



## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES TERMS

Most of these terms can be found in North Carolina's Juvenile Code: N.C. General Statutes § 7B-101. Others are from [Working with the Courts in Child Protection](#) by The Honorable William G. Jones found at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/courts/courts.pdf>

*These are scaled down versions of those definitions and are for informational purposes only. Nothing herein should be considered legal advice.*

**Abused juvenile:** Any juvenile less than 18 years of age whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker:

- a. Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the juvenile a serious physical injury by other than accidental means;
- b. Creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the juvenile by other than accidental means;
- c. Uses or allows to be used upon the juvenile cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices to modify behavior;
- d. Commits, permits, or encourages the commission of a violation of the following laws by, with, or upon the juvenile: first-degree rape; second degree rape; first-degree sexual offense; second degree sexual offense; sexual act by a custodian; crime against nature; incest; preparation of obscene photographs, slides, or motion pictures of the juvenile; employing or permitting the juvenile to assist in a violation of the obscenity laws; dissemination of obscene material to the juvenile; displaying or disseminating material harmful to the juvenile; first and second degree sexual exploitation of the juvenile; promoting the prostitution of the juvenile; and taking indecent liberties with the juvenile;
- e. Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage to the juvenile; serious emotional damage is evidenced by a juvenile's severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior toward himself or others; or
- f. Encourages, directs, or approves of delinquent acts involving moral turpitude committed by the juvenile.\*

<b>Case Plan:</b>	The document that outlines the outcomes, goals, and tasks necessary to be achieved in order to reduce the risk of maltreatment.**
<b>Case Planning:</b>	The stage of the CPS case process where the CPS caseworker develops a case plan with family members.**
<b>Child Protective Services (CPS)</b>	The designated social services agency (in most States) to receive reports, investigate, and provide intervention and treatment services to children and families in which child maltreatment has occurred. Frequently, this agency is located within larger public social service agencies, such as Departments of Social Services.**
<b>Concurrent Planning:</b>	Identifies alternative plans for permanent placement of a child by addressing both reunification and legal permanency with a new parent or caregiver if reunification efforts fail.**
<b>Custodian:</b>	The person or agency that has been awarded legal custody of a juvenile by a court or a person, other than parents or legal guardian, who has assumed the status and obligation of a parent without being awarded the legal custody of a juvenile by a court.*
<b>Dependent juvenile:</b>	<p>(1) A juvenile in need of assistance or placement because the juvenile has no parent, guardian, or custodian responsible for the juvenile's care or supervision or whose parent, guardian, or custodian is unable to provide for the care or supervision and lacks an appropriate alternative child care arrangement.*</p> <p>(2) as used in statutes providing for the care of dependent, neglected, and delinquent children, the term means dependent upon the public support; any child under the age of 18 who is destitute, or whose home by reason of neglect by the parents is an unfit place for such child, or whose father, mother, guardian, or custodian does not properly provide for such a child.**</p>
<b>Family Assessment:</b>	The stage of the child protection process when the CPS caseworker, community treatment provider, and the family reach a mutual understanding regarding the behaviors and conditions that must change to reduce or eliminate the risk of maltreatment, the most critical treatment needs that must be addressed, and the strengths on which to build.**

