place that reflects and keeps you connected to the cultural and social standards of your tribe and/or tribal community
- Contact your ICWA advocate and have them attend Court hearings
- Contact your tribe, tribal members, and Indian community
- Have a social worker/probation officer, and lawyer who are trained in ICWA
- Participate in traditional Native American religious practices
- Get help becoming a member of an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- Get all the benefits that come from being a member of an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- Be free from discrimination and be recognized for your relationship with an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- Have protections for your tribal relationship in your case plan

Education

You have educational rights. You have the right to:

- Go to school every day
- Get help with school
- Stay at your same school if it's best for you
- Enroll right away at a new school
- Get partial credits for all classes you were passing if you change schools
- Go to after-school activities
- Have priority enrollment in pre-school and after-school programs
- Have priority enrollment at California State Universities and community colleges
- Receive information about college and career education programs

Health

You have health rights. You have the right to:

- See a doctor, dentist, or eye doctor, or talk to a counselor when you need to
- See a doctor who is gender affirming
- Refuse to take any medicines, vitamins, or herbs, and not be punished for refusing
- Keep your medical records private
- Have the risks and benefits of treatment explained to you in a way that is easy to understand

Mental Health

You have mental health rights. You have the right to:

- Keep your mental health records private
- Get gender affirming mental health treatment
- Work with your doctor to safely stop taking psychotropic medication
- Refuse to take psychotropic medication and not be punished for refusing
- Know about your diagnosis and understand treatment options
- Get help with an alcohol or drug problem without asking for permission
- Get mental health services in a place that meets your needs
- If you are 12 years of age or older, choose your own doctor or counselor and make decisions about your mental health treatment

Sexual and Reproductive Health

You have sexual and reproductive health rights, too. You have the right to:

- Get information about sexual health in a way that you understand
- Use or refuse services for birth control, condoms, other types of protection, and pregnancy care, including abortion, without telling an adult
- Get healthcare services for sexual assault without telling an adult
- If you are 12 years of age or older, choose your own doctor or counselor and make decisions about preventing, testing, or treating sexually transmitted diseases (STIs), including HIV without permission from any adult

Case Plan

You have the right to:

- Help create your case plan
- Have a case plan within 60 days of being in foster care
- Have your case plan updated at least every six months
- Be told of any changes to your case plan
- Get a copy of it if you are ten years of age and older
- Have your tribe involved in case plan decisions if you are an Indian child
- Have a case plan that includes:
 - Health and education plans
 - The best place for you to live
 - The services you need
 - A long-term plan for where you will live
 - Gender-affirming healthcare plans
 - Plans for visiting your parents, siblings and/or relatives
 - A Transition to Independent Living Plan (TILP), if you are 16 or older

Court

You have rights at Juvenile Court. You have the right to:

- Be told about Court hearings in writing
- Go to Court and talk to the judge
- Tell the judge what you want to happen in your case
- Tell the judge how you feel about psychotropic medications you may be taking
- Ask the judge for visits with your parents, siblings and/or relatives
- Request a hearing if you feel like your lawyer is not acting in your best interest
- Ask for certain people to be in the courtroom or ask for certain persons to leave
- Keep your Court records private (unless the law says otherwise)
- Tell the judge how you feel about your family, lawyer, social worker and probation officer
- A lawyer who does not work for your parents or the County

Your lawyer must:

- Keep what you tell them private
- Have special training on ICWA and SOGIE
- Make sure you are safe and have the services and supports you need
- Tell the judge what you want to happen in your case
- Answer questions you have about Court, foster care, and laws that affect you

Children and Family Team Meeting (CFTM)

You have the right to a CFTM. You have the right to:

- Request CFTMs
- Have support people at your CFTM
- Talk about your needs in the CFTM
- A CFTM within 60 days of entering foster care
- A CFTM every six months
- A CFTM at least every 90 days if you are in a STRTP, CTF or therapeutic foster home
- A CFTM at least every 90 days if you are getting certain types of services
- A CFTM when any changes will be made to your case plan

Family and Social Connections

You have the right to:

- Visit and contact your parents, siblings, and other family members in private (unless a judge says you cannot)
- Contact people who are not in the foster care system (like friends, church members, teachers, and others), unless a judge says you cannot

Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management

You have the right to do certain things on your own. You have the right to:

- Have an allowance
- Your own bank account (unless your case plan says you cannot)
- Learn job skills for your age
- Work (unless the law says you are too young)
- Earn, save, and manage your money (unless your case plan says you cannot)
- Go to an Independent Living Program (if you are old enough)
- Beginning at age 14, get a credit report every year from the major reporting agencies and get help fixing any issues

Communications

Unless there is a safety concern or the judge orders otherwise, you have the right to:

- Use a phone to make and get confidential (private) calls
- Use a computer and the internet
- Privately use email, text messages, or other electronic communication
- Send and receive unopened mail
- You have the right to contact the following people in private, and no one can stop you or punish you for speaking with them:
 - Your social worker or probation officer
 - Your lawyer
 - Service providers
 - Foster youth advocates and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)
 - Your Education Rights Holder
 - Your tribe (if you have one)
 - The Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson (OFCO)
 - The California Community Care Licensing Division (CCL)

Records

You have the right to see and get a free copy of the following until you are 26:

- Medical, dental, and mental health records
- Child welfare records
- Juvenile Court records
- Educational records

Foster youth have rights!

You have the right to speak to these offices immediately and confidentially.

