

# FAMILY ACTION PLAN FOR CHANGE (FAP): A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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

A **Family Action Plan for Change** is a written plan DCJ uses **after (or before) your child has been removed**. It is created from the Summary of proposed plan concerns they have evidence of. Its purpose is to spell out clearly what it will take for them to agree to your children coming home. It talks about

- **What DCJ is worried about**

(the concerns they say they have evidence for and would rely on in Court)

- **What they need to see change**

(what needs to be different for those worries of theirs to go down)

- **How everyone will work together**

(you, DCJ, family, and services) to make that change happen

It's meant to be a **shared plan**, not just DCJ's document.

You are supposed to help write it, along with your support people, so the goals are realistic, achievable, and make sense in **your** real life. It is important you understand and agree with what's written otherwise it could be used against you. Don't say you will engage in things you're not prepared to, if your comfortable find alternative solutions that will work for you and your family and suggest them.

## What's Inside the FAP

- **Worries**

What DCJ is concerned about and what they believe they can evidence.

- **Goals**

What "safe enough" looks like, the changes DCJ needs to see to be confident to evidence in court.

- **Actions**

What everyone will do:

– what you'll work on

- what DCJ will do
- what supports or services will do

(Parents are not the only ones who should have tasks.)

### • **Timeframes**

When actions will be checked or reviewed.

### • **Supports**

Who can help; counsellors, DV services, drug and alcohol supports, housing, therapy, peer workers, family members, etc. Who is responsible for engaging/funding these supports.

### • **How the child will experience the change**

This section helps show your child's "felt experience" of things getting better, not just tasks being ticked off.

## **What the FAP Is Meant to Do**

The plan is supposed to:

- Give you **clear information** about what DCJ wants to see
- Show you **how** you will be supported to make changes
- Create a **pathway toward restoration**
- Help everyone measure progress in a fair, transparent way
- Keep the focus on **the child's safety, wellbeing, and connection**

Done well, it should feel **understandable, collaborative**, and something you can use to show progress. It should also use strength based language and not be a tool to continuously talk about you negatively.

## **In Reality: What Parents Often Experience**

Many parents say the FAP does **not** always work the way it's meant to. Common problems include:

- It's written **about** you, not **with** you
- It lists everything you must do, but not what DCJ or services will do
- Goals feel vague, broad, or unrealistic
- Expectations change without clear explanation
- It's hard to understand what "enough change" really means
- Issues are not related to your personal experiences but assumptions and judgements
- They can feel like a trap to get you to admit what they want evidence for
- Language around Domestic violence can be victim blaming and harmful

This is why it's important to:

- Ask questions, get clarifications
- Bring a support person (peer worker, advocate, or trusted family member)
- Get legal advice ASAP
- Make sure your voice and context are included in the plan
- Make complaints if you're not being heard
- Ask for changes in language that works for you

You have every right to understand the plan and participate in it.

### **"How the Child Will Experience the Change" A Helpful Reflection Tool**

This section is a chance for everyone to slow down and ask: **What will these changes actually *feel/like* for my child?** This part can be powerful, it helps show DCJ that you understand what your child needs.

### **Reflection Prompts to Help You Prepare**

- *What do you hope your child will notice is different when things improve?*
- *How might they feel in their body or heart?*
- *What might they say or do that shows things are safer, calmer, or more predictable?*
- *What small everyday moments will be different for them?*

If you are a victim of DV accepting responsibility for a perpetrators behaviour or being forced to write or believe that you are to blame can be really harmful. It is important to reach out to DV services and get support with this.

### **This Is Your Document**

A FAP is **not a legal document**, but:

- it does go to the Magistrate
- it is used to show progress
- it can influence decisions about restoration

That means it can either:

- help demonstrate change

- or quickly set you up to fail

You have the right to:

- ask for strengths-based language
- say what *you* want to change
- ask for support, resources, and funding
- push back on unrealistic expectations

Having support at FAP meetings – and having them **regularly** – matters.

**“For the first few years, my Family Action Plan felt like something written *about* me, not *with* me. Decisions were made in meetings I wasn’t really part of, using language I didn’t understand, and I was expected to just comply.**

**Once I finally understood what a Family Action Plan was – what it was meant to show, how goals were meant to link to restoration, and that I had a right to be involved – everything shifted. I could ask questions, push back, and say what support I actually needed instead of being set up to fail.**

**Understanding my plan didn’t fix the system, but it gave me my voice back and helped me advocate for a pathway that made sense for my family.”**

#### Contact Information:

- Email: [contact@finclusionh.org](mailto:contact@finclusionh.org)
- Support: [parentpeersnewcastle@gmail.com](mailto:parentpeersnewcastle@gmail.com)
- Website: <https://finclusionh.org>

