

DCJ IS TALKING TO ME ABOUT MY CHILD: WHAT DO I DO?

A Resource for Parents written by Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter Peer Parent Expert

DCJ is Talking to you about your Kids: What do I do?

<https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/when-a-caseworker-visits/why-a-caseworker-may-visit-your-family-.html>

1. Understand what DCJ can and can't do

- DCJ can investigate concerns about child safety.
- Not every report will lead to removal; DCJ should work with you to keep children safe at home when possible.
- You can ask *why* they're involved and what *specific concerns* they have. [Legal Aid NSW Publications](#)

2. Ask for legal advice AS SOON AS DCJ contacts you

This advice is strongly recommended by parents who have had that dreadful knock at the door.

Ask DCJ to refer you to a lawyer immediately they can send a referral to Legal Aid NSW or the Aboriginal Legal Service so a lawyer contacts you. This referral is called a LAPFA referral <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/my-problem-is-about/my-family-or-relationship/care-and-protection/care-and-protection-early-intervention-mediation/lafpa>

You can also call LawAccess NSW (1300 888 529) to get legal information and referrals.

Talk to a lawyer before signing any plans, contracts, or agreements that DCJ gives you.

[Legal Aid NSW Publications](#)

Why this matters early

A lawyer can explain your rights, what you're being asked to sign, what DCJ means by "safe," and what might happen if you don't agree – *before* any child is removed. This can prevent misunderstandings and protect your parental rights. [Legal Aid NSW Publications](#)

3. Before removal: key steps to take

These are practical things the guide encourages, with a lawyer's involvement where possible:

Ask for a referral to a lawyer right away (before anything serious happens).

Talk to a lawyer before you agree to anything DCJ proposes, including:

- *Written parental responsibility contracts*
- *Temporary Care Agreements* (if they suggest your children live with someone else)
- *Safety plans or case plans*

Lawyers can help you understand whether what you are being asked to agree to is realistic and whether it protects your rights. [Legal Aid NSW Publications](#)

4. Respond constructively but smartly

- Try to talk respectfully with caseworkers so you can understand concerns.
- If you disagree, ask the caseworker (or their manager) to explain in writing.
- Keep a diary of all meetings, phone calls, and agreements *including who said what and when*.
- Ask for copies of all notes about meetings with DCJ.
- Ask for a support person at meetings if you want one.
- Write down what you discuss with your lawyer and caseworkers. [Legal Aid NSW Publications](#)

(These steps help keep a clear factual record – which is important legally later, even if removal doesn't happen right now.)

5. Legal advice isn't just for crisis, when DCJ is knocking at your door it is serious, take it seriously and seek legal advice

Before any removal:

- *Legal advice is free and available from Legal Aid or community legal centres.*
- You don't need a removal or Court order to see a lawyer, DCJ caseworkers can help you access this early.
- Lawyers can support you in mediated discussions about your child's safety, not just in Court.
- **Knowing your rights early can help keep your family together.**

IF DCJ is not telling you to seek legal advice, give them this information and keep a record of every time you ask, make sure you ask in writing

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/legalaidnsw/documents/pdf/my-problem-is-about/my-family-or-relationship/care-and-protection/lafpa-frequently-asked-questions.pdf.coredownload.pdf>

"If I'd spoken to a lawyer at the start, I would have understood what I was agreeing to and what I didn't have to agree to."

"I didn't take the Legal Aid referral because I didn't think it was serious. I believed the caseworker was helping me and being transparent. I didn't know that important legal decisions were unfolding in the background, or that I needed independent advice to understand the risks."

Contact Information:

- Email: contact@finclusionh.org
- Support: 1300 942 598
parentpeersnewcastle@gmail.com
- Website: <https://finclusionh.org>

