



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF FLOYD COUNTY

CASA COURT REPORT HANDBOOK

CASA of Floyd County:
115 E. Spring Street, Suite 416
New Albany, IN 47150

812-920-3002

info@floydcountycasa.org

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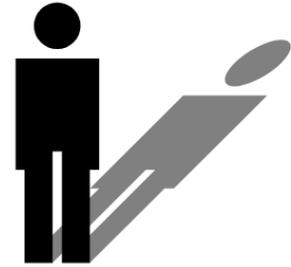
New CASA Onboarding



Assigned a Case Coordinator



STEP 01



STEP 02



Shadow Case Coordinator on a visit

Assignment of case and case debrief

- Review what a court order includes and how to troubleshoot if access to service provider and information is being denied.
- Provide handout



STEP 03



STEP 04



Case Coordinator goes on visit with new CASA.



Case Coordinator attends CFTM with new CASA. Send CFTM training video.



STEP 05



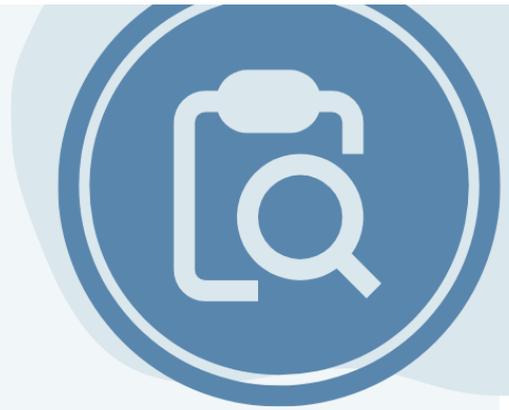
STEP 06



Case Coordinator meets with new CASA to help them write their first court report and meets with them before upcoming hearings.



WHAT SHOULD BE IN MY COURT REPORT?



1

Who is important to the child and who is in their life?

2

How is the child doing in school?

3

Are there issues with visiting their parents or a relationship with their parents?

4

Are there therapy concerns?

5

Are they involved in any extracurricular activities or hobbies or interests? What kind of life do they have?

6

What are the parents doing? Are they involved? Do they want to get their children back?



The Court Order:

What you have access to

Any Agency

- hospital
- organization
- school
- person
- office
- DCS
- Mental health agency or practitioner
- health care provider
- physician
- psychiatrist
- psychologist
- social worker
- law enforcement agency



*Always present court order and CASA badge when seeking information and access to agencies, notes, and records.

Permission to Inspect

- records
- reports
- test results
- x-rays
- photographs

of either the parents or any person responsible for the child's custody or welfare, without the consent of the child or the parent(s), guardian, or custodian



To the child in the case

- Access includes the right to visit with the child or children where placed.
- Placement includes an in-home CHINS placement, family foster care placement, relative placement, kinship placement, shelter care facility placement and medical facilities.



Trouble shooting

- If you are denied access to any of the following agencies or records above, remind them of the Order of Appointment of CASA.
- If denial continues, ask to speak to a supervisor and present your court order to them as well.
- If denial continues, contact your case coordinator.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN YOU ARE ASSIGNED TO A CASE

1. Read the CASA case file on Optima, take notes, and discuss/debrief with your Case Coordinator.
2. Do not call anyone related to the case until you receive your court order and CASA badge.
3. After reviewing the case, contact the following:
 - Your child's/youth's FCM
 - Your child's/youth's caregiver to arrange a meeting with the child/youth and also meet with them.
 - Your child's/youth's therapist, if applicable.
 - Your child's/youth's teacher and/or school counselor, if applicable.
 - Your child's/youth's biological parents, if applicable.
 - Anyone else who you or your case coordinator has identified as needing to be contacted.
4. Note the date/type of your child's/youth's next hearing. Review the dependency court process flow chart to determine where your child/youth is in the legal process. This information is under the hearings tab in Optima.
5. Maintain contact with all the people relevant to the child's/youth's life. Always share relevant information with the FCM.
6. Maintain required monthly phone/in-person contact with your Case Coordinator; staff needs to be apprised of the status of your case.
7. Stay in contact with the FCM.
8. Log case notes within 48 hours of contact or observation.
9. See more in-depth set of instructions in 1st case assignment packet

CASA Interviews

The CASA interviews are a chance for you to provide information you have received from important people in the child/youth's life. Refer to your "Case Note Logs" on Optima for reference. *Do not add your own comments or interpretation of statements.

