

## **BIRTH PARENT HANDBOOK**

### **What is DCCCA ?**

DCCCA is a non profit social service agency with its headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas. We offer many different kinds of programs for children, teens and adults all over Kansas and in Colorado, too.

You were referred to one of those programs... Family Preservation. An SRS worker felt that your child was at risk of removal unless your family made some changes. You worked with a Family Specialist and Family Support Worker to make a plan and work to improve how things in your family were going.

Now a Juvenile Judge has made the decision that your child needs to be in alternative care while you work on those changes. Our job changes, too. Now we will work with you and your child to do the things the judge will require so he or she can return home. Those things are called *court orders*. DCCCA staff will work with you to *reintegrate* (return) your child home.

### **The Court Process**

Your child may have gone into *Protective Custody* when safety concerns came up. This may mean they stayed in an emergency shelter or SRS asked you to find a relative's home for them to stay. Within 72 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday and Holidays), a *Temporary Custody Hearing* will be held. At this hearing, the judge has to decide if there is a need to continue custody or if the child can go home or go with a relative.

Your child will be appointed a *Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)*. This attorney will represent your child in court. You have the right to be represented, too. You can hire your own attorney or have a *Court Appointed Attorney*. There will also be a *Court Services Officer (CSO)* you can speak with about court proceedings.

About 30 days after the Temporary Custody Hearing, there will be an *Adjudicatory Hearing*. This is basically the trial when the state must prove that your child is a "Child in Need of Care" or a *CINC*. Witnesses may be called to testify about your child's well-being.

Within 30 days unless it is delayed for good cause, this hearing will be followed by a *Dispositional Hearing*. At this hearing, the court makes a decision as to the custody of your child and gives *court orders* to be done before your child can come home.

*Review Hearings* will be held every two to four months to see if court orders are being followed and progress is being made. Reports will be submitted by therapists, resource parents, the DCCCA Family Specialist and other interested persons. The judge will return your child home when he has evidence that all the orders have been met and the child is safe.

If orders have not been met by the time a child has been out of the home about a year, the judge may hold a *Termination of Parental Rights Hearing*. At this hearing, the judge looks at evidence

to decide if a parent is unable or unwilling to make changes needed to properly care for their child. If so, the judge can terminate a parent's rights to their child.

Parents have the right to ask for an *Appeal Hearing* about any decision a judge makes. The parent will need the services of an attorney to file an appeal and it must be filed within a certain amount of time.

### **Where Will My Child Live While in Alternate Care?**

When your child is removed from home, every effort will be made to place him with *Resource Parents* close by. We will try to keep brothers and sisters together if it is in their best interest. You will be asked for your input on what kind of home you think would work best with you and your child.

Resource Parents go through a lot of training and their home must be inspected and licensed every year through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and our agency. They must pass a health exam, have no criminal record, and must have a good driving record, too. They will try to help your child return home if it is safe for him to do so and will help you stay in touch. Resource Parents also help teach children skills they need to succeed in school and the community.

### **PARENT'S RIGHTS**

- To be treated with respect
- To receive notice about any legal proceeding about your child
- To help plan for your child and have a copy of the plan
- To visit and communicate with your child within reasonable guidelines
- To have your cultural, religious, ethnic or racial heritage respected as the plan for your child and family is developed
- To be told what is expected of you before your child can be returned home
- To have information about you and your child kept confidential
- To be advised of your child's health, development, progress, behaviors and needs
- To have access to your DCCCA staff in the event of an emergency

### **PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Visit as frequently as you can and follow the procedures outlined to make the visit a positive one for your child. Stay involved in your child's life.
- Tell your DCCCA staff about major changes in your life and make sure they always have your address and a phone number where you can be reached
- Make and keep your appointments with DCCCA, therapists and community providers. Attend every court hearing
- Sign Releases of Information so that accurate information about your child can be gathered
- Work in partnership with your child's Resource Parents to make his stay as positive as possible. This will speed his return home

## **VISITATION**

The judge will decide what level of contact will be allowed between you and your child. Studies have shown that children in care who visit frequently with their parents do better in school and in the community. They also return home faster and have fewer problems once they return home if they have had lots of positive contact. Visits can be structured or informal. Structured visits might be those times you, your child and your DCCCA Specialist meet together for counseling. This is a time to build your relationship, solve problems, and learn skills.

Structured visits can also be at a regularly scheduled time (usually lasting an hour) in a designated place where you can spend time with your child. When your child first comes into care, the judge may want these visits *supervised*. This means there will be a staff person present. If they go well, the judge can order *monitored* visits. This means that a staff person will drop in unexpectedly during your visit.

Informal visits may be times when you go to your child's school meeting, doctor's appointment or sports activity. You may accompany the resource parent if it can be arranged. This shows your child that you are supportive to them and cooperative with the resource parent and helps you stay connected while he's in alternate care.

## **TIPS FOR POSITIVE VISITATION**

It is usually a court order not to discuss the court case with your child (that's grown up business) If your child tries to talk about it, redirect them by playing a game, asking about school or another favorite topic.

Do bring toys, crayons and paper or other activities that you can do together during a structured visit. Celebrate important family holidays, birthdays or special events in your child's life (like an award from school). Encourage your child to talk about friends and activities they are involved in. Practice parenting skills you have learned in class. Try to teach your child something new like a new card game, tic-tack-toe or a new word.

Your child will have been given a *Lifebook* by the DCCCA staff when he went into alternate care. This is one of your child's links to home. You can bring pictures, postcards, or any appropriate mementoes to put in his book, talk about it and use the time to encourage and support him.

These visits will be both happy and sad for you and your child. You are the grown-up and must do your best to make the visit a good one. Save your anger and tears to share with another adult, staff or therapist rather than with your child. If he sees you upset, he will feel guilty, confused or angry, too. Encourage him to follow the rules and work hard in school. Children often try to get their parents to tell them an exact date they are coming home. Don't make promises you can't keep but do let him know you are working on the changes you need to make.

## **RULES TO FOLLOW DURING SUPERVISED VISITS**

- Do not discuss your case in front of the children
- Visitation needs to start and end at designated times
- If you are more than 15 minutes late and do not call in, the visit will not be held
- Save your tears and anger to share with another adult, not your child
- DCCCA staff supervising the visit will stop the visit if it is the best interest of the child
- Visitation will be cancelled if you arrive under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Everything discussed with the children during the visit must be within hearing of the staff supervising the visit
- Unless the court has given permission, no one other than the parent will be allowed to join the visit
- There should be no corporal punishment used during visitation

## **DCCCA'S DISCIPLINE STATEMENT**

DCCCA requires the use of positive discipline techniques for guiding and teaching children in care. Positive discipline gives children a sense of security, develops respect for order and helps the child know what is expected from him. Resource parents know that the Department of Health and Environment, DHS and DCCCA doesn't allow spanking or hitting of any child in care. They go through training to learn positive discipline techniques to use in their home.

**IMPORTANT NAMES AND NUMBERS**

My DCCCA staff : \_\_\_\_\_ Pager #: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Pager #: \_\_\_\_\_

My Child's Resource Parents :

\_\_\_\_\_

My Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

GAL: \_\_\_\_\_

DHS Worker: \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER :**

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**HEARING DATES**

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# **DCCCA RESOURCE CARE**

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

