What is your social worker's role?

Your social worker will inform you of the identified safety threats that led to your child being placed in out-of-home care. They will partner with you to assess your needs and help you with services to focus on reducing or eliminating safety threats.

What is a Dependency Petition?

A dependency petition is a written request to the court about concerns that your child has been abused, neglected or abandoned and there is no parent able to safely care for your child. The dependency petition asks the court to step in and protect your child from harm and have the State assume temporary legal custody of your child. Dependency petitions are filed by Children's Administration when a child is believed to be in impending or present danger. Children are returned home when the identified safety threats can be safely controlled and managed in the family home.

Attorney

You have a right to an attorney. If you cannot hire your own attorney because of your income, the court will appoint you one.

CASA/GAL

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) and GAL's (Guardians ad Litem) are appointed by judges to advocate for your child. The CASA or GAL tells the judge at court hearings what he or she believes is in the best interest of your child and what your child needs. The CASA or GAL will work to make sure that your child is always considered in every decision that the court makes.

Important Contacts

Social Worker's name:

Need a Lawyer?

Office of Assigned Counsel:

Office of Public Defense
phone: 360-586-3164
email: opd@opd.wa.gov

CASA/GAL Name and phone number:

> **Family and Children's Ombudsman** investigates complaints about agency actions or inaction that involve a child or parent involved with child protection or child welfare services.
Toll free phone: 1-800-571-7321
Phone: (206) 439-3870

> **Children's Administration Hotline**
Call 1-866-ENDHARM (1-866-363-4276)
24 hours/seven days a week hotline that will connect you directly to the appropriate local office.

> You can also contact **Children's Administration Office of Constituent Relations** at 1-800-723-4831 to understand the formal complaint process.

Washington State Department of Social & Health Services
DSHS 22-1499 (1/13)

Understanding the Dependency Court Process

You have the right to:

- Be treated with respect
- Know what is happening with your case and your child
- Have your information kept confidential

You have a responsibility to:

- Participate in shared planning meetings about where you want your child to live
- Visit your child
- Let your social worker know of phone number and address changes
- Explain what you need to be a safe parent

Your role is to:

- Express your wishes for planning for your child
- Speak and be involved in your case plan

Important to know

At any point during the court process, a judge can decide that your child can be safely returned home. However, if you are unable to make the changes necessary to keep your child safe, you could lose the right to parent that child. Children's Administration will offer you supports and services to help you to avoid this outcome and reunify with your child.

Dependency Court Process Timeline

Please make sure you talk with your lawyer about your court hearings.

CPS Referral (Process begins here)	Child is placed into Protective Custody	Shelter Care Hearing (your child can be returned home after any of the listed court hearings)	Continued Shelter Care Hearing (in some courts)	Fact Finding Hearing (within 75 days of filing a Dependency Petition)	Disposition Hearing (within 90 days of filing a Dependency Petition)	First Dependency Review Hearing	Permanency Planning Hearing	Dependency Review Hearing (Ongoing every 6 months)
	72 Hr. Maximum		30 days	90 days		6 months	12 months	18 months
CPS receives a referral regarding abuse or neglect of a child. The referral is evaluated and either screened in for investigation or screened out. Child is removed from the home by CPS or law enforcement if it is believed necessary to protect the child from imminent harm.	Child is removed from your care and placed into out-of-home care either with a relative or foster home. A Shelter Care Hearing will be held within 72 hours of your child being removed from your home.	At this hearing you can ask that the court appoint you an attorney. A judge decides whether your child needs to remain in out-of-home care or can be safely returned to you. You can ask that your child stay with relatives rather than in a foster home. If your child will remain in care your social worker will set up a regular visitation plan.	The court again decides if your child will stay in out-of-home care or will be returned to you. The court reviews your visitation plan and where your child is living.	If you continue to object to the dependency, the court will take testimony from you and others about the identified child safety threats in the dependency petition. The court will either rule your child a dependent of the State or order that your child be returned to your care and dismiss the dependency or order your child safe enough to go home with an in-home dependency with court oversight.	If your child is declared a dependent, the court will order that you participate in services to reduce the safety threats in your home. The court will also address any placement or visitation issues at this hearing.	The court reviews your progress with services and considers if there are additional services that can strengthen your ability to provide a safe home for your child. The court might determine that it is now safe for your child to return home with an in-home dependency with court oversight.	The court decides what your child's permanent plan should be and also what your child's concurrent plan should be if you are unable to safely parent your child.	The court reviews your participation in services and if you have not made sufficient progress by this point, the court will order (in some cases) that the State file a petition to terminate your parental rights. If the termination petition is filed there will be a trial where your attorney and the State's attorney will present evidence on your case. A judge will decide whether or not to terminate your parental rights.

Shared Planning Meetings

Your involvement in all Children's Administration shared planning meetings is very important. You will help develop your family case plan to eliminate safety threats and create permanency goals for your child.

Family Team Decision Making (FTDM)

FTDM meetings occur throughout the life of a case. They bring together your family members and supports as well as involved professionals to make recommendations regarding your child's temporary and permanent placement.

Child Protection Teams (CPT)

Child Protection Teams include doctors, school personnel, mental health practitioners and other community professionals. Together these individuals provide confidential consultation and recommendations to Children's Administration regarding cases in which there is a risk of imminent harm to a child six years old and younger, or in which there is a dispute about the need for out-of-home placement.

Permanent and Concurrent Planning

In addition to working with you to reduce or eliminate safety threats, Children's Administration staff will work with you to develop case plan goals for your child's short term and long term care. Our first goal is to return your child to your care, but we must also have another (concurrent) plan if the case plan goals are not achieved.

Local Indian Child Welfare Advisory Committee (LICWAC)

If you or your child are identified as Native American or possibly Native American your case may be staffed by the Local Indian Child Welfare Advisory Committee. The LICWAC is a group of volunteers who staff and consult on CA cases when your Native American status has not yet been determined or when the child's tribe is unavailable.