

A Resource Guide for Families

December 2020

Health care. Financial help. Job search. Education certificate or degree. These are just some services that providers offer to individuals and families. This resource guide talks about the benefits of seeking services, common challenges when seeking services, and tips for accessing the services you might need. We are excited to share this resource guide with families like you who are together again after concerns about child abuse or neglect - we want your family to have the support you need to stay happy and healthy.

Has your child recently returned home after Department of Social Services (DSS) involvement?

You probably feel happy and relieved about having your family together again. But you and your children may still be getting used to being back together as a family. You may sometimes worry about having everything that you need to support yourself and your family.

Does needing support mean that you are not doing a good job as a parent?

No! You are not alone. Feeling tired or stressed is normal for every parent. All families need help and support sometimes.

Are you worried about looking for support?

You may not know where to find support. You may not have enough time to look for support. You may not want other people to think you need help to care for your family. You may not want to reach out to anyone after working with DSS, especially if you feel that you have been treated unfairly.

How can having support help you and your family?

Having the support that you need can help your family to stay safe.

What types of services are available for you and your family?



Basic Needs: food, clothing, utilities, or technology;



Housing: find, provide, maintain, or cost assistance for housing;



Employment: job training, searches, and placement;



Physical Health: general or specialized health care, emergency, physical safety, or cost assistance for health care;



Mental and Behavioral Health: refer or provide services for counseling, substance abuse treatment, crisis help, or disability services;



Emotional Health: social and emotional support groups or programs;



Legal Services: mediation, court advocacy services for domestic violence, immigration, or child custody;



Education: resources for children and youth, material needs for students (for example, school supplies, clothing, or toiletries), and academic or technical training for adults (for example, GED and college programs);



Childcare: finding, providing, or cost assistance for childcare services; and,



Parenting Support: providing knowledge and skills or social support, such as parenting support groups.

This guide provides families with information about services, including:

- challenges that families may face;
- ways providers are trying to address challenges for families; and
- tips for seeking services.

Additional resources are included at the end on pages 5-12:

- Resource #1 shares details about the services, fees (if any), and eligibility requirements from providers that we interviewed (pages 5–7).
- Resource #2 lists questions to consider asking providers you contact for help (pages 8-12).

Common challenges to accessing support services

Finding and accessing services can be challenging. Service providers we spoke with talked about challenges families face. Have you experienced:

- Not enough service providers near you?
- Service providers located too far from where you live?
- Long waiting lists?
- Workers who do not speak your primary language?
- Limited business hours?
- Services that cost too much?
- No in-home services?
- No transportation?
- No childcare?

Ways service providers are addressing challenges

Some service providers:

- come to your home so that you do not have to travel;
- offer food and childcare during appointments or programs;
- provide services outside of business hours; or,
- use interpreting services to work with families.

Service providers should ask you about your challenges so they can help find solutions. But it also is OK to let them know if you have any challenges and ask how they can help.

Tips for seeking services

One of the reasons families might not seek services is that they do not have time. This is even harder if families do not know where to start or think they may need to do a lot to qualify for services.

Below is a list of steps to help you seek services. Some steps are helpful to do before going to a service provider's office. It is OK if you are not able to do all of the steps right away. It might help to complete a few steps at a time.



Identify providers

- Ask friends or family members if they know of any providers.
- Ask the DSS agency in your county if they can recommend providers.
- Ask service providers that you already see. For example, your doctor may be able to recommend a mental health provider.
- Search provider websites or Facebook pages for the help you need. For example, search for “help with finding housing in [name of your home town or county]”.
- Search the internet for lists of providers in your area.
- Attend events such as fairs or festivals and talk to providers who have a table set up about their services.
- Add your name and contact information to sign-up sheets so providers can follow up with you.



