

WORKING WITH THE DEPARTMENT: TIPS FOR PARENTS

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

Getting advice and information

- Get legal advice as early as possible.
 - You have the right to a clear explanation of:
 - Why your child was removed, and
 - What you need to do for your child to be returned to your care.
- Ask for this information in writing.

Keep records

- Keep copies of all communication with the Department:
 - Emails/Text messages/Phone call records
- Write down:
 - Dates/Who you spoke to/ What was said
- Ask caseworkers to confirm important conversations by email.
- Ask for minutes of any meetings you attend
- Ask for copies of family time records/write your own

Appointments and meetings

- Attend all appointments and meetings if you can.
- If you can't attend, call the caseworker and reschedule.
- Ask to be invited to meetings where decisions are being made about your child.

- Tell the caseworker you want to be involved in decisions about your child.
- Ask for a meeting to discuss issues/concerns/anything you are unclear of

Communication tips

- It can help to write down what you want to say before conversations, especially if you're feeling upset or overwhelmed.
- It is okay to:
 - Ask questions about your child
 - Ask how they are doing
 - Ask for updates
 - Ask for clear explanations
 - Ask to be involved in a handover when caseworkers change

Support for meetings

- It is okay to take a support person to meetings with caseworkers.
This can be:
 - A worker
 - A friend
 - A family member
 - Anyone you trust

Staying connected to your child

- Ask to spend time with your child as soon as possible.
- Ask for important information about your child to be shared with carers.
- Ask for more family time/changes in locations/length of time if the answer is no ask for clear explanations in writing
- If you don't know your child's carers, it is okay to ask to meet them.

o The Department or carers may say no at first.

o If this happens, don't give up, keep asking respectfully.

"After my child was removed, I did not trust the caseworker at all. Every conversation felt loaded and exhausting. Learning how to work with them took time, support, and a lot of emotional effort, but I kept going because staying involved mattered for my child."

"I made sure I recorded everything and kept the records all together, I got support to take my anger out of my emails as I knew they would be part of my records."

Working with the Department does not mean agreeing with everything.

It means staying informed, involved, and focused on your child.

Language can seem confusing, its important to ask when you don't know what something means

<https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/words-and-phrases-you-may-hear-and-read.html>

Absec has great guides to help keep you safe when working with the department

<https://absec.org.au/know-your-rights/#guides>

For more information or to find out more about our services visit <https://finclusionh.org>

Contact Information:

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

