



# Legal Aid Chicago

## Family Preservation Legal Advocacy Program



### Program Purpose

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is partnering with Legal Aid Chicago (LAC) to support and empower families through early legal advocacy. The Family Preservation Legal Advocacy Program aims to prevent unnecessary family disruption and promote long-term family and community stability by providing early, **multidisciplinary, and independent legal representation to eligible families at risk of separation due to current or impending DCFS involvement.** This program serves low-income or otherwise vulnerable individuals in Cook County.

LAC clients can receive free prepetition legal advocacy and support from a team that includes attorneys and social workers. This specialized team can proactively address a wide range of civil legal issues impacting a family's stability. By addressing these legal challenges early, the program seeks to help families avoid unnecessary child welfare involvement and remain safely together.



### Eligibility Criteria

Youth and families may be eligible for this program if the youth or their family reside in Cook County, or the relevant events occurred in Cook County; and

- Family is at risk of separation due to a current investigation or indicated finding; or
- Family is at risk of separation because another party (e.g., psychiatric facility) intends to file a petition for wardship in juvenile court; or
- Family is facing other civil legal issues (e.g. housing, public benefits, education, health access) that could lead to a youth coming into DCFS care, or that may delay family reunification.

*Note: If a petition for child removal has been filed in juvenile court, a family is not eligible for representation in that matter under this project.*



To refer a case, complete the form online:  
<https://forms.office.com/r/3ESQ2N6LUu>  
or email

[DCFS.PrepetitionLegalAdvocacy@Illinois.gov](mailto:DCFS.PrepetitionLegalAdvocacy@Illinois.gov)

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**DCFS**  
Illinois Department of  
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