


DHS: CHILDREN, ADULTS AND FAMILIES

Caregivers



and ASFA

 | Independent. Healthy. Safe.

**A child's sense of time is
different from an adult's ...**



**... a year can seem like
forever to a child.**

What is ASFA?

In 1997, Congress made significant changes to the federal child abuse and neglect law. These changes became the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). ASFA focuses on the health and safety of a child. Oregon law already supported that main goal.

If a child is not safe at home, Department of Human Services child welfare staff and the courts may become involved. A child who is not safe with a parent may be removed from his/her home temporarily. A child removed from home may be placed with relatives, foster parents or residential treatment providers.

Child welfare staff, the courts and the parents work together to determine what changes need to occur in order for the child to return safely to the parent's home. ASFA and Oregon law shortened the time a parent has to make changes. In most cases, DHS will work with parents to make changes to address concerns about the child's safety.

Oregon law also requires a concurrent plan (such as adoption, guardianship, permanent placement with a fit and willing relative or another planned permanent living arrangement) be developed for the child. This concurrent plan will be used if the parents cannot provide a safe home for a child. The family should help build this plan, if possible. This concurrent plan will be used if the parents cannot make the changes required for the child to remain safely in the parent's home within the ASFA timelines.

Relatives, foster parents or others in the community may provide information to the child welfare staff to help build both plans. This may be done in a Family Decision Meeting. Foster parents or relatives may provide support to parents. They can also help with visits between the child and parents.

If the child cannot be safely returned to the parent's home, the court will have a permanency hearing. This hearing will be held no later than 14 months after a child is removed from home. The permanency hearing may be held sooner if a parent is not working toward making changes. The hearing may result in a plan to terminate or relinquish parental rights and place the child for adoption, place the child with a fit and willing relative or another planned safe and permanent living arrangement.

ASFA puts the child first

The main goal of the Adoption and Safe Families Act is to assure the health and safety of a child.

If parents cannot provide safe care for a child, the court and DHS child welfare staff may become involved.

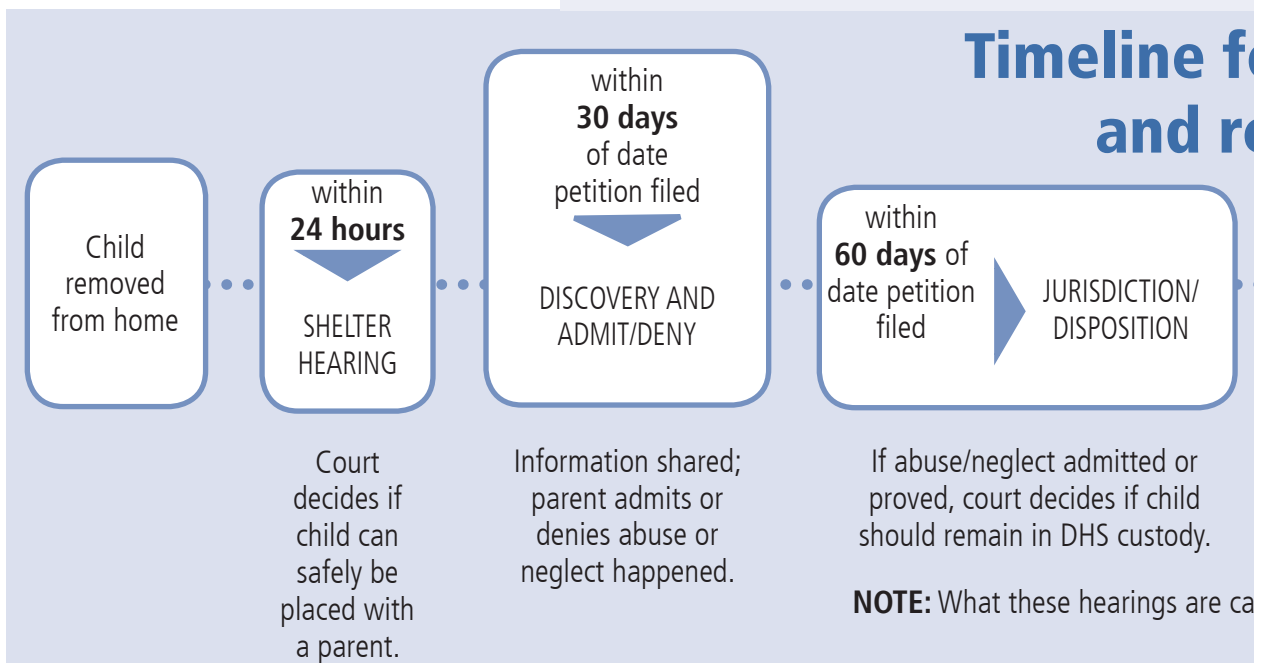
If a child must be removed from home to be safe, the child may be placed with relatives, a foster family or residential treatment providers. During this time, parents must make changes to meet the needs of the child.

