



Easy Read guide

NSW Department of
Communities and Justice

Helping children
stay safe at home



How to use this guide



The NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means the NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 38.



This Easy Read guide is a summary of a booklet.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.

You can find the booklet on our website.



www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/helping-children-stay-safe-at-home.html



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.



This guide includes photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It might contain photos of people who have passed away.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land we live on – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:

- land
- waters.



This guide is quite long.

It includes a lot of information.



You don't need to read it all at once.

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What is this guide about?



We deliver **child protection services**.



This means we work with families and communities to make sure children are safe.

We can decide if a child is not safe in their home.

We always aim to:



- keep your child safely at home with you



- treat families and communities with respect



- work with you and your community to build skills and knowledge.

We also aim to:



- be honest



- listen to your ideas and respond when you ask for help



- connect you to supports.



This guide is about how we work with you to keep your child safe at home.

We explain how we:



- check that your child will be safe in the future



- work with you to create a plan to keep your child safe.



We also explain how we will support you.

How do we decide how safe your child is?

Our **caseworkers** can support you to:



- care for your child



- live safely.



They visit your family to check if your child is safe.



Your caseworker can ask you questions to learn about your family's life.



They also want to learn about your child's life.

For example, how they see the world.

Doing a safety assessment



The caseworkers will visit your family to check if your child is safe right now.

We call this a 'safety assessment'.



The caseworkers will decide if your child is:

- safe
- needs a plan to help them be safe
- isn't safe.



If your child needs a plan to keep them safe, they'll work with you to create a safety plan.



This is a short-term plan to help keep your child in your home.



After the safety assessment, the caseworkers will check if it's likely that your child could get hurt in the future.

We call this a 'family based assessment'.



A caseworker will do a family based assessment within 30 days after they visit your family.



Different caseworkers might do your:

- safety assessment
- family based assessment.

Doing a family based assessment



The caseworkers will check if we've worked with you before.



They might check whether you use drugs and alcohol:

- now
- in the past.



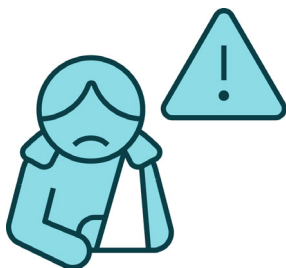
They'll also check how your mental health has been.



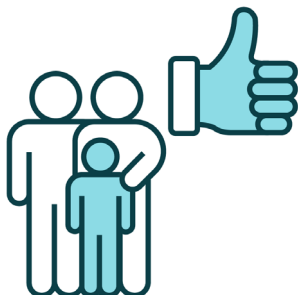
And they'll think about if you or your child have experienced violence or harm from:

- family members
- people in your home.

They'll also check:



- what things are happening right now that could hurt your child



- what is going well for your family.

Creating a plan to keep your child safe



If your child is at risk of getting hurt in the future, we'll work with you to create a plan.

We call it the 'Family Action Plan for Change'.

In this document, we call it the Plan for Change.



This is a longer-term plan than the safety plan.



The Plan for Change includes worries.

These are things the caseworkers are worried could hurt your child.



It also includes goals.

Your goals show what will be different for you and your child once the worries change.



The Plan for Change has actions.

Your actions are what you'll do to reach your goals with support.



The Plan for Change also has what other people will do to support you.

This includes:



- what actions they will do
- who will do those actions
- when they will do those actions.

Getting your family to take part

The caseworkers might ask if you want to take part in a meeting with:



- your family members
- the people who care about you and your child.

We call this meeting a ‘Family Group Conference.’



These meetings can be a good way to think about what everyone needs to do to keep your child safe.



You can ask for one of these meetings even if the caseworker doesn’t suggest one.

Creating the goals for the Plan for Change



When you create your goals, think about what a happy and healthy life would look like for:

- you
- your child.



Families can face issues that are hard or painful to deal with.

It's important to have other people around you to support you with the Plan for Change.



Your goals shouldn't be too big.

Be clear about:



- what your goals are



- what it will look like when you meet a goal



- what you and other people need to do to meet your goals.

You should also be clear about:

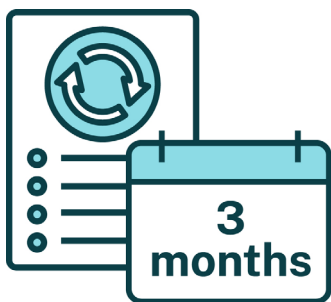


- who is going to help you and why



- how they can work to keep your child safe.

Following the Plan for Change



The Plan for Change will last for 3 months.
That will give you time to work on your goals.



In those 3 months, you and a caseworker
will talk about your Plan for Change often.
You can change your goals if you need to.



You will update the Plan for Change each time
you do an action.
You'll keep updating the Plan for Change with
your caseworker until you reach the goal.



In 3 months, a caseworker will visit your
home again to see if the risk has gone down.



If the risk is still too high, you and your caseworker will work to update the Plan for Change for another 3 months.

Your caseworker will stop working with your family if:



- you've reached the goals in the Plan for Change

and



- you have made enough changes to keep your child safe in the future.

