DHS
Philadelphia Department of Human Services

We make a difference in the lives of Philadelphia's children and families.

PARENT HANDBOOK

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT

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DHS Philadelphia Department of Human Services

1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215-683-4DHS
www.phila.gov/dhs

Dear Parent,

As a parent with a child in placement, we know you have lots of questions. This handbook was developed to help walk you through the process that will occur in the coming months. While we hope this book is helpful, please remember that every case is different and it is important to pay careful attention to the specific details, timelines, and requirements of your own unique situation.

Talking with your case manager and the other professionals helping your family is very important! If you have questions about your case that are not answered in this handbook, please contact your case manager or lawyer. This book contains a page where you can record the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your case managers and lawyers. You will also find a list of other important phone numbers and helpful information.

This handbook contains a lot of information. You may want to read some now, and come back to others later. Take a deep breath, and remember that reading this handbook is a good way to start preparing for the steps you will need to take to bring your child back home.

DHS' primary goal is to ensure that children are returned to their families in a timely manner whenever possible. As a parent, you will be asked to take some important steps to make this happen. But you are not alone. There are many resources and support services available to help you.

An Overview of Child Welfare in Philadelphia

In Philadelphia, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency; ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments; and strengthening and preserving families.

We accomplish our mission through a community-based service delivery model called Improving Outcomes for Children (IOC). In this model, case management services for children are delivered by local providers called Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs). Throughout Philadelphia, there are 10 neighborhood CUAs, which are designated by police district. A map of the CUAs and their contact information can be found on pages 22–23.

Through the CUAs, IOC ensures that children not only receive services in their own neighborhood whenever possible, but that families have a single case point of contact (the CUA Case Manager) that coordinates all of the services they receive. IOC also has a strong focus on Family Teaming, which ensures that the child, the family and other caring adults are actively involved in planning and decision making.

Thus, while DHS is responsible for investigating reports of abuse and neglect and removing children from unsafe situations, once your child enters placement, you will work directly with the CUA Case Manager to take the steps necessary to reunify your family.

Questions and Answers

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DHS Involvement

Why does DHS remove children from their homes?

DHS removes children from their homes ONLY when there is serious concern about their safety. Most often, this concern stems from neglect (where a child's basic needs are not being met) or abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional). But emergencies like sickness, injury, or death of the child's parents or caregivers may also require that a child be placed outside the home.

DHS is required by law to:

- Investigate all reports of child abuse and neglect.
- Provide services that will keep a family together whenever possible.
- Remove a child from his or her home ONLY when it is absolutely necessary to protect the child's welfare, safety, or health.

How does DHS remove children from their homes?

Children are only removed from their homes when DHS gets an emergency order for placement from Family Court.

When your child is removed by an emergency order for placement, the next thing you will need to do is attend a Shelter Care Hearing (explained on page 7). You will also need to stay in regular contact with DHS for a series of meetings to plan for your child's safe return home.

How does DHS decide where to place my child?

You have an important role in helping DHS decide where to place your child. When possible, DHS will try to place your child with a family member or good friend who knows your child and family really well. You will want to talk to your child's CUA Case Manager about potential living arrangements with friends or family members. The case manager will need the names, addresses and phone numbers of friends or family members who are willing to be evaluated as placement possibilities.

It may not always be possible for your child to be placed with someone he or she knows. If that can't happen, your child will most likely be living with a foster family (also known as a resource home). In some cases, though, a child's special needs may require a more structured environment, such as a treatment foster home, group home or residential treatment center. Whenever possible, DHS will try very hard to place your child somewhere that is close to your home, his or her school, medical providers, and other significant community ties. DHS will also always try to place siblings together.

Your case manager will tell you exactly where your child is (unless the Court orders DHS not to in the best interests of his or her safety). You will also be given the contact information of the agency directly responsible for overseeing your child's care and setting up visits.

Children will do best living with people they already know. Make sure to talk to your social worker about family members and/or close family friends who might be willing to care for your child.

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

You can help your child adjust by VISITING:

Your visiting plan will usually be decided during your conferences with DHS and a CUA Case Manager or by a judge in Family Court. You CAN and SHOULD visit with your child as often as possible according to the plan. You should also try to attend medical appointments, school activities and meetings, and other important events in your child's life. Depending on your circumstances, you may be limited as to when and where your visits will occur and you may be supervised during these visits. 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 CUA Case Manager if you have questions or concerns about your visiting plan, or if you would like to make changes to it. Also, if you need transportation assistance in order to visit your child, your CUA worker can help you get it.

You can help your child adjust by COMMUNICATING:

It is important to talk with the people directly caring for your child. Call and talk to them about your child's personality, favorite foods, bedtime routine, and any other special needs, likes, or dislikes that will help them make your child feel more comfortable and secure.

Who will be working with my Family?

When your child enters placement, you will begin working with a number of different people. As previously noted, however, your main point of contact is your CUA Case Manager. The CUA Case Manager sets up and organizes planning meetings, and checks in with the other professionals working with your family. He or she also visits your home to help you get any services you may need, attends court hearings and sets up a visitation schedule.

The CUA Case Manager also arranges for your child's placement in a foster home or alternate setting, and regularly checks in to see how your child is doing there.

If at any time you are unsure about who your CUA Case Manager is or if you don't know how to get in touch with him or her, call your local CUA (a CUA map and contact information is available on pages 22–23).