- Begin entering your case note by marking who you met with, if they are not included in the list in Optima, you can add them separately. Be sure names are spelled correctly.
- Document all interviews and work you do on the case, remember if it isn't in Optima, it didn't happen-this is a legal process, we must document!
- Use a new paragraph for each person interviewed if you speak to multiple people in one sitting, like at a CFTM.
- Document only what the person told you.
- Only include interviews and details necessary for the court to make decisions in the court report.
- For each person interviewed, record the date, and type of contact (i.e., phone, text message, or in-person contact)
- Document unsuccessful attempts to contact important people in the child's/youth's life. (ex. Left voicemail for parents 1/19/21, 1/30/21 and have received no response.)

Introduction to the CASA Court Report

The next sections of this handbook will guide you through the components of a typical CASA Court Report. Use this handbook as a reference while writing your report. Writing your report will be a process; make sure to check-in with your Case Coordinator with any questions and give yourself at least two weeks for editing. Your supervisor will provide feedback on your report and will need to approve the final report for submission to the court. Final reports must be submitted to your case coordinator two weeks before your child's/youth's upcoming court date.

General Tips and Guidelines:

- Use the standard CASA report template- do not change fonts or font size.
- Reports should always be typed, and should be no longer than 7 pages.
- Report should be child-focused and fact-based.
- Narratives should be written in third person, ex. "CASA believes that Mark should attend football camp this summer."
- Each child will have their own CASA court report if they have a different father or mother.

History

This section is a brief summary of how the child/youth came to the attention of the court. Additionally, we want to include any major changes that have occurred in previous reporting periods. Elements of the history could include:

- Significant changes in placement
- Extreme behavior concerns
- Failed trial home visits
- Etc.
- Include any pertinent information and changes in the case in the past six months that you want the court to remember since the previous hearing.

Current Status

The Current Status provides a brief summary of key facts about what is happening in the life of your CASA child/youth and case. Your CASA report will include only the information that is relevant to your child/youth. Many CASAs find it helpful to give a status update on child and then mom, dad, or family member/s pertinent to the case and if and how they are participating in services by paragraph. This section is an opportunity for you to tell the court about your observations as well voice your recommendations for the future of the case . Ex. Children are attending therapeutic and supervised visits with their father twice weekly, when CASA spoke to children about the visits the children said the visits are going well because they are finally able to articulate the trauma their father has caused them and do not fear retaliation because the visits are supervised.

Begin this section by stating the child(ren)'s name and a brief description using adjectives to describe the nature of the child. Ex. Johnny is a witty, funny, kind, and happy 5-year-old boy. Then, provide details that you feel are important to the judge's understanding of this child's situation.

*Focus on talking about the child FIRST and then address parents as needed. You want this section of the court report to refresh the judge's memory about past orders and recommendations, and agreements that have been discussed previously by the court.

CHILD'S/YOUTH'S CURRENT PLACEMENT

- How is the child doing in current placement

EDUCATION:

- Name of school and grade, or daycare.
- Educational rights holder-if not the parents, when the rights were limited.
- Identify if the child/youth is in special education and the date of their most recent IEP.
- Current grades or other examples of how the child/youth is doing.
- The services referred to, providers and status.

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES:

- If the child/youth is under the age of three, identify if they are receiving early start services.
- Services referred to, providers and status.

PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- The services referred to, providers and status.

FAMILY:

- Current whereabouts of parents and siblings.
- Visits with parents and siblings: if/how monitored, location, and frequency.
- Services provided and parents' compliance or noncompliance, if applicable.
- Relatives who could be considered a placement or who are in contact with the child/youth.

