

## **Children's Court General Information (Awareness)**

**Children's Court\*:** The Edmund D. Edelman Children's Courthouse, located in Monterey Park, California, is the main courthouse for the Los Angeles County dependency courts.

**The L.A. County dependency courts\*** are part of the California juvenile justice system. In addition to the approximately 60 Family Law Courts in L.A. County, there are more than 30 dependency courts. Harm or credible risk of harm to a child means families will be evaluated by a dependency court judicial officer (JO). If charges are sustained, the process of family reunification (FR) may take two years or more.

**A Family Reunification (FR)\*** plan is assigned by a dependency court judicial officer (JO). FR plans may include: 52-week parenting classes, anger management classes, random/on-demand drug/alcohol testing, joint therapy, individual counseling, home inspections by a social worker, and a series of evaluative hearings by the court, as one or both parents seek to earn back their parental rights.

**Parental Rights\*:** There are two types of custody, legal custody and physical custody. While a dependency court case is open, there is no custody, because the court/county has jurisdiction of the child/ren. The goal of family reunification is for parents to safely regain custody of their children. While the case is open, "Home of Parents" (HOP) is the equivalent of joint legal custody; HOP-MO is the equivalent of sole custody for Mother; HOP-FA is the equivalent of sole custody for Father.

**Legal Custody\*:** Decision-making. Family Code Section 3003: Joint Legal Custody means that both parents share the right and responsibility to make decisions related to the health, education and welfare of the child. Family Code Section 3006: Sole Legal Custody means one parent has the right and responsibility to make decisions related to the health, education and welfare of the child.

**Physical Custody\*:** Parenting time & visitation time. Family Code Section 3004: Joint Physical Custody means that each parent has significant periods of time with the child. Joint physical custody shall be shared in such a way so as to assure a child of frequent and continuing contact with both parents. Family Code section 3007: Sole Physical Custody means a child shall reside with and be under the supervision of one parent, subject to the court ordering visitation for the other parent. Family Code Section 3086: In making an order for joint physical custody, the court may specify one parent as the primary caretaker of the child and one home as the primary home of the child.

**\*This information is to promote introductory awareness**, and is not intended to provide legal advice or legally accurate definitions/descriptions.