Contact providers

- Before calling, review the provider's website if possible, to learn more about the organization. It may help to have a friend or family member review the website with you.
 - Websites often include information about what services are available, who is eligible for the services, or the required forms.
 - Identify information or requirements that you want to ask more about when you call.
- Call before visiting a provider and prepare questions to ask on the call.
 - Knowing what you want to ask ahead of time will help you get all of the information you need.
 - Ending a call with the information you need will keep you from having to wait to apply for or receive services.
- Go ahead and make the first call to the provider.
 - Share only what you feel comfortable sharing.
 - As you get to know the provider, you may feel more comfortable sharing personal information, but it is OK if you don't want to share some details right away.
- Schedule a visit with the provider.
 - Some providers may not require a visit but might encourage you to visit so that you can learn about all of the resources they offer.
- Ask about a waiting list if they tell you they are not accepting new clients.
 - Signing up for the waitlist will “put you in line” and connect you with a possible provider, which is good if there are not many providers that offer the services you need.

*Note: See **Resource #2** for questions to ask providers, as well as some specific questions to ask providers in certain service areas such as health care or housing.*



Prepare for your first visit with providers

- Complete application or forms.
 - Save a copy.
 - Submit online, if possible.
 - If you cannot submit online, you can print the form and complete it by hand, if that is OK with the provider.
 - If you cannot print the form, just review it to see what information is needed. Then ask the provider if you can complete the form in person or if they can mail you a copy.
- Obtain required documents to take with you.
 - Make copies of documents to give to the provider.
 - Keep the original documents for yourself.
 - If you cannot make copies before you visit, ask the provider to make a copy for you.
 - Required documents might include:
 - identification;
 - Social Security card;
 - proof of residence, such as a utility bill showing your name and address;
 - income verification, such as your last three paystubs/pay statements;
 - birth certificate for you or your child; or
 - insurance information, referral, and medical history.

If you're not sure what documents you need, call to ask the provider for more information.
- Bring a list of questions if you think of anything new to ask about after calling the provider or reviewing the application and required forms.



After your visit...

- Be sure to complete any next steps the provider gives you.
- If you are on a waitlist, call the provider from time to time to ask if you moved up on the waitlist.
- Feel free to share your concerns with the provider so that you get the services and support you need. You will likely feel more comfortable doing this as you and the provider develop a positive relationship over time.

Final Words of Advice

Seeking support means that you want to create the best possible life for yourself and your children. You should feel good that you are seeking out services, and providers are willing to meet your needs. If the first provider you call does not work out, however, do not give up. Sometimes it takes a few tries before finding the right match.

Additional Resources

The National Child Abuse Prevention Month Strong and Thriving Families Tip Sheets 2020, which cover topics ranging from managing stress to connecting with your teen-age child to helping your child heal from trauma.

The tip sheets can be found at this website:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>

Resource #1

Types of services

Providers offer many different services to individuals and families, and sometimes offer services aside from their main service area. For example, educational service providers may also offer services for employment. With every provider, it is important to find out who they serve, the cost, and eligibility requirements. Below we describe typical services, other services they may also provide, who is served, the cost, and eligibility. This information is based on speaking with one or two providers in each service area. It does not apply to all providers.



Basic Needs

- **Services offered:** food pantry, meals, personal hygiene products, and financial assistance with utilities.
- **Other services:** childcare, education, or mental and behavioral health.
- **Who they serve:** families, women in crisis, children involved who were involved with DSS, or the Latino community.
- **Cost:** free.
- **Eligibility requirements:** a referral, application, or documents such as proof of residency or birth certificates may be required.



Housing

- **Services offered:** home construction, emergency shelter, long- or short-term housing, and rental assistance.
- **Other services:** childcare, parenting, or education.
- **Who they serve:** adults, families, single parents, persons who are homeless with children, or women in crisis, as well as families who have had involvement with DSS.
- **Cost:** free for women or persons who are homeless with children, but they may require a deposit that is refundable up to a certain amount. Rent may be determined on a sliding scale based on your income.
- **Eligibility requirements:** may need to complete an application, meet income requirements, or provide income verification or paystubs. If housing is not available right away, you may need to join a waitlist.