Your caseworker will also stop working with your family if:



- you and your supports are working well together on the Plan for Change

and



- we do not need to help with the Plan for Change anymore.



We also call this ‘closing the case’.

If the Plan for Change is too hard

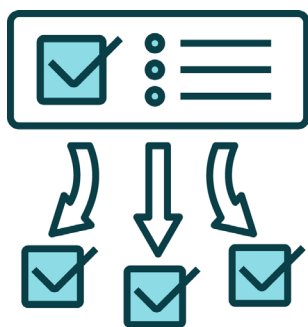
Talk to your caseworker if:



- the Plan for Change is too hard



- it's not helping.



The goals can feel big.

You can break down what you have to do into small actions.



Your caseworker will help you to do this.

You can also ask for easier goals.



It's good to be honest about how you feel so you can get the support you need.



Make sure to get lots of help from the people who care about you and your child.



Tell your caseworker if you don't have someone who can support you.

They can connect you to services and people who can help.



You can also visit our website for a list of supports.

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

If you aren't happy with your caseworker



You might not be happy about the way the Plan for Change has been made.



Or you might feel like your caseworker isn't listening to you.



You can contact their manager at your local Community Services Centre.



You can contact one of the legal services on page 32.

How your caseworker can help you



You can ask your caseworker for support.

It's their job to help:

- you and your family
- your community.



Their job is to support you so you can make sure your child is safe.



They also need to meet **standards** about how they support you and your child.

Standards are rules about how to do things well.

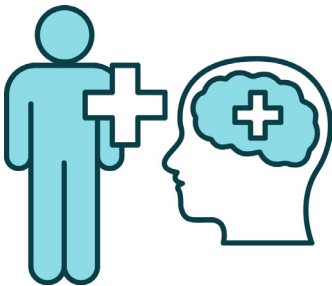
Your caseworker can support you with things like:



- housing and food



- managing drugs and alcohol



- health issues and mental health



- disability supports for you or your child.



Your caseworker can also help if you or your child have experienced violence from:

- family members
- people in your home.

How caseworkers should treat you



Caseworkers should always:

- listen to you
- treat you with respect.



They should ask you what's happening in your life.

And what you're worried about.



They should do things to support your child.

For example:

- taking them to activities
- organising services to support them.



Caseworkers should talk to your child about their life.

They should also connect your child to family and community that make them feel safe.

Caseworkers understand many issues like:



- grief



- violence



- mental health.



They can give you advice and support about these issues.



They can also offer support and services for people with disability.



They will ask you if there are things they can do to help.

And tell you about ways to build skills.



Caseworkers can help you contact services.

For example, by calling them or going with you to your first visits.



They can make sure the service is the right choice for you and your family.



They will:

- explain why they chose the service
- listen to what you have to say about if the service is right for you.

Connecting you to services



Caseworkers can connect you to services in your area.

For example, they can support you with:



- getting healthy food



- making and going to appointments



- organising someone to clean or fix your home.



They can help you with applying for:

- housing
- disability supports.

They can support you with:



- getting transport to where you need to go



- organising your money



- finding and using financial support.



You can get support from these services:

- online
- over the phone
- in person.



Your caseworker can help you if you don't have a phone or computer you can use.

There might be places in your local area with a phone or computer you can use, like a library.



You can visit our website for more information about services you contact.

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/support-services.html

Legal services

Aboriginal Legal Service



You can contact the Aboriginal Legal Service for legal advice.



You can call them.

1800 733 233



You can visit their website.

www.alsnswact.org.au

Legal Aid NSW



You can contact Legal Aid NSW for legal advice.



You can call them.

1300 888 529



You can visit their website.

www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Women's Legal Service



You can contact the Women's Legal Service for legal advice.



You can call them.

1800 801 501



You can visit their website.

www.wlsnsw.org.au

Disability Advocacy NSW



You can contact Disability Advocacy NSW for support to speak up for yourself.



You can call them.

1300 365 085



You can visit their website.

www.da.org.au

Intellectual Disability Rights Service



You can contact the Intellectual Disability Rights Service for support:

- to speak up for yourself
- if you have an **intellectual disability**.



An intellectual disability affects how you:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



You can call them.

02 9265 6300



You can visit their website.

www.idrs.org.au

Contact us

Asking for help can show that you:



- are a strong parent



- want your child to be safe.



If you want support, you can visit our website.

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

Your caseworker



You can also contact your caseworker for information about how to get support.

You can write their contact details below.



Your caseworker's name:



Your caseworker's phone number:



Your caseworker's email address:

Your local Community Services Centre



You can contact your local Community Services Centre for information about how to get support.

You can write their phone number below.

Make a complaint about our services



When you make a **complaint**, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.



If you want to make a complaint about our services, you can contact the Enquiry, Feedback and Complaints Unit.



You can call them.

1800 000 164



You can also send them an email.

complaints@facs.nsw.gov.au

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this guide mean.



Caseworkers

Our caseworkers can support you to:

- care for your child
- live safely.



Child protection services

Child protection services work with families and communities to make sure children are safe.

They can decide if a child is not safe in their home.



Complaint

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.



Intellectual disability

An intellectual disability affects how you:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



Standards

Standards are rules about how to do things well.



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