Other people who will be working with your family include:

- Lawyers: You will have a lawyer, and your child will have a lawyer. Lawyers are also sometimes called 'advocates', 'attorneys', or 'counsel'.
- Judges: The judges from Family Court will be making decisions during court hearings about your child and family.
- Resource parents: People who have been trained and qualified to care for children who are removed from their homes. If your child has been placed by DHS into the care of a relative, this is called Kinship Foster Care.

Family Court

Why do I need to go to court?

You need to go to all court hearings because a judge will be making decisions about your family and you have the right to tell the judge your point of view. It is very important that you attend ALL of the hearings in Family Court. If you miss a hearing, decisions will still be made about your family but the judge may only hear from your CUA Case Manager, the DHS lawyer and the lawyer appointed to represent your child (called a Child Advocate). Your lawyer may not be able to represent you in court if you do not come to court every time you have a hearing. During the time you are involved with DHS, you will need to attend several court hearings. Each hearing has a specific purpose.

At Family Court hearings, you have the right to be represented by a lawyer, to testify, to call and cross-examine witnesses, and to present evidence for your case. Your lawyer will talk to you about this, and will help you to do these things.

How do I get a lawyer?

A lawyer will automatically be appointed to represent you in court if you cannot afford one. You may also choose to pay to have the lawyer of your choice represent you in court. If you are the non-custodial parent, you also have the right to a court-appointed lawyer, but in this case, you must ask the judge to appoint a lawyer for you when you come to your child's first hearing.

To find out who your court appointed lawyer is, call Court Operations at 215-686-4028. To get legal advice about any problems you are having, check page 21 for a list of numbers to call.

What happens at Family Court Hearings?

The following is a quick overview of the hearings you will most likely need to attend and the timeline they will likely follow. This should not replace your careful attention to the specific dates and timelines of your own case. You will be notified of every hearing you need to attend by both DHS and Family Court. The information presented in this section is designed to help prepare you for your hearings in Family Court.

Shelter Care Hearing

When an emergency order for placement was issued to remove your child from your home, the first hearing you will attend is a Shelter Care Hearing (which must be held within 72 hours of the emergency order being issued by the judge). At this hearing, the judge will decide whether or not your child needs to remain in placement until the next hearing (the Adjudicatory Hearing) is held.

- If the judge decides that your child does not need to remain in placement until the next hearing, your child will be returned home. Your family may continue to be supervised by a CUA Case Manager.
- If the judge decides that your child must remain in placement until the next hearing, your child will not come home. The next hearing you will need to attend is an Adjudicatory Hearing (which will be held within 10 days of the Shelter Care Hearing).

Pre-Hearing Conference:
There will be a 30-minute pre-hearing meeting of the parties in your case, which is usually scheduled on the same day as the Adjudicatory Hearing. You will need to attend this conference to prepare for the Adjudicatory Hearing. The conference begins promptly at a specific time before the hearing, after which all parties will go directly to the assigned courtroom.

Adjudicatory (Fact-Finding) Hearing:
Before the Adjudicatory Hearing, DHS will file a petition with the court that details why your child was removed from your home (these are called allegations). The purpose of this hearing is to find out whether the allegations in the petition are supported by the facts of the case.

- If the judge decides that the allegations are not true, your child will be returned home and the case will be closed.
- If the judge decides that some or all of the allegations are true, the judge will then decide who should take care of your child until the next hearing. The judge might decide to return your child home with you at that time, or might set a future date when that can happen. The judge might also award temporary legal custody to a relative, close family friend, or foster parent. After this decision is made, the next hearing you will attend is a Permanency Hearing (See page 11 for more information about the Permanency Hearing).

If a parent or caretaker is incarcerated, he or she will be appointed a lawyer by the court and still has the right to participate in court hearings and team planning meetings. In these cases, the incarcerated parent or caretaker should ask the CUA Case Manager or lawyer to request a "bring down" order or asked to be allowed to participate by phone. DHS has the ability to video-conference with parents incarcerated in Philadelphia so that they can participate in important meetings about their family. If you are incarcerated, be sure to ask your case manager about video-conference meetings.

PLEASE NOTE:

- You will need to attend court hearings on an ongoing basis. You should always know the date of your next hearing, which is set at the end of each hearing. If you cannot remember your next court date, call your CUA Case Manager, your lawyer or Court Operations at 215-686-4028 and ask for an update.
- You should receive written notice of every court hearing you need to attend, and you should receive copies of any petitions filed with the court regarding your case. You will receive a copy of the court order at the end of the hearing. It includes your next court date.
- During your involvement with DHS and Family Court, you will be asked to sign many different documents. It is important to carefully read and understand any piece of paper you are asked to sign. If you don't understand something you are asked to sign, ask your lawyer to explain it to you.

- Tell your Case Manager right away if your address changes, so that you will receive all important letters and documents in a timely manner.

If you have questions about your case in Family Court, call your lawyer. Tell your CUA Case Manager and the Family Court judge if your lawyer is not returning your calls.

Permanency

What is permanency?

Foster care is meant to be temporary, permanency means children must not stay in foster care for too long. Children need to feel safe and loved. Being removed from home and staying in foster care for a long time are major disruptions that can make a child feel unsafe and unloved. This can hurt his or her chance to grow up to become a secure, happy and confident adult. Thus, DHS strives to ensure all children have permanent, stable homes. Permanency means a lifelong home for your child. DHS' hope is that your child's lifelong home can be yours. But, if too much time passes, DHS has to make a different plan for a lifelong home for your child.