Employment

- **Services offered:** job training and placement, résumé writing or interview skills, and unemployment claims.
- **Other services:** housing, parenting, mental and behavioral health, or education.
- **Who they serve:** adults, families, persons who are unemployed, or families with low-income, as well as families that have had involvement with DSS.
- **Cost:** free, except for fees for specific programs, such as a home-ownership class.

- **Eligibility requirements:** may need to meet income requirements or provide documents such as Social Security card or identification. If employment services are not available right away, you may need to join a waitlist.



Physical Health

- **Services offered:** doctor referrals, pregnancy testing and education, prescription assistance, diabetes management, dental or primary care, and support for children with developmental delays or long-term illness.
- **Other services:** mental and behavioral health.
- **Who they serve:** adults and children.
- **Cost:** Medicare/Medicaid or private insurance. Some providers also serve uninsured children.
- **Eligibility requirements:** health physical or insurance information may be required.



Mental and Behavioral Health

- **Services offered:** individual or family therapy, substance abuse treatment, counseling for victims of domestic violence, or postpartum support.
- **Other services:** housing, childcare, or parenting.
- **Who they serve:** women in crisis, children, and families that have had involvement with DSS.
- **Cost:** free (for the provider we interviewed).
- **Eligibility requirements:** a referral or health physical may be required. If services are not available right away, you may need to join a waitlist.



Emotional Health

- **Services offered:** support groups for parenting, child development, or parents of children with autism, therapeutic horseback riding for children with disabilities, and grief counseling.
- **Other services:** basic needs or mental and behavioral health.
- **Who they serve:** adults, children, families, or children and families that have had involvement with DSS. Special services may be offered for children or youth who show inappropriate sexual behavior, who a court, DSS, or a school would refer.
- **Cost:** free, private insurance, Medicare/Medicaid, or sliding scale of fees based on income.
- **Eligibility requirements:** application, health physical, insurance information, or a referral may be required. You may need to schedule an appointment for services or be present during services for your child.



Legal Services

- **Services offered:** free legal assistance, mediation or counseling, or family- or employment-based immigration support.
- **Other services:** basic needs, education, or childcare.
- **Who they serve:** children who have had involvement with DSS and the Latino community.
- **Cost:** providers we spoke with mentioned offering services for free.
- **Eligibility requirements:** free legal services may be available if you meet income requirements.

Education

- **Services offered:** tutoring, basic skills programs, General Educational Development (GED) programs, or English as a Second Language (ESL) support.
- **Other services:** basic needs, education, or physical health.
- **Who they serve:** adults, children, or families.
- **Cost:** free for children. Adult education programs, such as community colleges, may have tuition costs but you may be able to qualify for financial aid.
- **Eligibility requirements:** may need to meet income requirements or complete an application.

Childcare

- **Services offered:** subsidized childcare services, childcare availability in the community, or developmental screening.
- **Other services:** parenting or education.
- **Who they serve:** children and families, as well as those who have had involvement with DSS.
- **Cost:** free or vouchers for eligible families, although free services may be for support programs/resources and not for childcare.
- **Eligibility requirements:** may need to complete an application, meet income requirements, or provide required documents such as proof of residency or income verification.

Parenting support

- **Services offered:** home visiting, early intervention, parenting education classes, and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) support.
- **Other services:** employment, childcare, mental and behavioral health, emotional health, or education.
- **Who they serve:** adults and children and families, including those who have had involvement with DSS. Special services may be offered for children with disabilities.
- **Cost:** Medicare/Medicaid or a sliding scale of fees based on income. For children receiving services for a developmental disability, some fees may be waived.
- **Eligibility requirements:** may need a health physical or insurance information.

