



Contact Information

Use this sheet to record important names and contact information.

CP&P Caseworker

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

CP&P Supervisor

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

My Lawyer

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

My Child's Law Guardian

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

Other Social Workers/Treatment Professionals

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

NAME _____ CONTACT _____

Hearing Dates and Other Notes

Dear Parent,



This handbook was created by the Department of Children and Families to help families involved with Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) whose children have been placed in foster care. Families need to know why children have been removed from their parents' care, what to expect when this happens, and how and when their children can return home.

Because your child is now in placement, it is critically important for you to understand what will happen next, what you can expect from CP&P and the Family Court, and what they will expect of you.

This handbook was written to answer some of the questions that parents ask. It can help to guide the work we will face together in the coming months so that your children can return home safely. However, reading this handbook should not take the place of paying careful attention to the specific details, timelines, and requirements of your own unique family situation.

As difficult a time as this may be, it helps to know that CP&P's primary goal is to safely return children to their family as quickly as possible. **But time is very important!** By state and federal law, children cannot stay too long in foster care before CP&P is required to make sure they are living in a permanent home. Raising your child is the most important thing you can do. There will be challenges ahead, but you can meet those challenges successfully with help from CP&P and other supports. Take a deep breath, and remember that reading this handbook is a good way to start preparing for the things you need to do to bring your child back home.

There is a lot of information in this handbook. The table of contents on the next page will give you an idea of the kinds of questions answered in the handbook. There is also a page with definitions of some important terms that may not be clear to you. **There is very important resource information at the end of the book, including an appendix of all Inm CPI**

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Questions & Answers



Why does CP&P remove children from their homes?

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How does CP&P remove children from their parent's care?

There are two ways in which CP&P can remove children from their home:

1 with an order from the Family Court

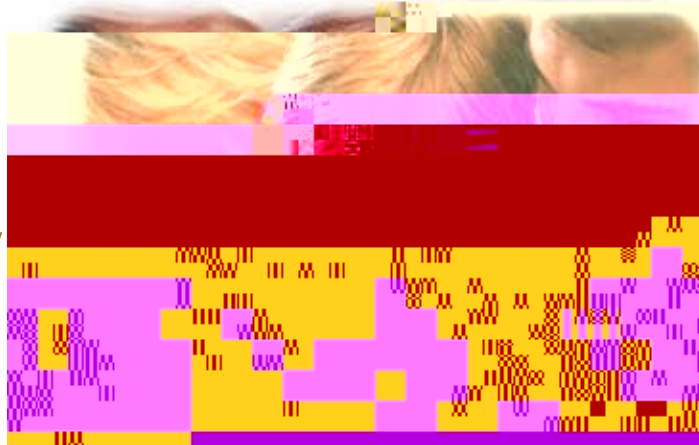
without a court order in situations of immediate (imminent) danger to the child

When CP&P believes your child's safety, health, or welfare is threatened, the caseworker must try to arrange a meeting with you, so that together you can work out a solution which does not require your child's removal from home. However, if this cannot be done, CP&P will file the legal papers called a Complaint and Order to S/r that together you

Questions & Answers

How can I help my child adjust to this new living arrangement?

The most important way you can help your child is by visiting him or her.



Your visiting plan will be decided during your meetings with your caseworker or by a judge in Family Court. **You CAN and SHOULD visit with your child as often as possible according to the plan.** Ask to attend medical appointments, school activities and meetings, and other important events in your child's life. Even though your child is not living with you, you have the right to make important decisions regarding his or her health and education.

The length, location, and circumstances of your visits will depend upon both your situation and your child's needs. Try not to let anger or discomfort with these arrangements keep you from visiting your child. If you must miss a visit, call before the scheduled time to explain why you can't make it, and ask to reschedule. Talk to your CP&P caseworker if you have questions or concerns about your visiting plan, or if you would like to make changes to it. If you cannot agree, ask to speak with the supervisor. Also, if you need transportation assistance in order to visit your child, your caseworker can help you get it. Remember that your child wants to see you and know that you care about him or her, so even if it's difficult, **KEEP VISITING!**

You can also help your child adjust by SHARING INFORMATION about their needs, likes, and dislikes.

It is important that the people caring for your child understand your child's personality, favorite foods, bedtime routine, special needs, and likes or dislikes.

This will help them make your child feel more comfortable and secure. Ask if you can talk to them directly either in person or on the phone or write down this information and give it to your caseworker. Foster parents are important not only in caring for your child, but in helping to achieve his or her return home. They have been trained to understand that this is one of their duties as a temporary caregiver for your child.