In order to ensure that children do not spend excessive amounts of time in foster care, work on that alternate plan will begin as soon as the child comes into placement and will continue at the same time that work on the primary reunification goal is occurring. This is called concurrent planning. As a result, you should expect that the court will ask about the progress toward the concurrent goal during hearings in addition to asking about progress toward the primary goal. Even if your child is unable to return to your home, you can play an instrumental role in making sure they have a nurturing and stable lifelong home by, among other things, suggesting relatives who might be willing to provide a permanent home.

What are the permanency goals for children?

DHS has three primary permanency goals for children:

- **Reunification:** DHS' primary goal is to make sure that children are returned home to live with their families as quickly as possible, whenever possible. When a child goes home to his or her family, this is called reunification.
- **Adoption:** If a child cannot be returned home, the next most permanent plan is for that child to be adopted by a qualified and loving family. For a child to be adopted, parental rights must first be terminated.
- **Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC):** If there is a good reason why parental rights should not be terminated, Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC) may be considered. PLC makes another person—often a family member—the child's legal custodian.

While the above goals represent the most desirable forms of permanency for children, the law also allows for two other options.

- **Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative:** The law also provides a way for relatives providing kinship care to become the child's permanent home without adopting or becoming a permanent legal custodian. This is known as "placement with a fit and willing relative." However, in most instances, formalizing the relative

caregiver's permanent commitment to the child through adoption or PLC is preferable because it provides a higher level of legal and emotional stability for the child or youth.

- **Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA):** Federal law also allows DHS and the courts to develop other permanency plans for some children that do not fit into any of the above categories. This is known as Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). However, this rarely represents the highest level of legal or emotional security or stability for a child, and is not an option likely to be considered in most children's cases. APPLA cannot be used for any child under 16 years of age.

Reunification

What does permanency mean when the goal is for a child to return home?

Reunification is the first permanency goal for children in DHS care. This means we are working to make sure that a child will be returned to a safe and stable life at home with his or her parents or primary caregivers. For the sake of a child's healthy growth and development, this needs to happen as quickly as possible. When a child is removed from his or her home, we must all work together to make your home a safe, stable, and permanent place for your child to live as soon as possible.

What is a Single Case Plan (SCP)?

The Single Case Plan (SCP) tells you what you need to do to have your child returned to your care. The SCP also tells you what your CUA Case Manager and other professionals need to do to help you reach your goals. It is created during a team planning meeting.

The first team planning meeting will be held within 30 days of when your child is placed. You will be notified of the date, time, and location by DHS. You are encouraged to bring family members and other people who support you to these meetings if they will be helpful during this process.

During these meetings, you will discuss the strengths and needs of your family. You may feel like you are being asked a lot of questions, but the answers to these questions will help the CUA Case Manager and lawyers understand how they can help you get your child back home. In addition, it is a good idea for you to ask questions if you do not understand something discussed during the meetings.

After the first team planning meeting, the next meetings are scheduled every three months (and more often if necessary). If the plan is not working for you or you are having trouble getting the services you need, you should ask for another meeting. The purpose of these meetings is to see how your child is doing and to follow up on the work you have done to reach the goals of the Single Case Plan.

There is a time limit for returning a child home. Reading this section will prepare you for the things you need to do to have your child returned home. However, it is not always possible for every child to be returned home.
See page 13 for an explanation of the time limit and the alternatives to reunification.

What can I do to prepare for Family Team Conference?

Because your participation at these meetings is so important, you should prepare for them. Here are some key things you can do to prepare:

Identify your strengths
You've solved problems in your life before. How? Think about the strengths of your personality that have helped you get through life thus far, and how you can build on them.

Identify your needs
Think honestly about the kind of help you will need to work out whatever problems or obstacles you may be facing. Needs might include education and job training, transportation, housing assistance, counseling, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, parenting support groups, health care, child care assistance, or temporary shelter from abuse.

Identify your "support network"
Think about the friends and family members who you can trust and rely on. These will be the kinds of people you will want to have helping you through this difficult time. You may also want to invite them to attend the meetings with you.

Write It down
During this time of preparation, you will probably come up with important information to share with your lawyer and case manager. You may also come up with questions to ask at the meetings. Writing this information down will prevent you from forgetting anything if you become distracted during the meetings.

What happens in Family Court during the planning process?

If your child remains in placement for three months, you will need to attend a Permanency Hearing. The purpose of a Permanency Hearing is to review the Single Case Plan and the progress you have made, as well as what your case manager and other professionals have done to help you. These hearings are held every three months and you and your case manager will need to show the judge that steps have been taken to resolve the problems which caused your child to be removed from your home.

What if I am a single parent?

DHS and the CUA have the responsibility to work with BOTH of your child's parents. If only one parent has custody of the child, every effort will be made to include the non-custodial parent in the planning process. The non-custodial parent has parental rights and his or her family may be a valuable resource for your child. You must help to locate the other parent of your child. If you do not know where the other parent is, efforts to locate the parent can include use of the Parent Locator Service, and searches through Voter Registration records, Driver's License records, and the Department of Public Assistance.

