

ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT

You probably know that while your child is living away from your home, you should be working with your caseworker. You know that you need to make changes in the way you care for your child. This may mean making big changes in your own life.

Under the law, called the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), a parent is **required** to take responsibility for making the changes that are necessary for keeping their children safe. **Parents are required to make these changes in a limited amount of time-usually 12 to 15 months.**

The law says that:

- *A child needs to be safe;*
- *A child needs a permanent home;*
- *A child needs both of these things as soon as possible.*

Permanency means that your child must be able to expect a decision about where they will live and whom they will live with. **The law allows only 15 months, a little over a year, before the court makes that decision.**

When a child is placed away from their parents there will be court hearings every six months. They are called

permanency hearings. At these permanency hearings the court will decide if your child will stay away from your home and when or if you child can go home. At permanency hearings, there must be a decision made about:

- *when and if a child will be returned home, or if they will be placed.*
- *for adoption, or*
- *with another legal guardian, or*
- *in another permanent living arrangement.*

Whether your child will return home depends on whether you have made the necessary changes in your life and how you plan to take care of your children.

THE LAW EFFECTS YOU AND YOUR CHILD FROM THE MINUTE YOUR CHILD IS REMOVED FROM YOUR CUSTODY.

Once your child has been placed outside of your home, you have a limited time to show that you have solved, or nearly solved, the problem that led to your child's placement.

If you are not able to show that you have solved or nearly solved the problems, and your child remains out of your home for 15 out of 22 months, your parental rights could be ended and your child may be placed for adoption.

WHAT SHOULD YOU WORK ON?

You must work with your caseworker to solve the problems that led to your child's placement. Your caseworker will offer services and recommendations to help you keep your child safe.

The important thing to remember is that you do not have much time to solve these problems. The Agency will work with you and will provide services to help you.

YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HAVE YOUR CHILD RETURNED TO YOU.

The law says that there are some reasons that your child may not be returned to you regardless of what you do. These reasons are called aggravated circumstances and include:

- *an infant is abandoned;*
- *you have involuntarily lost parental rights to another child;*
- *you have been convicted of certain crimes where the victim was a child;*
- *your actions have resulted in a serious bodily injury to any of your children;*
- *if you do not stay involved with your child for six months.*

WHAT SHOULD YOU THINK ABOUT?

The new federal law sets strict time limits and deadlines that you and the Agency must both meet. You need to think about:

- *The consequences of missing meetings with your child's caseworker.*
- *The consequences of missing visits with your child.*
- *The consequences of missing scheduled court hearings.*
- *The consequences of delaying solving the problems that led to your child's living away from home.*

The consequences may be that your parental rights will be terminated without your agreement, and your child will be placed for adoption.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

1. Work with your caseworker to solve your family problems quickly.
2. Talk to your caseworker if you have any questions.

Your caseworker can be reached by contacting:

Crawford County Human Services

632 Arch St. suite B101

Meadville, PA 16335

(814) 724-8380 or (877) 334-8793

THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) applies to you if you have a child in placement, even if you asked CYS to place your child in a home away from you.

The new federal law sets strict time limits and deadlines that you and the Agency must both meet

This brochure has information that is important for you to know.

CRAWFORD COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT

A law about parents, children, placement and adoption

**What parents need to know
and do NOW.**