

Often Used ACS Vocabulary

Please use this vocabulary list to assist you when interpreting for the Division of Child Protection (DCP). This vocabulary list is not exhaustive and does not provide legal definitions. It is intended to only help explain some terms that do not translate well or at all into other languages. As always, be sure to ask the DCP worker to describe unknown or difficult to translate child welfare vocabulary in more detail whenever necessary.

Types of Child Maltreatment Allegations:

Allegations are accusations. Allegations of abuse or neglect are statements which, if shown to be true, would establish that the child is an abused or neglected child.

Educational Neglect is when a parent or caregiver allows unexplained absences from school, fails to enroll a school-age child in school, refuses recommended remedial services without good reason and/or fails to respond to attendance questions from the school.

Emotional Abuse/Verbal Abuse is non-physical maltreatment that can seriously interfere with positive emotional development of a child. Patterns of Emotional/Verbal Abuse can include constant rejection; terrorizing; exposing a child to corruption, violence (including Domestic Violence) or criminal behavior; irrational behavior; and/or verbal abuse (excessive yelling, belittling and teasing.)

Domestic Violence is a pattern of physical, emotional, verbal and/or other types of abuse between intimate partners for the purpose of the abuser to gain control over the victim.

Emotional Neglect is the failure of a parent or caregiver to give a child the love and support necessary for healthy emotional development. Examples include failure to provide warmth, attention, supervision, affection, praise or encouragement to a child.

Medical Neglect is the failure of a parent to supply adequate medical, dental, optical and surgical care for a child. This includes: not seeking adequate treatment for conditions that impair or threaten to impair the child's mental, emotional, or physical condition; not following prescribed treatment for medical, psychiatric and/or psychological care; and/or not obtaining preventive care such as well-baby care checkups, physicals and immunizations.

Physical Abuse is inflicting or allowing someone to inflict physical injury to a child other than by accidental means. This includes shaking, beating, biting, kicking, punching and burning.

Physical Neglect/Inadequate Guardianship is the failure by the parent or caregiver to provide food, clothing and/or shelter for a child. It also includes abandonment, inadequate supervision and excessive corporal punishment.

Inadequate Supervision/Lack of Supervision is the failure of a parent or caregiver to make sure someone of adequate responsibility cares for the needs of a young child. Examples include: leaving young children home alone (even for short periods of time), no one picking up a young child from school or after-school program, caring for children while abusing drugs or alcohol or leaving children with an older-child or an adult who cannot care for them. This is a type of Inadequate Guardianship.

Excessive Corporal Punishment is a physical means of punishment (for example spanking with a belt) used to the point where it is physically or psychologically harmful to a child. This is a type of Physical Neglect.

Sexual Abuse includes incest, rape, obscene sexual performance, fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, sodomy and any other non-consensual sexual contact such as exposing a child to sexual activity or exhibitionism or commercial exploitation such as prostitution of a minor or pornographic materials. For all sexual acts a person is deemed legally incapable of consent if he/she is under 17 years old, mentally incapacitated or physically helpless.

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Part refers to a number in a court. The Part works like directions. If a parent is told to go to Family Court Part (2), the parent can find out which court room he or she needs to go to with this information.

A Permanency Hearing is held about 12 months after a child has been placed in foster care. This hearing will talk about what is the best permanent home for the child. This could be: Reunification, Adoption, or another permanent planned option.

Person In Need of Supervision/PINS is a child (usually a teenager) who cannot be controlled by his or her parents. This child is not necessarily in trouble with the police.

A Petition is a paper request to involve a court's authority to judge a situation.

Petitioner refers to the party filing the petition, also known as the plaintiff, in a court case. Usually, ACS is the Petitioner for Hearings in Family Court.

Respondent refers to the defendant in a court case. The person alleged to cause child abuse or neglect (usually a parent) is the Respondent for Article X hearings in Family Court.

The Subject of the Report refers to the person named in the report who has allegedly committed child abuse or neglect.

Being Named in the Report refers to other persons referred to in a report of child abuse or neglect who have not been reported to have committed child abuse or neglect.

The Termination of Parental Rights/TPR is a process of legally ending all rights a parent has to a child. This must be done, either voluntarily by a surrender or involuntarily by a TPR before a child can be adopted by another person. Parents have the right to appeal an order terminating parental rights. Once the decision has been made by the Judge (the petition has been granted) to TPR, a parent has lost the rights to their child and cannot get them back, except in very rare circumstances.