If your child's other parent is violent and poses a threat to you, tell your CUA Case Manager, your lawyer, and the judge. You can arrange to have separate meetings, although not separate court hearings. Also, your address and phone number can be kept confidential from the other parent and his or her family.

Every parent experiences stress and challenges when raising a child, and every parent needs help from time to time. You know best what kind of help will really work for you. Talk about this with your lawyers and case manager at the meetings.

When is a recommendation made to Family Court that a child should return home?

The CUA Case Manager and DHS attorney will recommend that a child should be returned home when they have determined that the child will be safely cared for at home. When making this decision, the child advocate, the parents' attorney and Family Court will consider whether the following conditions are met:

- The goal for your child is to return home (as decided by a judge at Family Court).
- You can show that you have made progress towards resolving the problem that caused your child to be removed from your home (this may include submitting papers, letters, and/or certificates issued to you by the agencies that provided you with support services).
- Sometimes all of the people involved (parents, children, the CUA Case Manager, lawyers and judges) will agree that your child should be returned home, but sometimes they won't agree. This may affect whether your child will be returned home, as well as when your child will be returned home. **When everyone involved does not agree, the judge will need to listen to the different points of view and make a decision at the next scheduled Permanency Hearing.**

At this hearing, the judge will make one of four decisions:

1. That your child should go home, and that his or her case should be completely discharged from Family Court.
2. That your child should be returned home, but with continued court and DHS supervision. If the judge makes this decision, your child will come home. However, you will need to continue to work with the case workers and attend future hearings at Family Court until the judge feels your child is safe without supervision and discharges the case. At these hearings, the judge will ask about the safety and stability of your home since your child was returned.
3. That your child should not be returned home. If the judge makes this decision, then your child will remain in his or her placement and you will need to continue to work on the problems which caused your child to be removed from your home.
4. That your child can return home prior to the next court date if all parties agree.

It is very important that you try to work as a team with your child's case workers. Their job is to explain the Single Case Plan to you and help you do the things required to get your child back home with you.

Will my family still receive services if my child comes home?

Whenever a child is about to be returned home, everyone involved with his or her family will be asked to meet in order to create an 'aftercare' plan. During this meeting, the needs of the family—including finan-

cial, emotional, medical, educational, and social need—will be discussed. The 'after-care' plan will include recommendations for future services to be provided to the family which will meet those needs.

Whether your case is officially closed with Family Court, or whether you are still attending Family Court hearings—the CUA is there to support your family as you welcome your child back home.

Alternatives to Reunification

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

DHS recognizes that the best place for a child is almost always with his or her parents or primary caregivers. However, sometimes it is not possible to return a child home. Our commitment to permanency means we must make sure every child permanently lives with a family who is committed to providing love, support, and stability during childhood and beyond.

DHS has to follow a federal law which gives a certain time limit for finding permanent homes for children. If the time limit is not met, a child might not be able to return home. This section will give you more information about the alternatives to reunification.

What does the law say? How does the time limit affect me?

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) is a federal law intended to shorten the amount of time that children spend in foster care. It does this by setting a time limit on how long it can take to return them to their families, move them towards adoption, or find another permanent plan for them. The ASFA time limit says that if a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent last 22 months, DHS must ask the court to take away ("terminate") parental rights and find a qualified family to adopt the child. There are also other reasons why parental rights might be terminated before 15 months. (Note: There are EXCEPTIONS to this time limit. See page 14 for an explanation of these exceptions.)

To make sure your child can come home within this time, it is important to start working immediately on changing the circumstances that caused your child to enter placement.

Why would parental rights be terminated?

DHS may file a petition to terminate parental rights to give a child the opportunity to be adopted. Parental rights might be terminated for one of several reasons:

- The parent has failed to show that he or she is working on the problem that caused the child to be removed from the home;
- The parent has abandoned the child, or stopped regularly visiting or financially supporting the child (depending on the parent's resources);
- The child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.

There are also several other reasons a judge might terminate parental rights.

- If DHS has filed a petition to terminate your parental rights, you must be person-

ally served a copy of the petition. You should review and discuss the petition with your lawyer in order to prepare for the court hearing that will follow.

- You might also agree to the termination of your parental rights, if you feel it would give your child the best opportunity to grow up in a stable home. When you agree to the termination of your parental rights, it is called 'voluntary relinquishment' (see page 15 for more information about this).

What are "aggravated circumstances"?

Aggravated circumstances are serious situations within a family that might cause a judge to decide that DHS does not have to provide the parent with services they need to have a child returned home. Aggravated circumstances include cases where a parent has seriously abused the child, abandoned or stopped visiting with the child, committed a serious crime against any child, or involuntarily lost parental rights to another child in the past.

If any of these circumstances exist in your situation, the law says DHS must bring them to the judge's attention. The judge must decide if they are true. If so, the judge must also decide whether they are so bad that DHS should stop trying to return your child home.

What are the exceptions to the time limit?

There are three exceptions to the rule that a petition to terminate parental rights must be filed if the child has been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. They include:

1. If the child is being cared for by a relative.
2. If there is a good reason why ending the parents' rights is not in the best interest of the child.
3. If the child's family has not been provided the services they need to achieve safe return to the home within the timeframes set in the Single Case Plan.

If any of these exceptions apply, they will be considered by the judge when making decisions about whether to terminate your parental rights or whether to place your child in another permanent arrangement.