IMPORTANT:

Discuss these issues with your Case Coordinator before you include them in your report.

- pregnancy/family planning
- Issues related to gender identity and/or sexual orientation
- Drug use
- Sexual exploitation
- Criminal charges/probation
- Mental and/or physical health diagnosis

THE CHILD'S/YOUTH'S POSITION:

The child/youth's position is an opportunity for the court to hear directly from the child/youth. Do not editorialize or add your own interpretation.

- What the child/youth would like to tell the judge.
- What the child/youth has said about their placement, visits, therapy, and/or other significant events
- Indicate if the child/youth is unable to make a statement
- If child/youth is nonverbal, CASA can state relevant observations.

Example: Maggie is 2 years old and nonverbal. Maggie continues to struggle to speak and mostly communicates through sounds, physical gestures, and cries. Maggie very much enjoys engaging in interactive and pretend play.

*Remember: Be mindful of tone-all parties will read this report. Even if we disagree, our goal is to maintain a working team for the child/youth.

Contact Log

Complete the contact log in the court report template. It needs to include the children, the FCM, and parents. If you have any regular contact with a service providers then you can include them on the contact log. Ex. Include both parents- if you spoke to dad various times, you can note that, if you have not been able to speak to mom- you can put no contact.

Recommendations

Recommendations are your requests to the judge about what you would like to see the court order. Recommendations should always be thoughtful and supported by the facts in your report. It is also important to know what recommendations are legally appropriate for the hearing you are attending. There may be times when you will not have many recommendations to include in your report.

Recommendations must be based on the facts and circumstances stated in your summary. *Line 1 on the Court Report Template remains the same every time.....until reunification or adoption is completed. Line 2: will be about placement

- Briefly state each recommendation. It is not necessary to explain why you are making them, as you will have already shared those in your Summary.
- Recommendations must be things that the court can order. The court can ensure that services are provided by DCS. The court cannot order other agencies or people to provide services for whom it does not have jurisdiction over.
- CASAs need to make recommendations regarding potential and current placements, including reunification (this is traditionally line 2 of the recommendations section)
*You must make sure the recommendation is appropriate for the type of hearing.
- CASA can make recommendations about visitations and services needed for the child/youth and/or family.
- Always make a line about recommendations for the family- if you do not have any new recommendations you can state "that they become/ or continue to be compliant with the dispositional order"
- You will want to review the previous court orders from the last hearing, included in the documents tab in Optima.

Court Procedures & Etiquette

Coming to court is an important element of advocacy. CASAs are expected to attend review, permanency, TPR fact findings hearings, or anytime they are subpoenaed. Attending the hearing is an opportunity to speak to the judge directly and to support your youth/child during the court process.

- Check in with your Case Coordinator prior to the hearing to be sure that date and time are as planned.
- Attire should be business casual, no hats in the courtroom.
- Proceed to the courtroom and check-in with CASA.
- You will receive a blue folder with court reports inside.
- One copy of the court report needs to be distributed to mom, dad, and there will be one for you to keep. Only parties to the case can receive a copy. (Judge, attorneys, FCM, and DCS already have a copy prior to hearing.)
- Sit to the far right of the courtroom and wait for your case to be called.
- You will have a chance to include any updates you would like to mention to the court that have happened since the report was written.
- Hand the blue folder back to CASA after you have spoken to the court, wait until the case is finished being heard and then you are free to go.
- Hearing notes are available within a week and will be in Optima.
- Account for your time and make a case note in Optima based on the hearing you attended.

