

Child in Need of Services (CHINS) Petitions-Summary

Parents, legal guardians, youth or DSHS social workers may file petitions with the Juvenile Court to ask for assistance with children who are running away, using drugs or alcohol, are generally out of the control of their parents and in need of necessary services such as an out-of-home placement. Filing a CHINS is a last resort option after a number of other interventions and services have been tried to hold the family together. Blank petitions are kept in the Clerk's Office on the 3rd floor of the Juvenile Courthouse in Seattle (1211 E. Alder, Seattle) or Room 2C at the Regional Justice Center in Kent (401 4th Avenue N., Kent). Generally, petitions can be filed at either location. Cases are heard in the courthouse that corresponds to the zip code in which the parent or legal guardian resides. Seattle, Eastside and North King County cases are heard in Seattle and South King County cases are heard in Kent. This petition may be filed without assistance from Juvenile Court personnel. **Parents must contact Family Reconciliation Services for a family assessment prior to completing a petition.** In general, most cases follow this process:

Step 1:

Contact Family Reconciliation Services for a Family Assessment. Family Reconciliation Services may offer in-home counseling to families in crisis for free in order to avoid the need to go to court.

Step 2:

Complete a Child In Need of Services Petition. File your completed petition with the Clerk's Office, along with the Family Assessment. You will be given a date and time for the fact-finding (trial). Your child will need to be legally served with the hearing date and petition. (Instructions below)

Step 3:

Attend the Fact-Finding Hearing with your child. The judge or commissioner will decide whether your child is, according to the law, a child in need of services. After they decide this, they will ask you, your child, and social service professionals what should happen next. An order will be issued that requires your child, and possibly you, to take some action. You will be given a new court date for you and your child to return for a Review Hearing.

Step 4:

Attend a Review Hearing with your child. The judge or commissioner will ask you, your child, and social service professionals to discuss what progress has been made on what the court has ordered. Some changes may be made to the order at this time.

Step 5:

If necessary, file a Motion for Contempt. If you believe your child is not obeying the court order, and would like to court to take action, you may file a motion for a contempt hearing. At this hearing, you and your child will have an opportunity to talk about what happened and why. You will also be asked how you would like the court to respond.

Filing A Child In Need of Services (CHINS) Petition

- Contact Family Reconciliation Services at 1-800-609-8764 (daytime) or 1-800-562-5624 (after hours) to get a family assessment. This assessment is required for filing a petition.
- Get a blank Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition at the Clerk's Office on the 3rd Floor of the Juvenile Courthouse or 2C at the Regional Justice Center in Kent, or call 206-205-9732, and ask for a packet to be mailed to you. Complete this in your own words. You will be asked to explain how your child is behaving, how you have tried to change this behavior, how you would like to court to respond and what services your child needs.
- When you have completed the petition, bring it to the Clerk's Office, in your area for filing. You will be given a court date. All Clerk's offices are closed for lunch, 12:15-1:15 p.m.
- If you would like an interpreter for your court hearing, please inform the clerk before you leave the clerk's office.
- Have someone 18 years old or older, other than you, serve your child with the petition and the court date. This person, the server, must complete the required service paperwork so you can prove that your child was properly served.

For information on how to file an ARY or CHINS petition, call 206-205-9732.

Child in Need of Services Fact-Finding Hearing

- A fact-finding hearing is the first court hearing in the CHINS petition process. A judge or commissioner will decide whether your child is child in need of services, according to the law.
- The hearing may be heard when you arrive, or you may have to wait for several hours before you can go into the courtroom. There are several reasons for this, including how busy the court is that day and whether other families arrived before you. You may want to bring a book or a magazine with you to read while you wait.
- At your hearing, the judge or commissioner will hear from you, your child, and social service professionals about your case. You should be prepared to explain why you would like this petition to be granted, what behaviors your child has been engaging in, and what you think the court should do about it. It is helpful to come prepared to address your child's curfew, school attendance and grades, services you have tried in the past, and services you would like to try.
- Your child will have an attorney at this hearing. This attorney will be representing your child's wishes, which may not be the same as your wishes.
- If the judge or commissioner agrees that your child is in need of necessary services, a court order will be issued with requirements for your child, and possibly you. A DSHS Social Worker will be assigned to your case.
- A date for a review hearing will be given to you before you leave the courtroom.

If you have questions, contact the DSHS Social Worker assigned to your case or area.

Child In Need of Services Review Hearing

- At the review hearing, the judge or commissioner will hear from you, your child, and social service professionals about the progress being made on what the court has ordered.
- You must arrive at court by the time listed in your court order. As soon as you enter the building, you will pass through a security area with a metal detector. Do not bring weapons of any kind to the courthouse. Sign in at the front desk so that the court knows that you and your child have arrived.
- Your hearing may be heard as soon as you arrive, or you may have to wait for several hours before you can go into the courtroom. There are several reasons for this, including how busy the court is that day and whether other families arrived before you. You may want to bring a book or a magazine with you to read while you wait.
- Changes may be made to the court order based on what the judge or commissioner hears during the hearing. No sanctions will be ordered during a review hearing.
- Before you leave the courtroom, another court date will be given to you.

If you have questions, contact the DSHS Social Worker assigned to your case or area.

Child In Need of Services Contempt Hearing

- If you believe that your child is not obeying the court order, and you would like the court to take action, you must file a motion for a contempt hearing.
- You will need help from someone in the Juvenile Courthouse to complete this paperwork. Please contact the case manager at the courthouse in which your case was heard to arrange an appointment for this. Listen to their messages for open office hours.
- At the contempt hearing, the judge or commissioner will decide whether the child has violated the court order. If he or she has, the court may issue sanctions in order to make sure that order will not be violated again.
- You must arrive at court by the time listed in your court order. As soon as you enter the building, you will pass through a security area with a metal detector. Do not bring weapons of any kind to the courthouse. Sign in at the front desk so that the court knows that you and your child have arrived.
- Your hearing may be heard as soon as you arrive, or you may have to wait for several hours before you can go into the courtroom. There are several reasons for this, including how busy the court is that day and whether other families arrived before you. You may want to bring a book or a magazine with you to read while you wait.

If you have questions, contact the DSHS Social Worker assigned to your case or area.