If my parental rights are terminated and my child is adopted, can I still see my child?

The law does allow for post-adoption visits or other contact if both you and the adoptive parent agree. The judge would also have to agree that post-adoption contact with you is in the best interest of your child. If you are interested in post-adoption contact, you should ask your case manager and your lawyer for more information.

What is Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC)?

Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC) is the third option to give your child permanency, after reunification and adoption. It allows you to keep your parental rights while someone else becomes your child's legal custodian. Most times, this person will be a relative or close friend of the family, but it could also be the foster parents who have been caring for your child. The legal custodian will provide a permanent home for your child, and will be legally responsible for raising your child. This person will be making important medical and educational decisions on your child's behalf, and will receive a subsidy to care for your child.

With adoption, your parental rights must be terminated, but with PLC, your parental rights are not terminated. With PLC:

- You may have visitation rights to your child as ordered by the judge.
- You may still have the responsibility to pay child support (depending on your resources).
- DHS will not need to stay involved with your family.
- You can ask for a court hearing to change visitation or custody if the change is in the child's best interests.

Ask your case manager and your lawyer to explain both adoption and PLC if you have further questions about these alternatives to reunification.

DHS will work with you to return your child home, whenever possible. However, there is a limit to how long reunification can take. The purpose of this time limit is to protect your child's need to grow up in a safe, stable and permanent home.

Can I ever voluntarily give up my parental rights?

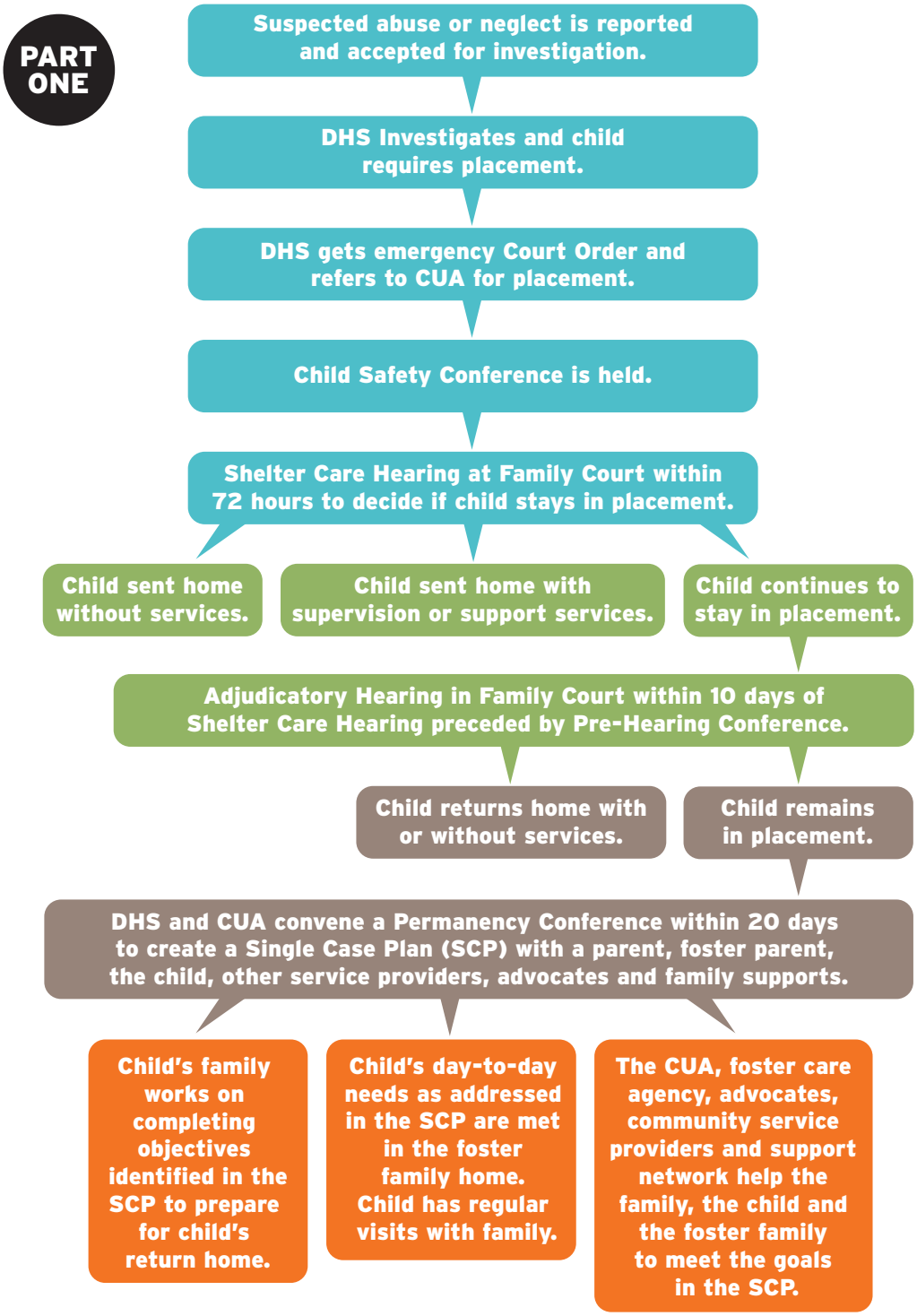
Yes, you have the option to voluntarily give up ("relinquish") your parental rights. There are a few reasons why you might decide to do this. You may feel that you are unable to continue keeping up with the responsibilities of parenthood. You may feel that your child has become very attached to his or her caregiver and that it would be best for your child to remain with that person permanently.