Court Hearings:

PERIODIC CASE REVIEW: 6 MONTHS AND ALSO AFTER PERMENANCY HEARING

1. Determine the child's future status (e.g., whether the child is to return to the child's parent, guardian, or custodian, continue in out-of-home care, be placed for adoption, with an appointed legal guardian, with a fit and willing relative, or under another planned permanent living arrangement [APPLA]).
2. Determine whether it is in the child's best interest for the juvenile court to retain jurisdiction;
3. Determine whether an existing Permanency Plan will be modified, taking into account the recommendations of individuals who have a significant relationship with the child.
4. Evaluate whether continuation of the Dispositional Decree with or without modification has a reasonable chance of success;
5. Identify procedural safeguards used by DCS to protect parental rights;
6. Determine whether DCS has made Reasonable Efforts to Finalize the Permanency Plan (REPP) that is in effect;
7. Determine whether responsibility for Placement and Care(PC)of the child should remain with DCS;
8. Identify objectives of the Dispositional Decree that have not been met;
9. Provide an opportunity for the court to hear how the child feels about the current placement and Permanency Plan; and review the ongoing appropriateness of treatment if a child is admitted to a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).

APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THESE TYPES OF HEARINGS:

- Therapy for the child/children if warranted
- Any services you feel would be beneficial to child and family
- Educational Recommendations
- Extracurricular Activities
- Visitation suggestions

Court Hearings:

PERMENANCY HEARING

IC 31-34-21-7(b) states that the court shall do the following at the permanency hearing:

1. Make the determination and findings required for the six month periodic case review.
2. Consider whether juvenile jurisdiction should continue and whether the dispositional decree should be modified
3. Consider the recommendations of persons required to be given notice of the permanency hearing under IC 31-34-21-4.
4. Consult with the child in person or through an interview or written statement or report from the child's guardian ad litem/court appointed special advocate, case manager, or a person with whom the child is living and who has primary responsibility for the child's care and supervision
5. Consider and approve a permanency plan for the child
6. Determine whether an existing permanency plan must be modified
7. Examine procedural safeguards used by DCS to protect parental rights.

APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THESE TYPES OF HEARINGS:

- Therapy for the child/children if warranted
- Any services you feel would be beneficial to child and family
- Educational Recommendations
- Extracurricular Activities
- Visitation suggestions
- Make a solid recommendation of whether the permanency plan should remain reunification or move to TPR

Common Court-Related Abbreviations

PTC- Pre-trial conference

CFTM: Child and Family Team Meeting

Contest: When a party challenges a decision made by a court

DCS (Department of Children and Family Services): Is responsible for care, custody, & supervision of children in foster care.

Dispo (Detention Hearing): Court may formally declare a child to be dependent of the Court, set visit frequency and whether monitored, and determine if the parents should receive Family Reunification services.

ICPC (Interstate Compact on Placement of Children): Agreement between states about placing and monitoring children outside state of residence.

ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act): Federal law re custody of Indian children

