

# WHAT IS DCFS' ROLE WHILE MY RELATIVE IS IN FOSTER CARE?

If the judge decides that the child is dependent-neglected and that the child must remain in foster care, DCFS must look at what is best for the child.

DCFS will work with the family to develop a case plan. A case plan is a written document that is given to the court. It says what steps are needed to reunite the child with his or her parents or guardians, including what the parents or guardians must do. All parents should be listed.

The case plan describes the services needed and says who is responsible for providing the services. Services may include things like counseling and classes designed to improve parenting skills. The type of services depends on the needs of the child and the family.

The case plan should say how often and under what conditions the parent will visit the child. The case plan will have a backup plan in case the child cannot be safely reunited with his or her family. This backup planning is called "concurrent planning."

Throughout the case, DCFS will look at what additional services may need to be provided. In fact,

DCFS must prove to the court that DCFS made "reasonable" efforts to reunite the child with his or her parents or guardians.

DCFS also will continue to check on the child wherever he or she is placed to make sure the child is doing well, attending school and going to doctor appointments, and is getting the services he or she needs. The child also has his or her own attorney called an attorney ad litem who advocates for the best interest of the child, along with other possible court-appointed advocates.

DCFS must attempt to place siblings together. Siblings may be placed apart if there is no available placement for all the siblings or if the judge determines it is not in their best interest to be together or if placing the siblings together would not be healthy for all of the children.

DCFS will ensure the reasons for the separation of siblings are regularly studied. A plan to reunite the siblings also will be made, if appropriate. Until siblings are placed together, DCFS shall arrange visits at least every two weeks, unless the court orders more or fewer visits.