

aask | ADVOCACY

INFORM. EMPOWER.

Court reports provide valuable insights

One of the common complaints that we hear from foster parents is their frustration about not having more information about what is going on in their child's case. Lack of information can sometimes lead to fear that poor decisions will be made by the State due to inaccurate information. Even when families have requested information, they are often told that the information cannot be shared with them.

In reality, according to DCS's own policy, foster parents are entitled to the same information that DCS submits to the Courts. The Arizona Department of Child Safety Policy and Procedure Manual provides that foster parents are entitled to see the court report and the case plan for any child they have cared for in the last sixth months. It states in Chapter 7: Section 11 Court Reports: "Send the report and the case plan to:

- if not represented by an attorney or guardian ad-litem, the parents, guardians and child, age 12 and older;
- **the foster parent**, pre-adoptive parent, **kinship foster parent**, or other

significant person who is caring for the child or who has cared for the child in the last six months;"

Unfortunately because not all DCS Child Safety Specialists (also referred to as Case Managers) are aware of this policy, you may need to educate them about their own policy manual.

Click [HERE](#) for a copy of this DCS policy.

We hope you will feel empowered to exercise your right to request this valuable information directly from DCS. If you have questions about the policy, or about contacting DCS, or if you would like AASK to help by advocating alongside you, feel free to contact your AASK Family Specialist.

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It is increasingly difficult to be a foster parent. At the same time expectations for families are increasing, the respect for and appreciation of families seems to be waning. It sometimes feels that the system is not designed to support families but to test their patience and commitment. Families are being asked to do things without being told "why" or "how." Families are often being told inconsistent and contradictory information that feels arbitrary or even incorrect. Foster parents are left feeling powerless. They don't know what to expect. They don't know how to respond.

In order to better support you in providing meaningful relationships for the children in your care, Aid to Adoption of Special Kids (AASK) begins an effort to give our foster parents power by giving them information. We hope to educate foster parents through "AASK Advocacy" a series of articles on state policies and laws governing the child welfare system and the role of foster families. Our goal is to arm you with a clear explanation of how things are supposed to work and the underlying policy, rule or law that is the legal basis for the explanation.

Education builds confidence. Confidence creates control. Together, education, confidence and control help you make better decisions for you, your family and for the child you've brought into your home.

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