



Birth Parent Handbooks

For birth parents whose children have entered the foster care system, the intricacies of the foster care and legal systems can be overwhelming. In response to this, the NCCWE has compiled this state-by-state listing of free online handbooks. These handbooks assist birth parents to help guide them through the process.

Title: *It's Ok to Need Support*

Description: Rise Magazine has produced this free 24 page parent-to-parent guide to family support services. This guide contains the stories of 21 individuals that can help parents keep their child safe or resolve family conflicts. The stories in this booklet will help readers find the support they need to take steps in protecting their children and themselves.

Link: <http://www.risemagazine.org/PDF/Its-OK-to-need-support.pdf>

Title: *One Step at a Time*

Description: Rise magazine has produced this parent-to-parent guide to the child welfare system. If your children have been removed, the stories in this booklet will take you step-by-step through the process of working to reunify with your children.

Link: <http://www.risemagazine.org/PDF/One-Step-at-a-Time.pdf>

Title: *A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System*

Description: This handbook was written collaboratively by the National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, the Child Welfare League of America and National Indian Child Welfare Association. It aims to help birth families understand how the child welfare system works, inform them of their rights and responsibilities, and help answer questions they may have. Ultimately, it seeks to ease any anger and fear a family may have, building a feeling of empowerment while dealing with the child welfare system. (2005)

Link: http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/AFamilysGuide_English.pdf

State: Alaska

Title: *A Handbook for Parents and Guardians in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*

Description: Designed for Alaskan parents or guardians, who are involved in child abuse and neglect cases, this handbook outlines the court processes involved in these types of

cases. Information is provided on the rights and responsibilities of parents, the role of the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS), and different types of hearings and conferences, including: the termination of parental rights hearing; the permanency court hearing; the permanency planning conference at DFYS; the temporary custody court hearing; the pre-trial conference page; the adjudication hearing; the disposition hearing page; and the Family and Children 6 Month Review/Conference. DFYS procedures when involved with a Native child are explained, as well as the roles of social workers and family attorneys in helping children and families. Contact information is provided for local DFYS offices and State offices.

Link: <http://hss.state.ak.us/ocs/Publications/pdf/ProtectiveCustodyHandbook.pdf>

State: California

Title: *Dependency Court*

Description: California provides two booklets for parents involved in the dependency system: "Juvenile Court Information for Parents (Dependency)" and "The Dependency Court: How it Works." These two booklets answer common questions parents may have when dealing with the court system. Parents will gain information about their rights and ways to navigate dependency court. Both are available online and in English, Spanish, Korean, Cambodian, Chinese, Russian, and Hmong.

Link: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/1208.htm>

State: Florida

Title: A Parent's Guide to Juvenile Dependency Court - Case Plan insert

Description: This booklet is intended for parents who are involved in dependency court. It aims to introduce parents to the dependency court process, the people who work in the judicial system, and the vocabulary that surrounds judicial proceedings. This guide informs parents of their rights, explains what happens in court, and contains helpful information to help parents understand what is going on and why.

Link: <http://www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/270/urlt/dependencybooklet.pdf>

State: Florida

Title: *A Family Guide to Dependency Court*

Description: This video was jointly developed by the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court and the Office of Court Improvement. The video provides an overview of the dependency court system for parents involved in the system.

Link: <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/education-outreach/court-system-videos/dependency-family-guide.stml>

State: Hawaii

Title: *A Guide to Child Welfare Services*

Description: The Hawaii Department of Human Services has developed this guide. It discusses the process Child Welfare Services will take in the event that a report of abuse or neglect has been made. Parents will learn their rights and gain a broad understanding of the investigation and assessment process. (2013)

Link: <http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/ssd/files/2013/04/A-GUIDE-TO-CHILD-WELFARE-FINAL.pdf>

State: Illinois

Title: *Substitute Care and Your Child*

Description: This handbook from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is available for download in both English and Spanish. This booklet has been prepared for birth parents to explain what has happened, what to expect and guidelines for what one should

do when involved with Child Protective Services. The information in this booklet is very general and not based on the specific facts of personal cases. This information is only intended as a guideline; it is not a substitute for a lawyer.