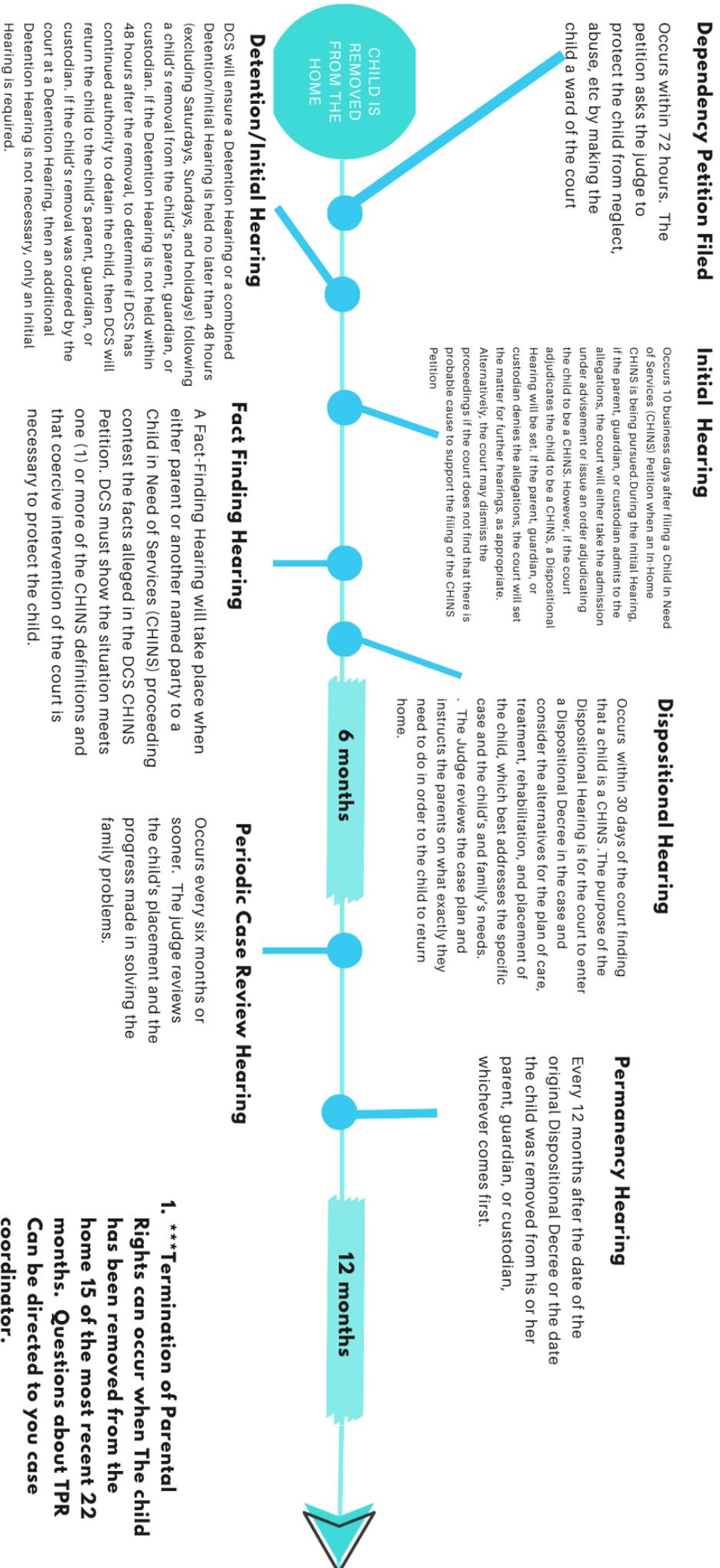
IEP (Individualized Education Program): Guides the delivery of special education support and services for a student with a disability.