You cannot be threatened, punished, or retaliated against for making complaints



California Foster Care Ombudsperson



Community Care Licensing Division



Resources

STATE

California Department of Social Services
(CDSS)

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/>

California Foster Care Ombudsperson

<https://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/>

1-877-846-1602

California Foster Youth Resources

<https://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/foster-youth-rights/>

Office of Tribal Affairs, CDSS

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/tribal-affairs>

California Department of Health Services
Medi-Cal Program

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/>

California Department of Social Services
Civil Rights Unit

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/civil-rights>

1-866-741-6241

LOCAL

San Diego County Home Page

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/>

211 San Diego

<https://211sandiego.org/>

Access Customer Services Call Center;
Family Resource Centers

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/ssp/access.html>

Public Health Services

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs.html>

Health and Human Services Agency

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/>

San Diego County Office of Education

<https://www.sdcoe.net/>

Behavioral Health Services

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs.html>

Women's, Infant, and Children's Program

<https://sandiegowic.org/>

1-888-500-6411

LEGAL

California Legislative Information
<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

Superior Court of California, County of San Diego
<https://www.sdcourt.ca.gov/>

Dependency Legal Services—Attorneys for Parents
(619) 398-2726 or (619) 398-2727

Children’s Legal Services—Attorneys for Children and Youth
(858) 221-0404

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB) Home Page
https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/cs/child_welfare_services.html

CFWB Child Abuse Hotline
(858) 560-2191
(800) 344-6000

CFWB Adoptions
<https://sdcares4kids.com/>
1-877-792-KIDS (5437) or
1-877- I ADOPT U

CFWB Information Line
(858) 514-6995

CFWB Office of the Ombudsman
(619) 338-2098

CFWB Records
(858) 616-5950

Polinsky Children’s Center
9400 Ruffin Road
San Diego, CA 92123
https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/cs/child_welfare_services/polinsky_childrens_center.html
(858) 514-4600

Juvenile Dependency Court Video
<https://youtu.be/QWoAVS1CIM0>
https://youtu.be/jw8_K-FYRQ
(Spanish)

SAN DIEGO JUVENILE PROBATION

San Diego Juvenile Probation Home Page
https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/probation/juvenile_information_community_supervision.html
(858) 694-4319

Probation Department Foster Home
Coordinator
(858) 694-4600

Contact Log

Your Social Worker

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Social Worker Supervisor

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Your Attorney

Name:

Phone:

Your Child's Attorney

Name:

Phone:

Your Child's Caregiver

Name:

Phone:

Probation Officer

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Other

Name:

Phone:

Address:

Dates to Appear in Juvenile Dependency Court

YOUR COURTHOUSE LOCATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> San Diego Juvenile Court 2851 Meadow Lark Drive San Diego, CA 92123 (858) 634-1600 Department: Judge:	<input type="checkbox"/> North County Court 325 S. Melrose Ave. Vista, CA 92081 (760) 201-8600 x1420 Department: N-04 Judge:	<input type="checkbox"/> East County Court 250 E. Main St. San Diego, CA 92020 (619) 456-4118 Department: E-18 Judge:
DATE		TIME

Acronyms

Commonly used acronyms (abbreviations) are listed below:

Acronym	Name
AAP	Adoption Assistance Program
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
DD	Deputy Director
AFDC-FC	Aid to Families w/ Dependent Children—Foster Care
APPLA	Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement
ASFA	Adoption & Safe Families Act
CACI	Child Abuse Central Index
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CCL	Community Care Licensing
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CFT	Child and Family Team
CFTM	Child and Family Team Meeting
CFWB	Child and Family Well-Being
CI	Court Intervention
CLETS	California Law Enforcement Telecommunication System
CLS	Children’s Legal Services
COP	Change of Placement
CORI	Criminal Offender Record Information
CWS	Child Welfare Services
CWS/CMS	Child Welfare Services/Case Management System
DDC	Dependency Drug Court
DLS	Dependency Legal Services
DOJ	Department of Justice
DV	Domestic Violence
ER	Emergency Response
ESCU	Emergency Shelter Care Unit
ESU	Emergency Screening Unit
EFC	Extended Foster Care
FCM	Family Centered Meeting
FFA	Foster Family Agency
FM	Family Maintenance
FP	Foster Parent
FR	Family Reunification
FTT	Failure to Thrive
HEP	Health & Education Passport
HHSA	Health & Human Services Agency

Acronym	Name
HSS	Human Services Specialist
ICPC	Interstate Compact for Placement of Children
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IFPP	Intensive Family Preservation Program
ILS	Independent Living Skills
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IRS	Immediate Response Services
IS	Initial Services
ISU	Indian Specialty Unit
Kin GAP	Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment
LE	Law Enforcement
LFH	Licensed Foster Home
LGH	Licensed Group Home
NMD	NonMinor Dependent
NPG	No Parent or Guardian
NREFM	Non-Relative Extended Family Member
OCS	Office of Child Safety
OCSF	Office of Child and Family Strengthening
OOO	Office of Ombudsman
PC	Penal Code
PCC	Polinsky Children's Center
PCO	Placement Coordinator's Office
PHN	Public Health Nurse
PPAU	Permanency-Planning Assessment Unit
PSS	Protective Services Supervisor
PSW	Protective Services Worker
RFA	Resource Family Approval
RPS	Regional Placement Specialist
RTC	Residential Treatment Center
SARB	School Attendance Review Board
SUS	Substance Use Specialist
SCP	Substitute Care Provider
SDM	Structured Decision Making
SET	Safety Enhanced Together
SOP	Safety-Organized Practice
STRTP	Short Term Residential Treatment Program
SW	Social Worker
VS	Voluntary Services
WIC	Welfare & Institutions Code