If you decide to voluntarily relinquish your parental rights, you will sign some papers stating that you agree to have your parental rights terminated so that your child may be adopted. The papers will be filed with Family Court. At a hearing that will follow, the judge will ask you if you still want to give up your rights. If so, the judge will order the termination of your parental rights. It will be very important to talk to your lawyer before you decide to do this.

Is there anything I can do to reverse a termination of parental rights?

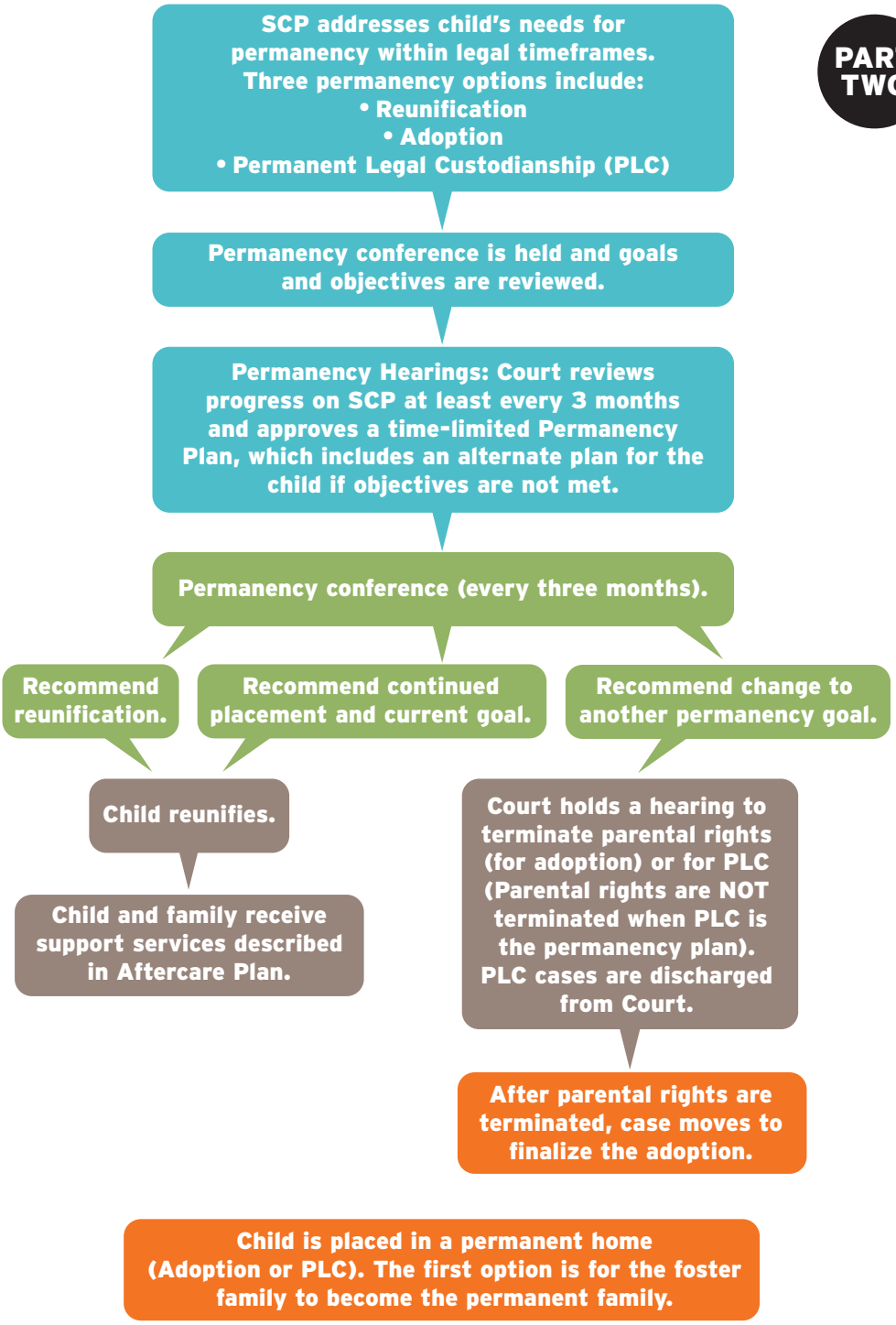
The law allows you the chance to appeal a judge's order which terminates your parental rights, but only for up to 30 days after the initial order was made. Your appeal is prepared by your lawyer.

The Journey through Foster Care in



the Philadelphia Child Welfare System

PART TWO



Use Your Resources

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Follow the Single Case Plan

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Call with Questions and Updates

Every Visit with Your Child Counts

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Parents' Responsibilities

As a parent, you are still the most important person in your child's life. While you are experiencing some challenges right now, a clear understanding of your responsibilities can make a big difference. In order to have you child returned home, one of the best things you can do is FACE these responsibilities head-on.

Follow the Single Case Plan

It is extremely important that you attend the planning meetings with your child's planning team, including the case workers and your network of support people. You will work together at these meetings to make a Single Case Plan. After you do this, you must follow the plan. It is crucial to immediately start working on the problems that caused your child to be removed.

