

Why was my child taken from me?

Someone made a report about your child's safety. To protect your child, a police officer or social worker has:

- Taken your child out of your home, and
- Asked the court to get involved in this case to protect your child.

Where is my child now?

Your child may be at a temporary foster home or shelter in this county. To find out more about what is happening with your child, call the social worker for this case:

Social Worker:

Phone:

E-mail:

Will my child be returned to me soon?

It depends. A social worker will review your home situation and decide how best to keep your child safe.

If your child is not returned home before you go to court, your child may be sent temporarily to stay with:

- Your child's other legal parent (if you do not live together),
- A relative or extended family member, or
- A foster parent.

Do I have the right to try to get my child back?

Yes. You have the right to:

- A lawyer. (The court will give you one if you cannot afford one.)
- Take part in all court hearings about your child.
- Have an interpreter in court if you do not speak English well.
- Refuse to answer questions that could lead to criminal charges against you.

Tell your lawyer if you have questions about your rights or about what happens in court.

Does my child have rights, too?

Yes. Your child has the same rights that you have. Your child will have a different lawyer who will:

- Tell the court what the child wants, and
- Ask the court to do what is best for the child.

Can my child be placed with relatives?

Yes. You **must** give the social worker names and contact information for your child's other legal parent and relatives who may be able to care for your child. The social worker will contact them to see if their home is available and safe for your child.

How will I know when to go to court?

You will get a *Notice* with the time, date, and location of the court hearing.

Important! The court and the social worker will mail you many important documents. If your mailing address changes, tell your social worker right away.

What to expect

1. After your child is taken from your home, a social worker has **2 full working days** to decide if your child is safe with you. If the social worker thinks your child is **not** safe with you, she or he will:
 - Take a *Petition* to a special court for children (Juvenile Court), and
 - Ask the court to be in charge of your child's care, custody, and supervision.

Important! Read the *Petition*. It lists the reasons (*allegations*) your child is not safe in your home. If you do not understand it, ask your lawyer.
2. The court has **1 full working day** to hold a **detention hearing**. This hearing will decide:
 - To return the child to you right away, or
 - Where the child will stay for now and how you can visit him or her.
3. The next hearing will be within **15 working days** unless the judge decides more time is needed. It's called a **jurisdictional hearing**. That's when the judge will look more closely at your child's situation and decide if any allegation in the *Petition* is true.
 - If the judge decides none of them is true, your child will be returned to you.
 - If the judge believes any allegation *is* true, your child may become the **court's dependent**.

If your child becomes the court's dependent

There will be another hearing (called a **dispositional hearing**), when the judge will decide:

- Where your child should live,
- When, where, and how you can visit your child, and
- What must be done to take care of the problems that caused your child to be taken out of the home. (This is called a *reunification plan*.)

This hearing may be at the same time as the jurisdictional hearing. If you or your child disagrees with the judge's decision, you may ask an appeals court to review the judge's decision.

Questions? Talk to your lawyer, and learn more about cases like yours at: courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-childabuse