APPLA: Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

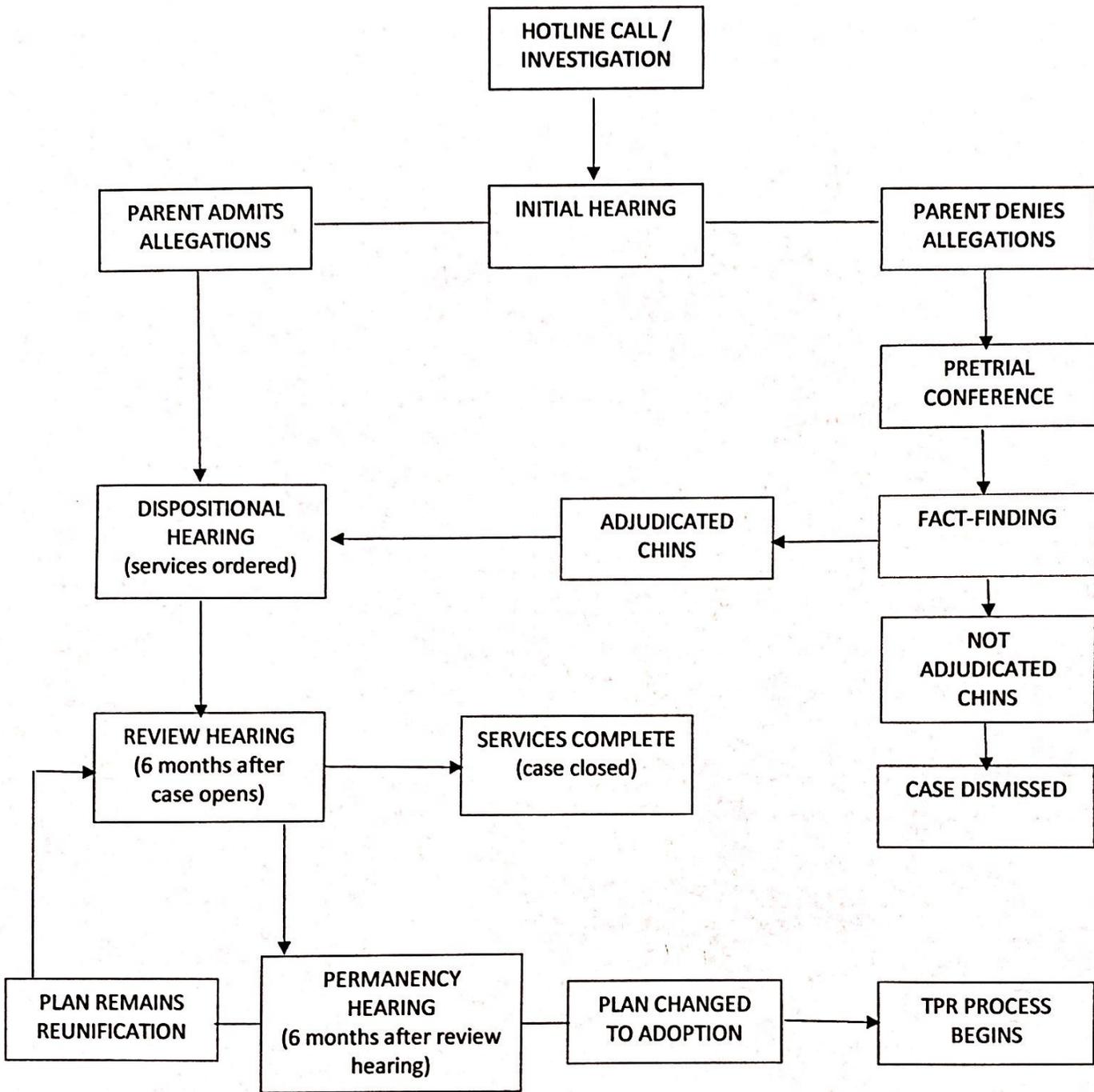
FF: Fact Finding

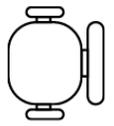
WIC (Welfare and Institutions Code): Law of which the 300 series applies to CASA work.

Indiana Dependency Court Timeline

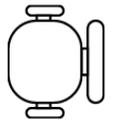


Juvenile Dependency Flow Chart

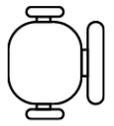




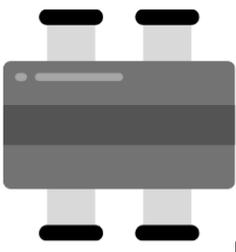
clerk



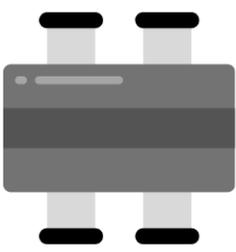
Judge



Witness stand



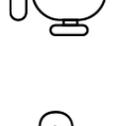
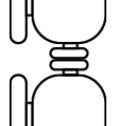
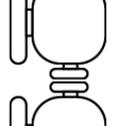
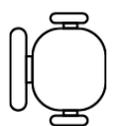
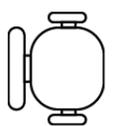
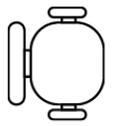
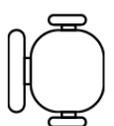
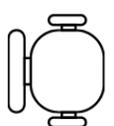
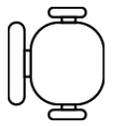
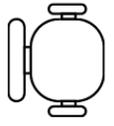
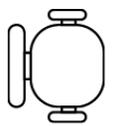
DCS attorney &
Case Worker



Parents'
Attorney

Parent

Parent



Gallery