You have to make the changes to have your child returned home. If something in your plan is not working for you, or you are not receiving the services you need to make the necessary changes, ask for another planning meeting to talk about it.

Attend the Family Court Hearings

Your attendance at the Family Court hearings is your chance to show the judge that you are making changes and working on the reasons your child was removed. Your attendance is also required by law, and it is the only way that you can have your say about what will happen to your child.

Missing a Family Court hearing is a very serious thing. Deciding not to attend means that the judge may decide what will happen to your child based ONLY on what DHS and your child's lawyer say. Your lawyer may not be able to represent you unless you attend the hearings. This makes it extremely important to always know the date and time of your next Family Court hearing, and be sure that you attend.

Call with Questions and Updates

One of the best things you can do for yourself and your child during this time is use your resources (see page 21). If you have a question that's not answered by this handbook, call and ask someone. If you feel you need help getting services that will help you work on any problems you're having, call your CUA Case Manager and talk about it. **Use page 24 of this handbook to record the phone numbers for you and your child's CUA Case Manager and lawyers.**

Also, keep in mind that if you move or change your phone number, you MUST notify your case workers right away! They need to know how to reach you in case of an emergency with your child.

Every Visit with Your Child Counts

While this may be a stressful or difficult time for you, it is important to remember that it is even more stressful and difficult for your child. This makes it important to visit and contact your child as often as you can. You should also try to attend medical appointments, school activities and meetings, and other important events in your child's life. If you must miss a visit, call beforehand (the day before whenever possible) to explain why you can't make it, and ask to reschedule. This way, your child isn't brought to a visit and expecting to see you when you won't be there. Remember that your CUA Case Manager can provide transportation assistance if you need it.

Parents' Rights

- Know the reasons for your child's placement outside your home.
- Know where your child is placed, unless there is a safety reason to keep this information from you.
- Know which CUA is providing case management and know your CUA Case Manager and Supervisor.
- Know and understand what needs to happen to have your child returned home.
- Receive timely notice of every court hearing and team planning meeting you need to attend.
- Request an additional team planning meeting if the Single Case Plan isn't working for you.
- Receive regular updates from your CUA Case Manager on your child's health, development, behavior, and progress in school.
- Visit with your child, and request transportation assistance if you need it.
- Consult with your lawyer at any time, and be represented by your lawyer in any Family Court proceedings.
- Ask questions and receive answers about anything that you don't understand.

Helpful Hints

- Whenever you become involved in court proceedings, it is a good idea to be organized and keep track of events, conversations, and important documents.
- A good way to keep track of all that's going on is to keep a journal. Take any ordinary notebook, and use it to record everything that happens during your involvement with DHS and Family Court. Bring it to team planning meetings and court hearings. Use it to record information that you get from case workers and lawyers during phone conversations. Keep a log with the date and time of every meeting, hearing, and visit you attend, as well as every phone call you make—even if you only leave a message.
- Keep a folder handy for important papers. Ask for a photocopy of any document you are asked to sign, and keep it in this folder. This will also be a good place to store any letters and petitions you receive in the mail, either from DHS or from Family Court.
- Make sure that you read and understand anything you are asked to sign. If you have a reading disability or need translation to a different language, tell your social worker so that you can get help with this.
- Read all court orders carefully and get a copy.
- If you are unable to reach your court-appointed lawyer to ask questions in between hearings, be sure to tell your case manager, along with the judge at the next Family Court hearing.
- Be sure to reach out to friends and family during your involvement with DHS and Family Court. Sometimes it is difficult to ask for help, but people solve problems better when they are supported by others who care about them.
- Remember that while lawyers and case managers are here to help, you are your own best advocate!

Resources

For questions, concerns or complaints about services provided by DHS:

Commissioners Action Response Office (CARO)
215-683-6000
dhscaro@phila.gov

To get help finding parenting education and support services:

Parenting Collaborative/
Parent Action Network
215-PARENTS (215-727-3687)

To get help finding drug and alcohol abuse services or to find counseling or other mental health programs:

Community Behavioral Health (CBH)
888-545-2600

To get help with Domestic Violence issues:

- 24-Hour Crisis Intervention Hotline
  Women in Transition
  215-751-1111
- 24-Hour Bilingual (Spanish) Domestic Violence Hotline
  Congreso de Latinos Unidos
  215-291-8742

To get help with public assistance and job training (for eligible families):

Philadelphia County Assistance Office
Community Services Department
215-560-2547

To find out who your court-appointed lawyer is or when your next court date is:

Court Operations
215-686-4028

To get legal help:

- For parents whose children are involved with DHS:
  Community Legal Services
  Family Advocacy Unit
  215-981-3765
- If you are HIV positive:
  AIDS Law Project
  215-587-9377
- For help with discrimination against women, reproductive rights and family law:
  Women's Law Project
  215-928-9801
- For advice about getting a Protection From Abuse (PFA) or custody order:
  Philadelphia Legal Assistance
  215-981-3800
  or
  Women Against Abuse Legal Center
  216-686-7082

Community Umbrella Agency (CUA) Contact Information

To find out who your CUA Case Manager is, contact your local CUA:

CUA 1
25th Police District
Eastern North Philadelphia
NET Community Care
4404 N. 5th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19140
267-339-0520
www.netcenters.org

CUA 2
24th and 26th Police Districts
Eastern North Philadelphia
Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM for Everyone)
1900 N. 9th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
267-296-7200
www.apmphila.org