Link: <http://www.state.il.us/dcf/docs/subchild.pdf>

State: Iowa

Title: *Handbook on Juvenile Court for Parents*

Description: This handbook focuses specifically on court processes. It is designed to help parents understand what is going on with their case, what to expect in the future with hearings, and what their rights and responsibilities are in a "child in need of assistance" case. (2008)

Link: http://www.ifapa.org/pdf_docs/HandbookJuvenileCourt.pdf

State: Maine

Title: *A Guide to Child Protective Services*

Description: This brochure produced by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services serves as a preliminary guide for birth parents to grasp a better understanding of Child Protective Services (CPS). Parents learn the legal rights they have, the rights of their child, and the role and responsibility of CPS in their case. (2006)

Link: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/handbook.pdf>

State: Massachusetts

Title: *You Are not Alone: An Empowering Guide for Parents Whose Children are in DCF Foster Care*

Description: This 50 page booklet was written by parents whose children were placed in foster care by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). The Guide focuses on what parents should do in the first 72 hours after removal to maintain their sanity, keep their children safe, and work to regain custody, if that is what they want. Information is provided about how DCF works and what to expect in court. A Glossary and sample forms to keep track of case activities are provided. (2010)

Link: <http://www.parentshelpingparents.org/#!news/cqna>

State: Michigan

Title: *A Parent's Guide to Children's Protective Services*

Description: Developed by the Michigan Department of Human Services, this handbook provides parents with an understanding of how the CPS process works. This booklet includes information on: "What CPS is; What a CPS worker does; What steps a CPS worker follows; How CPS can help your family; What Central Registry is; Important court hearings you might go to; Answers to common questions and different words you might hear the CPS worker use; Your rights and responsibilities as a parent; and, Where else you can get help." (2006)

Link: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-PUB-0460_179772_7.pdf

State: Montana

Title: *What Happens Next*

Description: The purpose of this booklet is to provide answers to the questions that are most often asked after a report of possible child abuse or neglect has been received by the Child and Family Services Division Child Abuse Hotline. Parents will gain an understanding of what happens during a Child and Family Services Division assessment and investigation. (2007)

Link: <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publications/whathappensnext.pdf>

State: Nebraska

Title: *Guide for Parents: Walking Your Way through the Nebraska Juvenile Court Child Protection Process*

Description: This handbook is intended to provide general information for parents and families who are in contact with Child Protective Services. Parents will gain a full understanding of their rights and responsibilities and gain advice about the court process and the names and numbers to important key people. This booklet does not provided legal advice. (2007)

Link: <http://ccfl.unl.edu/publications/pdf/parent.pdf>

State: Nevada

Title: *A Parent's Guide to Child Protective Services*

Description: The Nevada Division of Child & Family Services has produced this guidebook for parents (available in English and Spanish). The guide is broken up into three main sections: Child Protective Custody; Child Protection Laws; Legal Contact Information. The guide is meant to provide parents with a better understanding of child protective services and their case plan. (2008)

English Link: <http://www.dcf.state.nv.us/ChildFatalities/ChildProtServices/CPS-ParentGuide.pdf>

Spanish Link: <http://www.dcf.state.nv.us/ChildFatalities/ChildProtServices/CPS-ParentGuide-Spanish.pdf>

State: New Jersey

Title: *A Guide For Parents: When Your Child is in Foster Care*

Description: This handbook was created by The Department of Children and Families to help families involved with the Division of Youth and Family Services 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. It includes the following sections: Critical Definitions of Terms; Questions & Answers; Understanding the Process; Reunification – Bringing My Child Home; When Reunification Cannot Be Achieved; and, Use Your Resources! (2012)

English Link:

http://www.nj.gov/dcf/documents/support/dyfs/ParentGuideFosterCare_English11.12.pdf

Spanish Link:

http://www.nj.gov/dcf/documents/support/dyfs/ParentGuideFosterCare_Spanish11.12.pdf

State: New Mexico

Title: *Handbook for Parents and Guardians in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*

Description: Being involved in a child abuse and neglect case can be very confusing and stressful for a family. Not knowing what to expect can make it even harder. This handbook will help parents understand what will happen with their case, and explain and give answers about the court process and the people helping them with their case. This handbook offers section and spaces for parents to write the names of the people who will be helping them and the dates of meetings and court hearings. (2007)