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Permanency Plans:

A Permanency Plan is the plan made for a child regarding his or her permanent home. This plan is discussed at the Permanency Hearing.

Reunification is a Permanency Plan to reunite the child with the birth parent/s. In order for reunification to happen the safety issues that led to removal of the child must be resolved.

Guardianship is a Permanency Plan to arrange for a person to have the formal legal status and the right to act on the behalf of the child. A person who is given guardianship of a child can make all daily decisions concerning the child such as where the child lives, goes to school, and goes to the doctor. Parental rights do not need to be terminated for this permanency plan to occur.

Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative (Custody) is a Permanency Plan for a relative other than the parent to provide care for a child. This generally involves a court order giving custody to the relative. Parental rights do not need to be terminated for this permanency plan to occur.

Adoption is a Permanency Plan for a person to obtain all of the parental rights and responsibilities of a child. The birth parent's rights to the child must be surrendered or terminated prior to adoption. Once an adoption is complete, except in very rare circumstances, the birth parents cannot terminate the adoption.

Other Permanency Plans include Independent Living, institutionalization and other plans. These alternative plans are arranged when it is not feasible for any of the above plans to be arranged.

Independent Living is a program for teenagers who can not reunify with their parents and do not wish to be adopted. This program helps teenagers learn life skills to prepare them for living on their own. Some examples include: how to look for and rent an apartment, money management, how to look for and keep a job and preparing for and planning for college.

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People:

Birth Parents or Biological Parents refers to the mother and father genetically related to the child.

Caretaker refers to an adult, who is not a parent, with primary responsibility for the child. This adult does not always have legal custody or guardianship. Some examples include a stepfather, aunt, adult brother, or godmother to the child.

Caseworker/Case Manager refers to an ACS staff member in DCP, DFCS, OCACM, or ACM who makes sure the appropriate services are in place for a family. This person works mainly with the birth parents, the child, and the case planner. DCP caseworkers also investigate reports of child abuse and neglect.

Child refers to someone under 18 years of age. The term may also be used to refer to a child who became a foster child before his or her 18th birthday and has remained in foster care between age 18 and age 21.

Foster Care Worker/Case Planner refers to the person who works at the Foster Care Agency or DFCS coordinating a child's Foster Care and the services needed by the family. This person works mainly with the child, birth parents, foster parents, and the case manager.

Foster Parents are the people who are responsible for the care of the child with whom the child will be living with in a Foster Boarding Home.

Mandated Reporters are people who are required by law to make a report of any known or suspected child abuse or neglect they see in a professional or official capacity. This includes social workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, counselors, day care workers, police officers, and psychologists to name a few.

A **Paramour** is someone's romantic interest. The relationship a person has with the Paramour can include a common law spouse, a boyfriend or a girlfriend, a fiancé or something less formal.

Preservationists are caseworkers who work for the ACS Family Preservation Program.

Siblings refers to the brothers and sisters of a child.

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Agencies/Conferences:

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is a New York City agency that is comprised of many programs for children and their families including the Division for Child Protection, the Division of Foster Care and Preventive Services, Head Start, Child Support Enforcement, and others.

Adoption Case Management (ACM) is the division of ACS that monitors adoption cases and manages cases that are receiving pre or post adoption services.

A Child Safety Conference/72-Hour Conference is a conference held with the parents, their supports, ACS, the Foster Care Worker, and the children (if appropriate.) The goals of the conferences are to share information, discuss a service plan, and to develop positive working relationships.

An Elevated Risk Child Safety Conference discusses the safety issues in the home and what services or other resources are needed by the family to alleviate the safety issues in order to prevent placement.

A Post-Removal Child Safety Conference discusses the safety issues that required a removal, visitation plan, what services or other resources are needed by the family to alleviate the safety issues in order to reunify the parents and children.

Direct Foster Care Services (DFCS) is the program in ACS that serves as a Foster Care Agency for children directly supervised by ACS.

Division for Child Protection (DCP) is the division of ACS that investigates reports of child abuse and neglect, files court petitions and conducts court ordered investigations, provides intensive preventive services through a program called the Family Preservation Program, provides homemaking and housing subsidy services, makes preventive service referrals for families, and places children who have been removed from their homes or voluntarily placed into foster homes.

A Family Permanency Conference/30-Day Conference is a conference held with the parents, their supports, ACS, the Foster Care Worker, service providers and the children (if appropriate.) The goals of the conferences are to share information, discuss the services and if they are helpful, discuss the visitation plan, discuss the initial permanency plan for the child, and to develop positive working relationships.