CUA 3
15th Police District
Lower Northeast
Turning Points For Children
4329 Griscom Street
Philadelphia, PA 19124
215-268-5845
www.turningpointsforchildren.org

CUA 4
2nd, 7th and 8th Police Districts
Far Northeast
Catholic Community Services
10125 Verree Rd, Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19116
267-341-1253
www.ccs-cua.org

CUA 5
35th and 39th Police Districts
Logan/Olney
Wordsworth
3300 Henry Avenue, Suite 600
Philadelphia, PA 19129
267-766-2000
www.wordsworthcua.org

CUA 6
5th and 14th Police Districts
Northwest Philadelphia
Tabor Northern Community Partners
57 E. Armat Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144
267-339-3171
www.tabornorthern.org

CUA 7
22nd Police District
North Central Philadelphia
NET Community Care
3133 Ridge Avenue, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19132
267-479-5900
www.netcenters.org

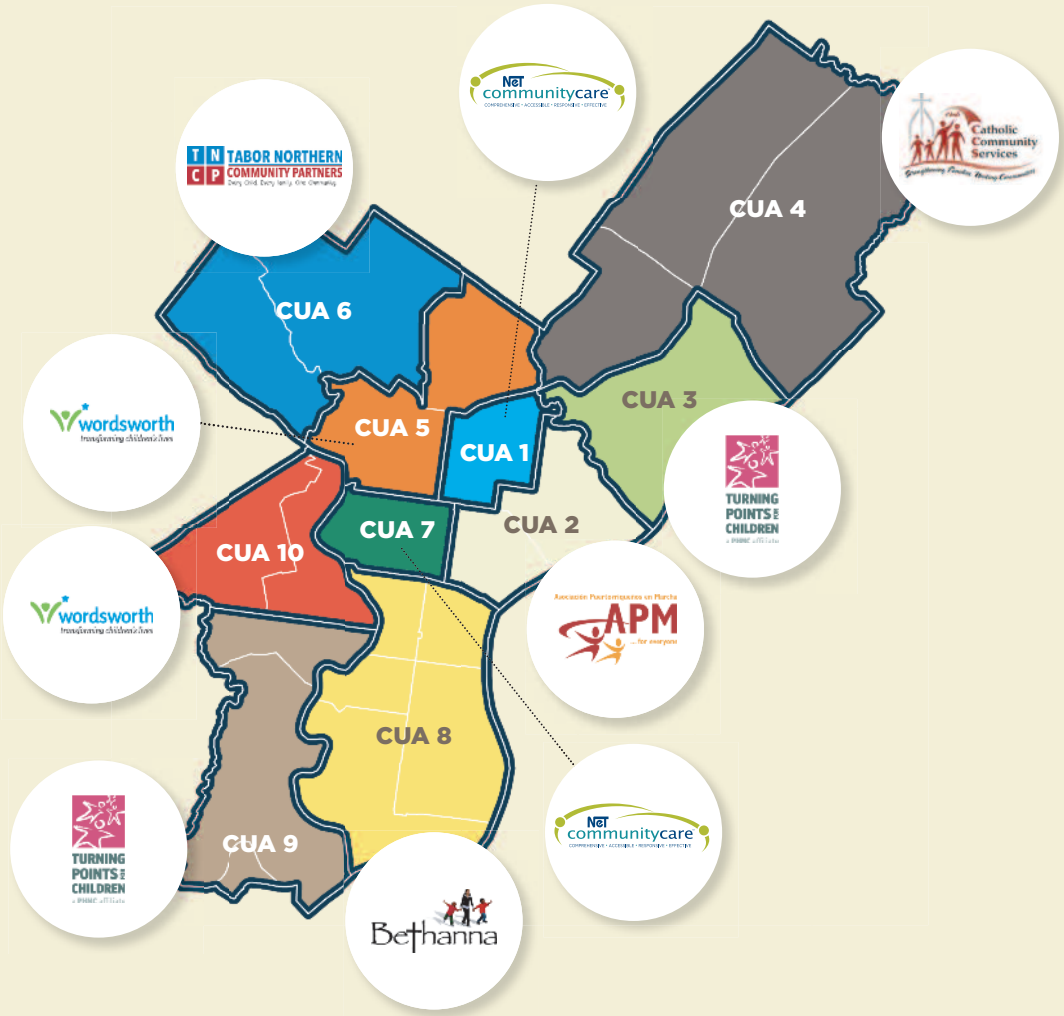
CUA 8
1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 17th Police Districts
South Philadelphia
Bethanna
1212 Wood Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-355-6500
www.bethanna.org

CUA 9
12th and 18th Police Districts
Southwest Philadelphia
Turning Points for Children
3901 Market Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215-875-8200
www.turningpointsforchildren.org

CUA 10
16th and 19th Police Districts
Mantua, Overbrook, Wynnefield
Wordsworth
3905 Ford Road
Philadelphia, PA 19131
215-642-5400
www.wordsworthcua.org

COMMUNITY UMBRELLA AGENCY (CUA) GEOGRAPHIC ZONES

City Of Philadelphia | Department Of Human Services



DHS
Department of Human Services

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

CUA Case Manager:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Parent's Lawyer

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Child's Lawyer

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Other inportant Contacts:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

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NOTES

1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215-683-4DHS
www.phila.gov/dhs