Link: http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/handbooks-for-birth-parents.html

State: New York

Title: *The Parents' Handbook: A Guide for Parents with Children in Foster Care*

Description: This handbook was written for birth parents that have questions and concerns about foster care; it answers questions in a sensitive and respectful tone. Parents who previously had children in foster care contributed to the writing of the handbook. (2010)

Link: http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/downloads/pdf/parent_handbook.pdf

State: New York

Title: *The Survival Guide to the NYC Child Welfare System: A Workbook for Parents by Parents*

Description: This workbook was written by parents who have had first hand dealings with the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS), in partnership with lawyers and social workers working in Family Court and its related systems. It explains ACS child welfare processes, the rights of parents, and strategies for working with ACS to ensure children are kept at home, brought back home as fast as possible, or receiving the best care and support possible if they cannot be home. (2010)

English Link: <http://www.cwop.org/documents/survivalguide2007english.pdf>

Chinese Link: <http://cwop.org/documents/Chin.pdf>

Spanish Link: <http://www.cwop.org/documents/survivalguide2007spanish.pdf>

State: Pennsylvania, Allegheny County

Title: *A Parent's Handbook*

Description: This book approaches a birth parent as a partner in helping to solve problems and improve family life. The handbook provides information about the rights and responsibilities of the birth parents, the child, the agency, and the legal system. (2008)

Link:

http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/uploadedFiles/DHS/About_DHS/Publications/Resource_Guides/ParentsHandbook.pdf

State: South Dakota

Title: *What I Should Know About My Child Living in Foster Care*

Description: The South Dakota Department of Social Services has developed this guide to provide parents with basic information about child protective services, foster care in South Dakota (including information on Indian child welfare) visitation policies, financial responsibility and the juvenile court system. (2009)

Link:

<http://dss.sd.gov/formspubs/docs/ADOPFOSTER/WhatIShouldKnowAboutFosterCare.pdf>

State: Tennessee

Title: *Clients' Rights Handbook*

Description: The Tennessee Department of Child Services has produces this booklet which spells out how the DCS process works. It describes what happens when DCS gets called, what will happen during the case process, and what Child Protective Services will seek to do and how they will work to keep a child's best interests at heart. (2010)

English Link: <http://www.tn.gov/youth/pdfs/clientsrights.pdf>

Spanish Link: <http://www.tn.gov/youth/pdfs/clientrightsSp.pdf>

State: Texas

Title: *A Handbook for Parents and Guardians in Child Protection Cases*

Description: This handbook provides basic information to explain what happens when parents and their child are involved in a CPS case. It informs parents of their rights and the role CPS will play throughout their case.

English Link: http://www.courts.state.tx.us/courts/pdf/CPSGuide_EnglishVersion.pdf

Spanish Link: http://www.courts.state.tx.us/courts/pdf/CPSGuide_SpanishVersion.pdf

State: Vermont

Title: *A Guide for Parents with Children in DCF Custody*

Description: This guide has been developed by the Vermont Department of Human Services. General information and answers are offered to the parents whose children have been placed in the care of the State. It was prepared with the help of families who have been through the court process. (2011)

Link: http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/Custodial_Parent_Brochure.pdf

State: Washington

Title: *Parent's Guide to Child Protective Services (CPS)*

Description: The Washington State Department of Social & Health Services has produced this guide to help parents understand why their family has been contacted by Child Protective Services. It discusses the role of CPS, answers questions parents may have about their case, lists the rights of the parents as well as the child, and offers information about re-gaining custody. (2003)

Link: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/publications/22-484.pdf>

State: Wisconsin

Title: *Parents Guide to Child Protective Services (CPS) Assessments*

Description: This brochure has been prepared by the Marathon County Department of Social Services to help parents understand what to expect if they are involved in a child protective service case. It answers important questions, such as, "Why has child protective services contacted me?; What is child abuse or neglect?; Will my child be taken away?; and, What if I don't agree with how my case was handled?".

Link:

http://www.co.marathon.wi.us/Portals/0/Departments/SSV/Documents/CPS_Brochure.pdf