Caregivers are vital partners

Foster parents or relatives provide the day-to-day care of a child who cannot live at home. Foster care is temporary. The role of the caregiver is vital to help the child be safely placed with a parent or to find another permanent home.

Aggravated circumstances

Murder, torture and sexual abuse are examples of aggravated circumstances. A court may decide that a parent has done something that seriously harms or results in the death of a child. If so,



Parents have limited time to make changes

Most parents will be given the chance to make changes. Changes may include better parenting practices or a lifestyle free of alcohol or drug abuse. DHS and others will work with parents to make these changes. The law allows a parent a limited time to make changes to meet the child's safety needs.

ces.....

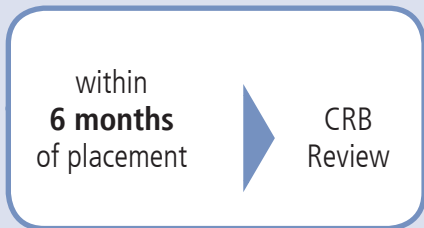
the court may say DHS does not have to work with that parent to return a child to that parent. Then DHS may look for another permanent home for the child right away.

Caregivers can help parents

Shortened time lines mean services must be provided quickly so a child can be safely placed with a parent. Foster parents can help. They can help with visits or with planning at Family Decision Meetings. They can be sure the child gets to school or counseling appointments. They can also help the parents with transportation.

The law recognizes the importance of time to a child. There is a sense of urgency in deciding where a child will grow up.

or hearings reviews



Citizen Review Board looks at DHS child welfare efforts to ensure the case plan is appropriate and that timely and appropriate services are being delivered.



The court decides on a plan for where the child will grow up.

lled may vary from county to county. Please contact your caseworker if you have questions.

The caregiver's input is valuable

Caregivers often know the foster child best. They will get notice of Citizen Review Board reviews and court hearings. Caregivers should be prepared to discuss the child's needs. The court or CRB may also ask questions about the child. Caregivers can call the caseworker to help prepare for hearings and reviews.

Court hearings are formal proceedings. Some tips for court hearings are:

- Dress seriously (e.g. church attire).
- Stand when called upon to speak.
- Address the judge as *Your Honor*.

Some children cannot sit quietly through an entire hearing. Also, it may not be appropriate for a child to be present. Emotions can be intense and adult subject matters are often discussed which could upset or confuse the child. Ask your caseworker or the child's attorney if the child should be brought to court.



A child needs a safe and permanent home...

Sometimes a child spends a long time in foster care. Yet, parents still don't make the changes needed to meet their children's need for safety.

The law limits the time parents have to make changes. If a child cannot be safely returned to the parent, the court will have a permanency hearing. This hearing will be held no later than 14 months after a child is removed from home.

At this hearing, a concurrent plan may become the goal for the child. If a child cannot be safely placed with a parent, the concurrent plan should be put into place quickly.

NOTE: The law is complex and each case is different. Contact your local DHS child welfare office or your caseworker if you have questions about this information. Visit our Web site for local office information — www.oregon.gov/DHS/localoffices/locations.shtml

Making a concurrent plan

The law requires a concurrent (or alternate) plan be made in case a child cannot be safely returned to the parent. This plan will be used if parents cannot provide a safe home for a child. Families should help build this plan, if possible.

The concurrent plan may be adoption. Other concurrent plans may be guardianship, permanent placement with a fit and willing relative, independence or another planned permanent living arrangement.

If a concurrent plan becomes the goal for a child, the court must approve that plan.

NOTE: The law is complex and each case is different. Contact your local DHS child welfare office, your caseworker or DHS, Children, Adults & Families, Office of Safety and Permanency for Children, 503-945-5651, if you have questions about this information. Visit our Web site for local office information — www.oregon.gov/DHS/localoffices/locations.shtml

Upon request this publication can be furnished in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities by contacting: DHS, Children, Adults & Families, Office of Safety and Permanency for Children, 503-945-5651. Available formats are: large print, Braille, audio tape recording, electronic format and oral presentation.

Oregon Department of Human Services
Children, Adults and Families
500 Summer Street NE, Salem, OR 97301
Telephone: 503-945-5600
www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/index.shtml



DHS 9121 Revised November 2007