The Family Court

All the cases of children removed from their home by

Family Court Hearings

First Court Hearing (Order to Show Cause)

There will be a brief initial hearing called the “Return of the Order to Show Cause” either when CP&P has already removed your child on an emergency basis or when CP&P seeks to remove your child. You will be told about this hearing by the CP&P caseworker. At this hearing the judge will decide whether or not your child needs to remain in out-of-home placement. If you believe your child can be safe in your care, you should present that information to the judge. If the judge decides that your child cannot immediately return home safely, it is very important to suggest relatives and/or friends who could safely care for your child.

Discovery

After your first appearance in Family Court, the judge will order that information including assessments and evaluations of your family’s situation be provided to the court. This will help the judge decide if you have abused or neglected your children, and what would be the best temporary plan for them. Your lawyer is allowed to review the CP&P file, as well as all reports and evaluations.

Fact Finding Hearing

Once all reports have been provided to the court, a formal hearing is held to determine if the allegations (charges) made by CP&P are true. Lawyers for CP&P will present witnesses and documents to support their position, while your lawyer has the right to present your view and defend against what CP&P says. Your child’s Law Guardian will also make recommendations during the hearing, based on interviews with your child and an assessment of his or her needs.

The judge will consider all the evidence presented and make a decision regarding whether you have abused or neglected your child. If the judge finds that you abused or neglected your child, a Dispositional Hearing will be scheduled.

Dispositional Hearing

This hearing often takes place immediately following the Fact Finding Hearing. At this hearing the judge will order both you and CP&P to take certain actions to address the problems that the court believes caused the abuse or neglect of your child. This will likely include CP&P arranging for you to receive services which may include drug or alcohol treatment, family counseling, parenting skills classes or other services to help you resolve identified problems. If either you or CP&P does not agree with the judge’s order, an appeal can be made within 45 days.

Review Hearings

Understanding the Disease

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What is a “permanency goal?”

Every child needs to be raised by a parent who is committed to caring for him or her safely. Having a “permanency goal” helps achieve this for your child placed in foster care. Usually, the permanency goal will be reunification with you, your child’s parents. This means all efforts are directed towards making sure that your child will be returned to a safe and stable life at home. For the sake of a child’s healthy growth and development, this needs to happen as quickly as possible. Children should not stay in foster care for long periods of time. The lack of permanency in your child’s life can hurt his or her chance to grow up to become a secure, happy and confident adult. When a child is removed from home, we must all work together to make your home a safe, permanent place for your child to live as soon as possible.

Understanding the Case Plan and Family Meetings

The Case Plan is the plan of action that explains what must occur for your child to be returned safely to your care. It lists the steps that must be taken by both you and CP&P to fix the problem(s) that caused the removal of your child. The plan needs to be created and agreed upon both by you and CP&P

Reunification *bringing my child home*

The following issues should be covered at the Family Meeting following the placement of a child in foster care:

- ▶ Why did CP&P feel your child could not remain home safely?
- What will need to change before your child can safely return home?
- What type of services will be needed to bring this change about?
- Who are the relatives available to care for your child?
- What is an appropriate visitation plan in your situation?
- Does your child have any special needs and how will these be met?
- Who is your child's doctor, and does he or she have any pressing medical or educational issues that need follow-up?
- Does the family have a clear understanding of what **Concurrent Planning** means? (See definitions on Page 2.)
- When will the next Family Meeting be held?

In addition to the CP&P caseworker meeting with you on a regular basis, it is essential that you and those that support you participate at scheduled Family Meetings. If your worker does not offer this to you, ask if a Family Meeting can be scheduled.

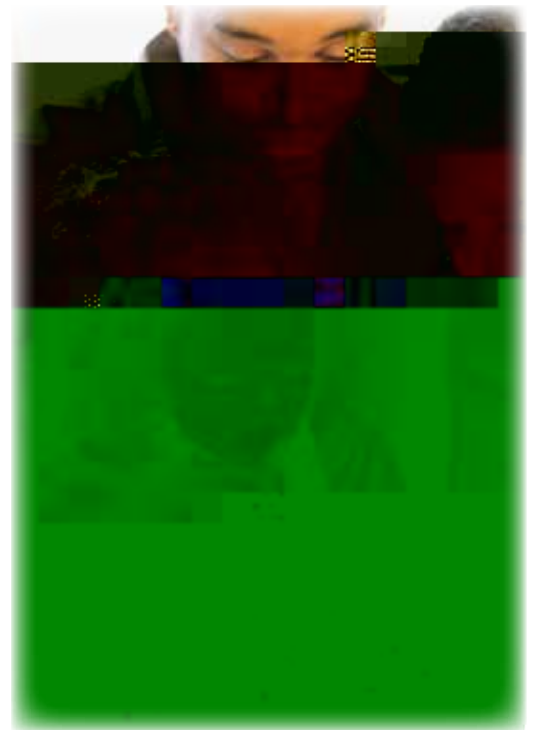
Preparing for your Family Meeting

How have you solved problems and gotten through difficult situations before? What parts of your personality can help you now in this situation?

