



WHERE DO I BEGIN? Tips for Newly-Involved Parents

- 1) Attend all your court hearings and appointments. You need to be present and involved. Your voice is important. If you aren't there, no one can hear you.
- 2) Be open and honest during the Integrated Assessment process. The Department wants to hear your story and get your input to help your family. Everyone is not your enemy in this ordeal.
- 3) Get organized. Start a notebook for all your court orders, handbooks, and different papers. Make sure you document dates and times of calls and write down who you spoke with. If you are not sure how to spell their name....ask!
- 4) Begin taking responsibility for your actions. It is easy to blame other people for your situation, but the first step is looking within. Emotions have a place and it is not in court, in front of your children at a visit, or in the office lobby. Save it for a counseling session.
- 5) Place your children first. Remember this is all about your children. Keep focused on their safety and well-being.
- 6) Stay Healthy! It is a tough time but you need to stay rested, eat right, and take any prescribed medication in order to do what needs to be done.
- 7) Don't Isolate! You may want to curl up in a ball, and never leave the house. But now is the time to create a healthy network of people who can help you and your family. Whether that means going to church, a twelve-step meeting, or a Partnering with Parents Advisory Board meeting... get involved.
- 8) Dusk and Daylight look the same. See this as a new beginning. Accepting change has to happen. Whether that means getting sober or leaving an abusive relationship. Services will be started to help you with these things.
- 9) Be ready to face your child's anger! Children react in different ways to DCFS involvement. They can withdraw, be angry or blame themselves.
- 10) If you don't understand something, ask your worker or their supervisor. If you still have questions, request a family meeting. Advocate for yourself! Understand the expectation.