

SECTION 10: WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH DCS TO REACH YOUR GOALS



WHAT ARE THE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF DCS?

- Parents identify the support they need to strengthen their families and protect their children, and the agency listens. Services are “family centered.”
- Families are involved in case planning and identifying the services they will need to achieve their goals.
- Services emphasize each family’s strengths and remedy the the deficiencies in their protective capacities. Building on strengths, aids to keep children at home or reunify when children have been placed out of the home.
- Services are provided as close to home as possible. The services provided or referred by DCS are “community based.”
- The entire family is provided the services they need, not just the child(ren) placed in out-of-home care.
- Services are flexible, and can change to fit each individual family.
- Services consider each family’s culture, they are “culturally competent.”
- The family selects the people who may be involved in developing the case plan. This may include extended family members, neighbors, friends, ministers, or others from the community.
- Foster parents and birth parents work together.
- All of the systems supporting the children and families work together to develop and complete the case plan.
- Services from multiple providers are coordinated to reduce confusion for families. Service coordination in support of the case plan ensures everyone is “on the same page.”
- Families and youth who are involved with the Department of Child Safety are encouraged to express their opinions and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Sometimes multiple providers will combine resources, and work together to better serve and help families.

WHAT ARE SOME APPROACHES OF DCS BASED ON THEIR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES?

Some of the approaches being used by DCS include:

1. Family Centered Approach
2. Family Function Assessment
3. Protective & Promotive Factors
4. Trauma Informed
5. Protective Capacities

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH DCS?

- Improves communication about goals for you and your child
- Enhances the match between your family’s needs and services offered
- Obtain additional support for your family and your child when needed
- Resolves issues early before they become bigger problems
- Allows your child to feel more comfortable with the family’s situation
- Ensures that DCS is able to communicate with your entire team
- Creates a partnership with DCS towards a common goal.

HOW CAN I RESOLVE A CONFLICT IF I EXPERIENCE ONE WITH MY DCS SPECIALIST?

If you are experiencing a conflict with your DCS Specialist, DCS has a series of steps to assist you in addressing and resolving complaints or disagreements.

Step 1: Attempt to resolve an issue or complaint directly with your DCS Specialist. Contacting your assigned DCS Specialist by phone or scheduling an in-person meeting to attempt to resolve the issue is ideal. Remember to keep a record of your attempts to schedule a meeting, and keep a written document outlining your concerns.

Step 2: If your attempt to resolve your concerns with your DCS Specialist is not successful, contact the DCS Specialist's Supervisor. In the same manner in which you attempted to resolve the issue or problem with your DCS Specialist, you should attempt to resolve the issue or problem with the DCS Supervisor.

Step 3: If your attempts to resolve the issue or complaint with the DCS Specialist or the DCS Specialist's Supervisor is not successful, you can contact the DCS Ombudsman's Office. The DCS Ombudsman, via phone at 877-527-0765 or 602-364-0777 or email Ombudsman@azdcs.gov, assists parents and guardians who are involved with DCS, their families and other interested parties to resolve complaints. The DCS Office of the Ombudsman will review your complaint and determine the type of response needed. Responses may include:

- A referral to the appropriate DCS management staff
 - This occurs when it is determined that the issue or problem can be readily resolved by speaking with the correct management staff.
- A response by the DCS Office of the Ombudsman
 - This response occurs when it is determined that the problem requires a review of the case record and contact with field staff by the DCS Office of the Ombudsman to obtain a needed response or action. DCS Office of the Ombudsman staff can also assist by explaining the DCS process for investigations, mediating disagreements between you and specific DCS personnel, and assisting with the elimination of barriers to services.
- A Client Grievance
 - A client grievance occurs when other conflict resolution methods have been unsuccessful and a more formal process is needed. It must be understood that not all concerns/conflicts are eligible for a grievance. If this is still unresolved, the DCS Office of the Ombudsman, <http://www.azoca.gov/child-safety-dcs/> will provide you with a Level I Client Grievance form and explain the next step in the grievance process. A grievance ensures complaints are addressed at the lowest management level by those most familiar with the situation. It provides for a face to face meeting with the management staff, and requires a specific response within specific time frames with detailed documentation of the complaint and resolution process.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- Your involvement with the Department of Child Safety can be both scary and frustrating. Remember that DCS, the court, and your family have the same goal - to help your family live together safely, successfully, and permanently.
- If you are experiencing a problem or issue with your DCS Specialist, it is important that you address the issue early, before it becomes a much bigger problem.
- While you are attempting to resolve an issue or complaint, follow Steps 1 through 3 above in the order they are presented. It will be helpful to write down important facts related to the issue or problem before you bring it to the attention of your DCS Specialist. Practicing what you are going to say first can help you remain calm and think clearly throughout the process.