Think honestly about what type of help you would need to solve the problems you face so that your child can return home safely.

Who are the friends and family members that you can trust and rely on? These are the people you will want to have helping you through this difficult time. You may also want to invite them to attend the Family Meetings.

It is essential that the Case Plan developed at the Family Meeting be clear and agreeable to you. It should represent your thoughts and solutions to the agreed upon problems. Both you and your CP&P caseworker will sign this plan. Because it represents a contract between you and CP&P, it is very important that you understand it before you agree to it.



When will CP&P recommend to the Family Court that my child can come home?

What if CP&P does not recommend that my child can come home?

The Permanency Hearing - usually held at the twelfth month after a child's removal from home - is a critical point in your child's case. The federal law says that if your child has been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months, CP&P must file a petition for Termination of Parental Rights. CP&P prepares a report for the court and will make one of the following recommendations:

It is safe for the child to return home.

You are making significant progress but need a few more months before the child can be returned home safely.

Alternative permanency goals such as adoption or kinship legal guardianship is needed.

What does "permanency" mean for a child who can't return home?

If the Family Court judge decides that your child cannot return home safely within the legal time frame, or shortly thereafter, the court will order CP&P to choose another permanency goal for him or her. Usually this is adoption, or if

When Reunification Cannot Be Achieved

What is the difference between Adoption and Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG)?

The choice between adoption and KLG as a permanency goal is always based on what appears best for an individual child in his unique family situation.

By law, KLG can only be considered if adoption is ruled out as a reasonable and achievable goal. Adoption is, in most instances, considered the best permanency goal as it provides the child with the most legal, emotional and financial security even when a child is living with relatives. In order for your child to be adopted, your parental rights must be terminated. The decision to file to terminate your legal rights to your child will be made by CP&P, not the relative caretaker.

Both adoption and KLG are legally permanent living situations where the adoptive parent or KLG caretaker agrees to raise a child to adulthood. Parental rights do not need to be terminated before a relative is granted Kinship Legal Guardianship (KLG). The legal guardian has control over contact with parents, as specified by the court, and assumes full responsibility for keeping the child safe. Unlike an adoption, the parent may go back to the Family Court to try and regain guardianship of their child or change the terms of the KLG agreement regarding visitation.

While both adoption and legal guardianship usually receive similar monthly subsidy payments from CP&P, adoption often provides the availability of social services to the child and family, while KLG is limited to the subsidy and New Jersey Medicaid. One of the most important differences in the two programs is that an adoptive parent may choose another person to raise the child in the event of the adoptive parents' death or disability. This person would continue to receive the monthly subsidy payments while caring for the child. The subsidy payments which a Kinship Legal Guardian receives cannot be transferred or given to another caregiver in the event of the illness or death of the guardian and it is likely that the child will

e involuntary termination of a parent's legal rights to their child is very serious and therefore CP&P must meet a high burden of proof.

What hearings will take place?

The type of hearings that take place are very similar to those you already experienced as a result of CP&P removing your child from your care. After the first hearing, called the *return date* for the *Order to Show Cause*, a period known as *discovery* will begin in which the judge will conduct his/her own review to determine if your parental rights should be terminated.

Throughout the discovery process, the judge will probably order you to have a psychological evaluation and, if needed, a psychiatric evaluation, and will review reports from any treatment in which you have participated. A bonding evaluation to see how emotionally attached your child is to you is likely to be arranged. A similar evaluation might be ordered for your child and the foster parents if they are interested in adopting. Your lawyer may want these evaluations done again by someone he or she recommends, so you will want to discuss this with your attorney.

What happens if the judge terminates my parental rights?

What happens if my child is adopted?