The Foster Care Agency refers to the agency that arranges for Foster Care for the children and coordinates services for the family.

The Office of Contract Agency Case Management (OCACM) is the part of ACS that monitors the contracted Foster Care and Preventive Services Agencies and manages cases that are receiving services from contracted Foster Care and Preventive Services Agencies.

The Service Plan Review/SPR is a conference, held with parents, the foster care worker, ACS staff and a reviewer not associated with case planning or case management. . The SPR is held every six months from the time a child is placed in foster care. The SPR reviews progress and compliance with the current service plan and permanency plan. If needed, the service plan is revised and the next steps are discussed.

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Foster Care/Services:

An Assessment is a formal analysis of a problem. DCP regularly conducts Assessments of Risk and Safety for Children.

The Family Preservation Program is a program run by DCP that provides intensive services to a family in their home for 6 to 8 weeks.

Foster Care is a general term for the temporary living arrangements children have after they have been removed from their homes.

A Diagnostic Reception Center (DRC) is a temporary residential facility where children who may have a mental disorder are diagnosed and have a high level of staff supervision.

A Foster Boarding Home (FBH) is a type of Foster Care where children live with foster parents in a home setting.

A Group Home is a type of Foster Care where children live together in groups (usually teenagers) in a facility with staff who provide adult supervision.

Kinship/Kinship Foster Home is a type of Foster Care where children live with a relative in a home setting.

A Residential Treatment Center (RTC) is a type of Foster Care where children who have a diagnosed mental disorder live in a facility with a high level of staff supervision.

A Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home is a type of Foster Care where children with special needs or behaviors that need extra supervision live with foster parents in a home setting.

Foster Care Agency refers to the agency that arranges for Foster Care for the children and coordinates services for the family.

Homemaking Services are services to maintain normal household operations during periods of stress or crisis, or to teach homemaking skills and management skills. They teach families how to clean a home and keep a home clean and/or to provide additional housekeeping help to families who are extremely overburdened.

Parenting Skills Classes are classes that talk about raising children and give strategies for dealing with difficult behaviors.

Placement refers to the process of arranging for appropriate Foster Care for children.

Preventive Services are services provided to a family to alleviate the risk factors in the home so that the children can remain home and Placement in Foster Care can be avoided.

A Service Plan is a written list of tasks and services that are needed by the family to alleviate the safety and risk issues in the home or other issues preventing the discharge of a child from foster care.

Visiting/Visitation refers to the visits children in Foster Care have with their parents, caretakers and siblings.

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Legal Terms/Court:

A 1028 Hearing is the hearing where a parent can apply to the Court for the return of his or her children.

An 18B Attorney is a court appointed attorney for the Respondent (usually a parent) in Family Court, if he or she cannot afford their own attorney.

Allegations are accusations. Allegations of abuse or neglect are statements which, if shown to be true, would establish that the child is an abused or neglected child.

Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) is a federal law passed to make sure that, among other things, children do not spend a long time in foster care and that children are safe. This means that if a child has been placed in foster care, ACS has to find a safe permanent home for the children with the birth parents or someone else. Parents should talk to their lawyer if they have questions about ASFA.

Court Ordered Supervision is ordered by a judge in an abuse or neglect case. This means that a child can live with his or her parents as long as the parents comply with services that are listed on the court order. ACS is required to visit the family regularly to make sure the family is in compliance with the court order.

Family Court is the court that deals with family problems.

A Finding is a final decision by a judge. For court cases where ACS is the Petitioner, the determination is about whether or not someone abused or neglected a child.

A Fair Hearing is an appeal of an agency decision to an administrative law judge employed by the State of New York. If someone feels that he or she hasn't been treated fairly with regard to services, visitation or other issues, he or she can request a fair hearing to discuss the complaint with an administrative law judge.

A Hearing is a session in court where the Petitioner and the Respondent have a chance to state their views of the Allegations.

A Juvenile Delinquent is a child between the age of seven and sixteen who has committed an act that would be a crime if committed by an adult.

A Law Guardian is a court appointed lawyer for the children. He or she represents the children's best interests and attends the Court Hearings in Family Court.

A Notice of Existence is a letter that tells a person a report of child abuse or neglect has been made and names them as the person causing the abuse or neglect. This letter also talks about how the report can be obtained and what a person's rights are concerning this report.

A Notice of Temporary Removal of Child(ren) and Right to Hearing (701B) is a form that is given to the parents or other people legally responsible for the children to officially inform them their children have been removed from their home. This form gives information about the Court process and the parent's rights during the initial Court process.