Resource #2

Provider Information Sheet

It is helpful to think about what assistance you would like. Once you identify a potential provider, it is a good idea to call before visiting so that you can ask questions, decide if you would like to visit in person, and make sure your visit is as helpful as possible. Below are questions to ask all providers, followed by some questions you may want to ask specific types of providers. You can make your own version of this sheet or make copies so that you can use it to contact more than one service provider.

When you call a service, let staff members know what you need and ask if they can help. You could say: "I need help with

(describe what you need)

Is this something your agency provides?"

- If no, "Can you recommend another provider for me to call?"
- If yes, "Are you the person who can answer questions I have about services? Or, is there someone else I should speak with?"
 - If yes, "What is your name and what is this the best phone number to call if I need to reach you again?"
 - If no, "Who should I speak with and how do I reach them?"

Organization name: _____ Phone number: _____

Address: _____ Website: _____

Contact Person: _____ Email address: _____

General Questions to Ask Service Providers

Questions	Responses
1. In what county is your office located? a. Do you only serve residents in your county?	
2. I need services for myself and/or my child(ren), do you serve adults and/or children? a. Both men and women? b. Children? If children, what ages? c. Special populations?	
3. What information and documents do I need to provide to access services?	
4. Are there any eligibility requirements to access your services? a. If so, what are they?	
5. Is there a fee for your services? a. If yes: What is the cost? What are the payment options? Are payment plans offered? b. What types of insurance do you accept, if any?	
6. Do I need to make an appointment? a. If yes: How do I make an appointment? b. If no: Can I just walk in? Are there set times for walk-ins?	If you are able to make an appointment: Date: Time: Location:
7. Are you accepting new clients? a. If yes: Are services available right away, or is there a waiting period? b. If no: Is there a waitlist to access services? If so, how do I get on the list?	
8. What is involved in receiving services? a. Are there regular meetings or appointments to attend? b. Are meetings or appointments required or optional?	
9. For how long can I receive services? a. Is there a time limit, or some other limit?	
10. What other services do you provide? a. [If you have transportation barriers] Do you provide transportation support?	

Questions	Responses
11. [If you speak a language other than English] Do you have an interpreter, or should I bring one with me?	
If Trying to Access Services at a Healthcare Provider	
12. Do I need a health physical?	
13. Do I need a referral or doctor's note?	
14. What medical history do you need from me?	
If Trying to Access Services at an Education or Employment Agency	
15. What kind of adult education classes do you offer? a. Trade or entrepreneurship classes? b. Certification programs?	
16. What is the application process to enroll?	
17. Do you offer financial aid? a. If yes: What type of financial aid do you offer? b. Who is eligible for financial aid? What verification do I need to provide? c. How do I apply for financial aid?	
18. What resources and types of support do you offer students? a. Academic advising? b. Internships/career placement? c. Counseling? d. Job search assistance? e. Other?	
19. [For an employment agency] Do you provide any career or technical training? a. If yes: How do I apply for training? Are there eligibility requirements? 20. Do you offer résumé writing support? Interview skills support? a. How do I get résumé or interview support?	
If Trying to Access Services at a Childcare Agency/ Parenting Support Classes	
21. Do you accept childcare vouchers?	
22. Do you offer Head Start?	

Questions	Responses
23. Do you provide support for special populations?	
24. Are there other services or support resources for families?	
If Trying to Access Services from a Housing Provider	
25. Who is eligible for housing?	
26. What is the application process for housing?	
27. How much does it cost to apply for and move into a housing unit?	
28. How long can I live in the unit? Is there a time limit? a. If there is a time limit, what support do you provide for finding permanent or other housing?	
29. Do I need to provide income verification? a. If yes: What documents do I need to provide? Tax returns? Letter from my employer?	
Other Relevant Questions You May Have <i>This section is provided for you to jot down relevant questions and answers that you may want to ask service providers about accessing services within their organizations.</i>	