<b>Guardian ad Litem:</b>	A lawyer or layperson who represents a child in juvenile or family court. Usually this person considers the "best interest" of the child and may perform a variety of roles, including those of independent investigator, advocate, advisor, and guardian for the child.**
<b>Initial Assessment or Investigation</b>	The stage of the CPS case process where the CPS caseworker determines the validity of the child maltreatment report, assesses the risk of maltreatment, determines if the child is safe, develops a safety plan if needed to assure the child's protection, and determines services needed.**
<b>Intake:</b>	The stage of the CPS case process where the CPS caseworker screens and accepts reports of child maltreatment.**
<b>Juvenile:</b>	A person who has not reached the person's eighteenth birthday and is not married, emancipated, or a member of the armed forces of the United States.*
<b>Multidisciplinary Team:</b>	Established between agencies and professionals within the child protection system to discuss cases of child abuse and neglect and to aid in decisions at various stages of the CPS case process. These teams also may be designated by different names, including child protection teams, interdisciplinary teams, or case consultation teams.**
<b>Neglected juvenile:</b>	<p>(1) A juvenile who does not receive proper care, supervision, or discipline from the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker; or who has been abandoned; or who is not provided necessary medical care; or who is not provided necessary remedial care; or who lives in an environment injurious to the juvenile's welfare; or who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of law. In determining whether a juvenile is a neglected juvenile, it is relevant whether that juvenile lives in a home where another juvenile has died as a result of suspected abuse or neglect or lives in a home where another juvenile has been subjected to abuse or neglect by an adult who regularly lives in the home.*</p> <p>(2) The failure to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. <i>Physical neglect</i> can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision, or proper weather protection (heat or coats). <i>Educational neglect</i> includes failure to provide appropriate schooling, special educational needs, or allowing excessive trancies. <i>Psychological neglect</i> includes the lack of any emotional support and love, chronic inattention to the child, exposure to spouse abuse, or drug and alcohol abuse.**</p>

<b>Reasonable efforts:</b>	The diligent use of preventive or reunification services by a department of social services when a juvenile's remaining at home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time. If a court of competent jurisdiction determines that the juvenile is not to be returned home, then reasonable efforts means the diligent and timely use of permanency planning services by a department of social services to develop and implement a permanent plan for the juvenile.*
<b>Review Hearings:</b>	Held by the juvenile and family court to review dispositions (usually every 6 months) and to determine the need to maintain placement in out-of-home care or court jurisdiction of a child.**
<b>Responsible individual:</b>	An individual identified by the director as the person who is responsible for rendering a juvenile abused or seriously neglected.*
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	To assess and measure the likelihood that a child will be maltreated in the future, frequently through the use of checklists, matrices, scales, and other methods of measurement.**
<b>Risk Factors</b>	Behaviors and conditions present in the child, parent, or family that likely will contribute to child maltreatment occurring in the future.**
<b>Safe home:</b>	A home in which the juvenile is not at substantial risk of physical or emotional abuse or neglect.*
<b>Safety Assessment:</b>	A part of the CPS case process in which available information is analyzed to identify whether a child is in immediate danger of moderate or serious harm.**
<b>Safety Plan:</b>	A casework document developed when it is determined that the child is in imminent or potential risk of serious harm. In the safety plan, the caseworker targets the factors that are causing or contributing to the risk of imminent serious harm to the child, and identifies, along with the family, the interventions that will control the safety factors and ensure the child's protection.**
<b>Service Agreement:</b>	The casework document developed between the CPS caseworker and the family that outlines the tasks necessary to achieve goals and outcomes necessary for risk reduction.**

**Termination of Parental Rights Hearing:**

A legal proceeding to free a child from a parent's legal custody so that others can adopt the child. The legal basis for termination of parental rights differs from State to State, but most States consider the failure of the parent to support or communicate with the child for a specified period, parental failure to improve home conditions, extreme or repeated neglect or abuse, parental incapacity to care for the child, and/or extreme deterioration of the parent-child relationship. In making this finding, the court is determining that the parents will not be able to provide adequate care for the child in the future by using a standard of clear and convincing evidence. This burden of proof is higher than preponderance of the evidence, which is used in civil abuse or neglect cases where termination is not sought.\*\*

**Substantiated:**

An investigation disposition concluding that the allegation of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment was supported or founded, as defined by State law or State policy. A CPS determination means that credible evidence exists that child abuse or neglect has occurred.\*\*

**Unsubstantiated (not substantiated)**

An investigation disposition that determines that there is not sufficient evidence under State law or policy to conclude that the child has been maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment. A CPS determination means that credible evidence does not exist that child abuse or neglect has occurred.\*\*

\* North Carolina's Juvenile Code: N.C. General Statutes § 7B-101.

\*\* Jones, William G., Working with the Courts in Child Protection, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect 2006.