

Family Case File Builder

Use this guide when the papers are scattered and the next official conversation will go better if the basics are in one place.

Build one folder with these sections

1. Immediate next step

- The next hearing date, filing deadline, notice date, or appointment date
- The one sentence version of what the next step is

2. Core names and contacts

- Adult names
- Child names and birthdates if handy
- Safe callback number and email
- County, court, or agency involved

3. Case and notice basics

- Case number or docket number if there is one
- Latest order, notice, motion, letter, or agency paper
- Any document that gives a deadline or instruction

4. Short timeline

- What happened
- When it happened
- What happened next

Keep this factual and short.

5. Three questions

- What do I need answered first
- What deadline matters most right now
- What document or information am I missing

6. Situation-specific papers

- Court process: latest order, hearing notice, parenting-plan draft, filing instructions
- Safety: existing protection order, incident dates, safe contact instructions
- Housing: lease, eviction notice, utility notice, arrears amount

- Child support: current order, review notice, payment summary, agency letter
- Legal help: the paper that best explains the problem, plus any benefit or income information a clinic may ask about

Best practice

- Put the newest and most important paper on top
- Keep a paper copy and phone photos if you can
- Bring a pen, charged phone, and written questions
- Do not assume you will remember details under stress

This guide is public information only. It is not legal advice.