

# Alliance CaRES

## The Child Welfare Team

### Core Members

**Biological (or legal) parents:** Those adults with a legal relationship to the child. Most children in care were removed from their biological parent(s), but children are sometimes found to be unsafe with (and removed from) their adoptive family. Men who are alleged to be a child's biological father are usually not made legal parties to the dependency case until they have established paternity.

**Caseworker/Social Worker:** Employed by the child welfare agency to ensure that:

- the child is safe wherever they are placed
- the legal/biological parents receive supports and services to address the safety threats that led to the child's removal
- the child achieves permanence within a reasonable amount of time.

Visits the child, birth/legal family and the foster family/caregivers regularly. Coordinates visitation between the child and the parent(s) and sibling(s) as directed in the court order. Reports to the court on the safety and wellbeing of the child and on the progress of the biological/legal parents towards being able to reunify with the child.

**CHET Worker:** The Child Health and Education Tracking (CHET) worker will contact the child or youth's caregiver as soon as possible when the child or youth is placed in foster care to help assess their needs. The CHET process must be fully completed within the first 30 days of care. The CHET worker will complete a developmental screening for children birth to five, obtain educational records for school-aged children, administer age-appropriate behavioral health screening tools and explore social connections. In addition, the CHET worker will work with the caregiver to make sure the child or youth has a well child exam with a medical provider. Then, the CHET worker will document all of the information they gathered in a CHET report which will be shared with the caregiver and caseworker. Caregivers can call Apple Health Core Connections at 1-844-354-9876 and ask for help with "health care coordination for needs identified in the CHET." The CHET report can be used as a reference for services or follow ups needed for the child.

**Federally Recognized Tribe(s):** The Indian Child Welfare Act, or ICWA, creates minimum standards for State Child Welfare agencies working with Native American/Alaskan Native/American Indian children from Federally Recognized Tribes. The Tribe may be involved with the child, the family, and the case in many different forms. A Tribe is entitled to fully participate in decision making about the child, biological family and placement. Tribes can also be a legal party to the case or might request that the case be managed within their own Tribal Court.

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**Foster Parents/Relative Caregivers/Fictive Kin/Suitable Others:** Adults who are willing and able to care for children on a temporary basis while reunification with the biological/legal parents is pursued. This caregiver may become the permanent placement for the child if the biological/legal parents are unable to safely resume parenting the child. The caregivers make the child available for regular meetings with the social worker, as well as for any court ordered visitation with biological parents or siblings. Caregivers may choose to provide reports to the court before each hearing.

**GAL (Guardian ad Litem) or CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate):** Appointed by the Court to represent the child's best interest (in other words, to tell the Court what is best for the child). Meets with the child, biological/legal parents, caregivers and others. Prepares reports to the court about how the child is doing and makes recommendations.

### Connected to the Child Welfare System

**Attorney for the youth:** If the child is 12 or over, the court will appoint an attorney to represent the child's wishes. (Note this may be different from what is in the child's "best interest.") Meets with the child, helps the child understand their rights, and represents their wishes in court.

**Child Placing Agency:** For caregivers who have chosen to be certified via a CPA, the agency may provide ongoing training, monitoring and support for the family. CPA Case Managers collaborate with state social workers to ensure the safety, stability and well-being of children while in foster care. The CPA and CPA case managers are NOT legal parties to the case and are NOT entitled to participate in court, but may attend hearings to observe and sometimes request to speak on behalf of the foster family.

**Juvenile Court:** The court holds regular hearings to determine whether progress is being made to safely return the child home. The court orders the department to provide services to the family and the child to support safe reunification of the child with one or both legal parents. The court must also keep the child's need for stability and permanency in mind and may ultimately order the department to file a petition to terminate parental rights and free the child for adoption if the parents do not address the safety issues that brought the child into care. Juvenile Court is a civil court and does not address criminal issues. Caregivers can and should attend court proceedings whenever possible.