CP&P Local Offices, Courts and Law Guardians by County

Atlantic County

CP&P Atlantic East LO
1601 Atlantic Avenue
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
(800) 392-2655

CP&P Atlantic West LO
5218 Atlantic Avenue
Suite 104
Mays Landing, NJ 08330
(866) 816-9199

**Atlantic County Court
Family Division**
1201 Bacharach Blvd.
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
(609) 345-6700

Atlantic Law Guardian
Citicenter Building
1300 Atlantic Avenue
Mezzanine
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
(609) 441-3773

Bergen County

CP&P Bergen Central LO
240 Frisch Court
2nd Floor
Paramus, NJ 07652
(866) 224-1859

CP&P Bergen South LO
125 State Street
1st & 2nd Floors
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(800) 531-1096

**Bergen County Court
Family Division**
10 Main Street
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 527-2317

Bergen Law Guardian
60 State Street
3rd Floor
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 996-8065

Burlington County

CP&P Burlington East LO
Mount Laurel Corporate
10 Lucas Drive
Lumberton, NJ 08048
(866) 663-1331

CP&P Burlington West LO
200 Campbell Drive
Suite 200
Willingboro, NJ 08046
(800) 847-1753

**Burlington County Court
Family Division**
Courts Facility and County
Office Building
49 Rancocas Road
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
(609) 518-2645

Burlington Law Guardian
100 High Street
1st Floor, Suite 102
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
(609) 518-3068

Camden County

CP&P Camden Central LO
101 Haddon Avenue
4th and 5th Floors
Camden, NJ 08101
(800) 531-1091

CP&P Camden South LO
4 Echelon Plaza
201 Laurel Road
Voorhees, NJ 08043
(800) 982-7395

**Camden County Court
Family Division**
101 South 5th Street
Camden NJ, 08103
(856) 379-2204

Camden Law Guardian
20 East Clementon Road
Suite 301 North
Gibbsboro, NJ 08026
(856) 346-8008

CP&P Camden North LO
101 Haddon Avenue
3rd Floor
Camden, NJ 08101
(800) 982-7412

CP&P Camden East LO
4 Echelon Plaza
2nd Floor
201 Laurel Road
Voorhees, NJ 08043
(888) 576-9629

CP&P Local Offices, Courts and Law Guardians by County

Cape May County

CP&P Cape May LO
Court House Commons
Building B
601 Route 9 South
Cape May Court House NJ, 08210
(800) 531-1259

**Cape May Court
Family Division**
Cape May Court House
9 North Main Street
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 463-6611

Cape May Law Guardian
Citicenter Building
1300 Atlantic Avenue
Mezzanine
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
(609) 441-3773

Cumberland County

CP&P Cumberland East LO
415 Landis Avenue
1st Floor
Vineland, NJ 08360
(866) 816-1105

CP&P Cumberland West LO
40 East Broad Street
Suite 400
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
(800) 531-1228

**Cumberland County Court
Family Division**
Cumberland Courthouse
Broad and Fayette Streets
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
(856) 453-4534

Cumberland Law Guardian
14 East Commerce Street
3rd Floor
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
(856) 459-7350

Essex County

**CP&P Newark
Center City LO**
153 Halsey Street
3rd Floor
Newark, NJ 07101
(800) 392-9532

**CP&P Newark
Northeast LO**
153 Halsey Street
4th Floor
Newark, NJ 07101
(800) 392-9531

**CP&P Newark
South LO**
153 Halsey Street
4th Floor
Newark, NJ 07101
(800) 847-1751

**Essex County Court
Family Division**
Robert N. Wilentz Court
Complex
212 Washington Street
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 693-6600

**CP&P Essex
Central LO**
240 South Harrison Street
East Orange, NJ 07018
(800) 392-9535

**CP&P Essex
North LO**
650 Bloomfield Ave.
3rd Floor
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
(800) 392-9536

CP&P Essex South LO
50-58 Burnett Avenue
Maplewood, NJ 07040
(888) 670-6407

Essex Law Guardian
31 Clinton Street
2nd Floor
PO Box 46007
Newark, NJ 07101
(973) 648-4572

Newark Adoption Office
153 Halsey Street, 3rd Flr
Newark, NJ 07101
(800) 392-2843

Gloucester County

CP&P Gloucester East LO
309 Fries Mill Road
Echo Plaza Unit 10
Sewell, NJ 08080-9283
(866) 753-8124

CP&P Gloucester West LO
215 Crown Point Road
Lodi, NJ 08086
(800) 847-1741

**Gloucester County Court
Family Division**
2 South Broad Street
Facility, 3rd Floor
Woodbury, NJ 08096
(856) 686-7410

Gloucester Law Guardian
20 East Clementon Road
Suite 301 North
Gibbsboro, NJ 08026
(856) 346-8008

CP&P Hudson Central LO

438 Summit Avenue
4th Floor
Jersey City, NJ 07306
(800) 982-7397

CP&P Hudson North LO

Gateway Plaza 4th Floor
1 Harmon Meadow Blvd.
Secaucus, NJ 07094
(800) 982-7401

**Hudson County Court
Family Division**

Administration Building
595 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07306
(201) 795-6786

