

Making a Complaint



Making a complaint can feel risky, especially when DCJ holds power over decisions about your child. This guide is about **helping you complain safely, strategically, and with support**.

You have the right to raise concerns. You also have the right to protect yourself while doing so.

1. First, you're allowed to complain

Parents often worry that complaining will make things worse. That fear is real and understandable. But:

- You have the right to raise concerns about decisions, conduct, communication, or delays
- You do **not** have to accept poor treatment to prove cooperation
- A complaint is not the same as refusing to work with DCJ

Complaining is a way to advocate for your children.

2. Be clear about **what** you are complaining about

Before you complain, try to name the issue as clearly as possible. This helps protect you and keeps the complaint

focused.

Common reasons parents complain include:

- Being spoken to disrespectfully or dismissed
- Decisions made without explanation
- Family time being reduced or cancelled without reason
- Reports that feel inaccurate or don't reflect what's happening
- Not being included in plans or meetings
- Delays that are harming the chance of restoration

You don't need legal language. Plain words are okay.

3. Keep it factual, not emotional (even though it *is* emotional)

Your feelings matter but complaints are taken more seriously when they focus on **what happened, when, and what impact it had.**

Try this structure:

- What happened
- When it happened
- Who was involved
- Why it concerns you
- What you are asking for

You can say how it affected you and your child – without attacking anyone.

4. Write it down (even if you speak first)

If you raise concerns verbally:

- Ask for a follow-up email confirming what was discussed
- Keep copies of all emails, letters, and notes

If possible, submit complaints **in writing**. Written records protect you.

5. Ask for support, don't do this alone

You are allowed to:

- Have a support person help you write or submit a complaint
- Take an advocate or peer worker with you to meetings
- Ask for time to think before responding

Many parents say complaints feel safer when someone walks beside them.

6. Know where complaints can go

Complaints can be raised:

- With your caseworker or their manager
- Through DCJ's formal complaints process
- With external bodies (for serious or unresolved concerns)

You don't have to escalate immediately. You can start small and build if needed.

7. Protect your working relationship

You can complain **and** still work toward restoration.

Helpful phrases parents use:

- "I want to keep working together, but I need this addressed."
- "This isn't about blame – it's about clarity and fairness."
- "I'm raising this because it affects my child."

This shows cooperation *without silence*.

8. If you feel unsafe complaining

Trust that feeling.

Some parents choose to:

- Delay a complaint until they have support
- Keep detailed records until a safer time
- Seek advice before submitting anything

"I was terrified to complain because I thought they'd say I wasn't cooperating. What helped was having someone sit with me and remind me that speaking up didn't make me a bad parent – it made me an informed one. This was about making sure my children were treated fairly, they don't have a voice in this, I can still

help keep them safe while they are in OOHC, complaining helped me do this.”

Remember

You are not asking for special treatment. You are asking for **fairness, transparency, and respect.**

You deserve to understand decisions being made about your child.

And you deserve support while navigating this system.

How to complain

To complain to the [NSW Department of Communities and Justice](#)(DCJ), contact their Enquiry, Feedback and Complaints Unit by calling **1800 000 164**, emailing **complaints@dcj.nsw.gov.au**, or writing to Locked Bag 4028, Ashfield NSW 2131; you can also make an anonymous complaint.

General Complaints & Feedback

- **Phone:** 1800 000 164 (9 am - 4:30 pm, Mon-Fri).
- **Email:** complaints@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Escalation Options

- **NSW Ombudsman:** For serious issues or to escalate, contact the NSW Ombudsman (ombo.nsw.gov.au) or

call 02 9286 1000.

- **OCG – Office of Children's Guardian**

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/making-complaint>

To make a ministerial complaint about NSW Child Protection,

Escalate directly to the Minister for Families and Communities if needed.

Contact the Minister's Office: For broader issues or if you're unsatisfied with DCJ, you can contact the [Minister for Families and Communities](#) (currently [Minister's Name]), though they can't intervene in court matters.

Timelines: Expect an acknowledgement within 3 business days and a response within 21 business days, though complex cases may take longer.

“Every cancelled family time took something from my child. I stayed quiet at first because I was scared, but silence didn’t protect us, it just let the harm continue. My caseworker kept making excuses that DCJ had no family time workers, it

was painful for my child and me. I got support and had recorded everything and when I finally got the courage to complain I had all the evidence I needed. With the evidence my complaint got handled quickly and my child got their family time back. Support and evidence are Important.”

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