

Best Practices

“Best practices” is a phrase that describes the things that have worked for other individuals/organizations, and that can increase the odds of success in a given situation. Following is a list of best practices for parents in a CINA case.

Compliance – Do what the judge, the DHS worker, and your attorney ask you to do. Everything they ask you to do is designed to help you become a better parent so that your child(ren) can be safely returned to you. There is a reason for everything they ask you to do. If you don’t understand what you are being asked to do or why—ask. If you don’t agree with something you are being asked to do, talk to your attorney about it. S/he can advocate for your position, instead of having you “fight with” DHS.

No Drama – Your life is not a soap opera. The less drama you create or allow, the more smoothly your case will progress towards reunification. If others are causing drama in your life, find a safe, legal way to eliminate or reduce their influence. If you’re not sure how to do this, ask your attorney, your therapist, or your FCS worker to help you think through the situation.

Be on time for hearings, appointments, and Solution Focused Meetings (SFMs). This means allowing plenty of time to drive, park, and get to the courtroom or meeting room where you need to be, if the hearing /meeting is in person. You should plan to arrive at your hearing at least *15 minutes prior* to the scheduled time, so that you can speak with your attorney prior to the hearing. If your hearing is scheduled for 9:00 a.m., or will run past 4:00 p.m., be careful that you are not parked in a place that doesn’t allow parking before 9:00 or after 4:00.

When talking to your children, be age appropriate. While accountability is important, your child(ren) does not need to know every last detail about what caused him or her to be removed. You may be able to schedule an “accountability session” with your child’s therapist, which allows the therapist to help you talk to your child in an age-appropriate way. Also – please do *not* promise your children that they will be able to come home at any particular time! If the judge doesn’t allow what you’ve promised, your children will be crushed. It’s better to just tell the child that this decision is up to the judge, not you.

Focus on what’s best for your child. This is what the court is primarily considering, so it’s smart to make it *your* top priority as well. Some of those things, of course, involve you. It is in your child’s best interest to have a substance-abuse-free, mentally healthy parent, and to be in a home free from violence. If you need help, ask for it. DHS can often provide a variety of services to help you get back on track in order to successfully reunify your family. If you’re not sure which service(s) you need, talk to your FSRP worker, DHS, or your attorney about what you are struggling with and ask them to help you identify the appropriate service.

Remember, what *you* choose to do will have the greatest impact on whether your child returns home. You don’t have to be perfect but making good decisions and following through on what you are asked to do will go a long way towards a good outcome. Take advantage of the resources and opportunities to strengthen your parenting skills. Finally—tell *and show* your kids that you love them and that you are doing everything you can to be together with them again.