



# PREGNANCY, PARENTING, & SUBSTANCE USE: NAVIGATING SYSTEMS

## Module 2.3: Child Welfare

### Common Roles Involved in a Child Welfare Case

Title	Role in Child Welfare
<b>Child Protective Services Investigator</b>	State or local government employee tasked with investigating reports of child neglect or abuse. Typically, only involved during the investigation and making initial recommendations about next steps.
<b>State/County Child Welfare Worker</b>	State or local government employee tasked with ongoing case management and oversight. They assess needs, write case plans, connect families with services/supports, regularly visit children in foster care, report on their well-being, and supervise family time (e.g., visitation).
<b>Private Foster Care Agency Child Welfare Worker</b>	Works directly for a private agency that has been contracted by the state/local government. Duties may overlap with those of state/county child welfare workers, although the state/county agency remains ultimately responsible for the case and well-being of the child.
<b>Kinship Caregiver</b>	An adult who has an existing relationship with a child coming into the system (e.g., relative, neighbor, family friend) who wants to care for the child and can meet the child welfare agency's standards and criteria for placement of the child. In many states, responsibilities and requirements are similar for other types of foster parents. (This option is preferred.)



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<b>Foster Parent (sometimes called “resource parent”)</b>	An adult who has met the training, background check, and safety requirements to be approved by the child welfare system to care for children in state custody within their home.
<b>Dependency Court Judge/Family Court Judge</b>	Hears cases of abuse, neglect, or abandonment of children; juries are not involved. Makes decisions regarding a child’s placement and parental rights based on information provided by those involved in the case.
<b>Parent’s Attorney</b>	Parents may hire a private attorney or can be appointed a court-provided attorney to represent their views and interests in court proceedings related to the child welfare case. (Each parent typically has their own separate attorney.)
<b>State Child Welfare Agency’s Attorney</b>	Attorney who represents the viewpoint of the public child welfare agency during court proceedings.
<b>Child Advocate Attorney</b>	Attorney who is appointed by the court to protect the rights of children involved in child welfare cases.
<b>Guardian ad Litem (GAL)</b>	In some states, the GAL may serve the same role as a child advocate attorney. In other states, the GAL does not need to be an attorney and acts as an additional, independent adult appointed by the court to solely represent the interests of the child. Depending on the state, a child with an advocate attorney may not also have a GAL.
<b>Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)</b>	Community volunteer who has been trained and appointed by the court to represent the best interests of the child while the family is involved with the child welfare agency. (Not every child in care will have a CASA)

Source: Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Healthcare toolbox. Accessed Sep 11, 2025. <https://www.healthcaretoolbox.org/who-s-who-in-the-child-welfare-system>



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