

Kids Have Questions

about foster care and adoption

Cornerstones of Care believes in delivering quality case management services to children and families

What does that mean to **you**?

It means we will:

- Help you and your family to identify your own strengths. Where you get along and agree, what makes you happy to be a family.
- Help you and your family to identify people who can help and support you, like other family members, neighbors, and/or friends.
- Work with your whole family to fix problem areas.
- Look for the least restrictive, most family-like place if you have to leave your family.
- Help your family to find the best place for you to live while things are being figured out - someplace where you can feel safe, and can have fun.
- Help figure out the best way to help you and your family by working with a team that cares about you.
- Make sure you and your family have help whenever you need it.

Words you will hear:

Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA): A federal law which promotes timely, permanent placements for children in foster care. The primary goal of the legislation is to expedite permanency for children in out-of-home care by setting specific time frames in which the state must act on a child's permanency plan.

Case Manager: The social worker assigned to your family who has the responsibility for coordinating all services delivered to the family. The Case Manager may or may not provide all of these services directly, but must make sure that the services needed to accomplish the goals of the permanency plan are made available.

Children's Division (CD): A division of the Missouri Department of Social

Services. The role of the Children's Division is to assure the protection of children by assisting their caregivers in providing a safe and nurturing environment in which children can develop. The children's Division is the state agency that Cornerstones of Care is contracted with to provide Foster Care Case Management and Adoption Services.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA): A responsible adult, other than a Guardian ad Litem (GAL), who is appointed by the Court to represent the child's best interest while they are under the jurisdiction of the Court and in the custody of the Children's Division.

Court Hearings:

Protective Custody Hearing: A court hearing held to determine whether the child should be kept away from the parents until a full hearing on neglect and abuse allegations can take place

Adjudicatory Hearing: This hearing is held to determine whether the child is homeless, abused, neglected, or dependent and in need of the Court's services. The Judge hears testimony to decide if there is evidence for the child to be in out-of-home care.

Dispositional/Review Hearing: A court hearing to determine whether the child will be returned to the parent's custody remain in the custody of the children's Division, or be placed in the custody of someone else. A Judge may decide to place custody with the parents, but require supervision by the Children's Division social worker.

Permanency Hearing: At a minimum of one time per year, a hearing is scheduled to review the family's situation and discuss the permanency plan.

Termination of Parental Rights (TRP): An action, taken by the Court, which legally brings to an end a parent's right to be involved with or make decisions in their child's life.

Court Jurisdiction: The authority of the Family Court or Juvenile Court to act, if it is determined that the child is delinquent, dependent, abused or neglected.

Custody: Custody means the Juvenile Court decides who is responsible for the child. The responsible person shall: 1) provide food, shelter, and clothing (subject to reimbursement by the parents as part of parental responsibility); 2) supervise, protect and keep a child free from harm; and 3) meet the child's health, education and emotional needs.

Family Support Team (FST): A group of individuals meeting under children's Division authorization who make recommendations regarding the permanency plan.

Family Support Team (FST) Meetings: This is a meeting held to determine the appropriateness of a child's placement, the progress towards

short and long term goals, and the need for continued care.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL): The attorney who represents the child's best interest in the Family court or Juvenile Court proceedings.

Out-of-home Care: When a child is in the custody of the Children's Division and placed somewhere other than their own home, the child is considered to be in out-of-home care. Options for this type of placement would include foster homes, residential treatment facilities, transitional living programs, relative homes and independent living arrangements.

Permanency Plan (Case Plan): A written document which describes the social and child welfare services and activities to be provided by the Children's Division and other state and local agencies for the purpose of achieving a permanent placement for the child.

Rights and Responsibilities:

Children in the custody of the Children's Division have rights to safeguard them. These rights are listed below. Sometimes, rights may conflict with what is in the child's best interest. If that happens, the Family Support Team and/or Juvenile/Family Court may need to make a decision which contradicts a listed right below. If this occurs, the Case Manager will discuss this issue with the child (as appropriate) in a way that the child can understand to be best of his/her ability.

Children have these rights:

To attend court hearings.

To attend Family Support Team Meetings and participate in the treatment/service planning process.

To have all basic needs met, including food, clothing and housing.

To have contact with their parents, siblings, and other family members (unless restricted by court order or Family Support Team) through mail, phone, and in-person contact in a way that supports the child's permanency plan.

To be placed in a safe environment.

To have access to personal belongings that are appropriate within the child's placement.

To have sleeping space accommodating age-appropriate privacy needs for the child.

To have a safe and permanent home.

To have medical treatment.

To have the child's cultural and/or religious heritage respected and taken into consideration when making placement decisions.

To have frequent contact with his/her Case Manager.

To take part in services aimed at addressing needs which brought the child into custody.

To be able to look at case records.

To an education appropriate for the child's needs.

This is what will happen next:

You are not alone. Your Case Manager and Family Support Team will be there for you.

Your Family Support Team will have many people on your team who care about you and who will help you.

Your Case Manager will be your "go to" person. Your Case Manager will stay in contact with you, check on you to see if you need anything, listen to you, answer your questions, go to meetings with you, explain how Family Court works, and go to court with you as needed. Your Case Manager will be your "voice."

You can ask questions:

Your part is to talk to your Case Manager and people on your Family Support Team. Let them know how you are feeling, what you are thinking, and what you want. Together, you will work on a plan and make decisions that are based on your best interests.