Hudson Law Guardian

60 State Street
3rd Floor
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 996-8065

CP&P Hudson South LO

690 Broadway
4th Floor
Bayonne, NJ 07002
(800) 982-7396

CP&P Hudson West LO

Gateway Plaza 5th Floor
1 Harmon Meadow Blvd.
Secaucus, NJ 07094
(888) 670-6406

CP&P Hunterdon LO

84 Park Avenue
1st Floor
Flemington, NJ 08822
(800) 392-2724

**Hunterdon County Court
Family Division**

65 Park Avenue
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 237-5880

Hunterdon Law Guardian

840 Bear Tavern Road
2nd Floor
Mountain View Office Park
Ewing, NJ 08628
(609) 530-3623

CP&P Mercer North LO

3131 Princeton Pike
2nd Fleet
(800) 392-7401
Family Division
2nd Fleet
(609) 420-5880
840 Bear Tavern Road

Ewing, NJ 08628
(609) 530-3623

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CP&P Local Offices, Courts and Law Guardians by County

Monmouth County

CP&P Monmouth North LO
Monmouth Park
Corporate Center 1
185 Route 36 West, Bldg. E
West Long Branch, NJ 07764
(800) 392-9511

CP&P Monmouth South LO
630 Bangs Avenue
Asbury Park, NJ 07712
(800) 392-9512

**Monmouth County Court
Family Division**
71 Monument Park
P. O. Box 1266
Freehold, NJ 07728
(732) 677-4348

Monmouth Law Guardian
630 Bangs Avenue
3rd Floor
Asbury Park, NJ 07728
(732) 869-2268

Morris County

CP&P Morris East LO
Mack-Cali Corporate Center
201 Littleton Road
Lower Level
Morristown, NJ 07960
(800) 688-3890

CP&P Morris West LO
855 Route 10 East
Randolph, NJ 07869
(800) 392-9518

**Morris County Court
Family Division**
Washington & Court Streets
Morristown, NJ 07963
(973) 656-4340

Morris Law Guardian
7 Sussex Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960
(973) 451-5630

Ocean County

CP&P Ocean North LO
1215 Route 70 West
Lakewood, NJ 08701
(866) 544-9197

CP&P Ocean South LO
1510 Hooper Avenue
Suite 210
Toms River, NJ 08753
(800) 442-6232

**Ocean County Court
Family Division**
Justice Complex
120 Hooper Ave.
2nd Floor
Toms River, NJ 08753
(732) 929-2037

Ocean Law Guardian
630 Bangs Avenue
3rd Floor
Asbury Park, NJ 07728
(732) 869-2268

Passaic County

CP&P Passaic Central LO
22 Mill Street, 3rd Floor
Paterson, NJ 07501
(800) 531-1260

CP&P Passaic North LO
100 Hamilton Plaza
11th Floor
Paterson, NJ 07505
(800) 847-1743

**Passaic County Court
Family Division**
Administration Building
401 Grand Street
Paterson, NJ 07505
(973) 247-8459

Passaic Law Guardian
66 Hamilton Street
5th Floor
Paterson, NJ 07505
(973) 977-4185

Salem County

CP&P Salem LO
199 East Broadway
2nd Floor
Salem, NJ 08079
(800) 531-1263

**Salem County Court
Family Division**
92 Market Street
Salem, NJ 08079
(856) 935-7510

Salem Law Guardian
20 East Clementon Road
Suite 301 North
Gibbsboro, NJ 08026
(856) 346-8008

CP&P Somerset LO
92 East Main Street
Suite 101
Somerville, NJ 08876
(800) 392-2734

**Somerset County Court
Family Division**
20 North Bridge Street
P.O. Box 3000
Somerville, NJ 08876
(908) 231-7000

Somerset Law Guardian
75 Veterans Memorial Drive East
Suite 203
Somerville, NJ 08876
(908) 575-3200

CP&P Sussex LO
20 East Clinton Street
Newton, NJ 07860
(800) 392-2654

**Sussex County Court
Family Division**
43-47 High Street
Newton, NJ 07860
(973) 579-0675

Sussex Law Guardian
20 East Clinton Street
Newton, NJ 07860
(973) 383-5002

CP&P Union Central LO
570 South Avenue East
Cranford, NJ 07016
(866) 224-1914

**Union County Court
Family Division**
Courthouse Annex

CP&P Union East LO
80 West Grand Street
Elizabeth, NJ 07202
(800) 847-1738



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