

Clear up a CPS record that's keeping you from getting a job

Author

Northwest Justice Project

Last Review Date

April 29, 2025

If you have a CPS record that's at least 5 years old, a procedure called getting a **Certificate of Parental Improvement (CPI)** could help you get a job despite your record.

Should I read this?

Yes, if both are true:

- You have a finding of child abuse or neglect in Washington State, especially one that caused you to lose work because you couldn't pass a background check, and
- 5 years have passed since the finding was made.

A **Certificate of Parental Improvement (CPI)** could help you also if you were in a dependency and the court found that you abused or neglected your child. A CPI lets you show that the reasons for the findings are no longer problems for you. This can make it easier to work with children or vulnerable adults, such as in day care or in health care, or to be a foster care placement.

For example, you may have CPS findings because of old criminal convictions. After some time, these convictions may be removed (expunged) from your record. Or you might have completed all the requirements of your sentence. Either way, the issues that led to the criminal conduct no longer exist.

You can't get a CPI for APS findings. The procedure is only available for CPS findings.

NJP filed a lawsuit because people of color were more likely than others to be investigated and have findings. Because of a settlement with NJP and the state, Washington State passed this law (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=74.13.720>) to give people with older findings a chance to work.

Am I eligible to get a CPI?

Yes, **if all these are true:**

- It's been 5 years since you last had a finding from CPS.
- It's been more than 2 years since you had a CPI denied.
- Your finding didn't involve certain kinds of physical abuse of a child (for example, shaking, or use of a deadly weapon).
- You haven't already been issued a CPI and then had another finding of abuse of neglect afterward.
- You don't have any of these types of felony convictions on your criminal record:
 - Any felony offense involving physical neglect of a child
 - Any felony offense involving physical injury or death of a child
 - Any felony domestic violence offense committed against a family or household member
 - A felony offense against a child
 - Any felony defined under any law as a class A felony or an attempt to commit a class A felony
 - Criminal solicitation of or criminal conspiracy to commit a class A felony
 - Manslaughter in the first or second degree
 - Indecent liberties
 - Kidnapping in the second degree
 - Arson in the second degree
 - Extortion in the first degree
 - Robbery in the second degree
 - Drive-by shooting
 - Vehicular homicide

How do I get a CPI?

You take an application to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). (<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/find-an-office>) They have 60 days to decide on your application. If they turn you down, you can appeal to a judge.

CPS will consider if you're now safe to work with children or vulnerable adults. They'll look at records they have and records or information you give them.

It's important to show how your life has changed for the better. Some examples might include:

- Showing that you've finished school to work as a nursing assistant
- Records showing that you've gotten mental health or substance use treatment that may have been the cause of your CPS involvement
- You've had no criminal convictions or other problems with the law
- You volunteer or help other people in your community
- Recommendations from people who know you and know you could do the work safely
- Any other information or statements from people that show that you can safely work with children and adults or have overcome the issues that led to your CPS involvement

Does a CPI guarantee I'll get a job?

Employers don't have to hire you even if you have a CPI. The finding may still show up on your background check. CPS will still have records from the investigation and the finding. But while any person or employer who completes a DSHS or state background check can still see that you have a finding, **they're no longer barred from hiring you.** Before the new law passed, they couldn't have hired you with findings on your record.

How do I ask DCYF for a CPI?

CPS has created forms for you to use: Background Check Authorization DSHS 09-653 form (<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/background-check-central-unit/forms>) and CPI Request Form

(<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dcyf.wa.gov%2Fforms%2F012%26title%3D&data=05%2F02%2Fwendy.bennett%40dcyf.wa.gov%2Fc9706a6150a24d80ac9908dc2c0e74>). You can print them out and mail them or email them to the agency (<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/safety/can-founded-findings/cpi>).

There's no cost to apply for a CPI. You may need to get copies of records to support your application. Those may cost money.

You may also need to email or mail records to CPS to prove you should get a CPI. **Make sure you give CPS these records with your name and contact information,** so CPS doesn't lose track of them.

What if CPS turns down (denies) my application?

You have the right to appeal their decision. You must appeal within **45 days** of the date of the denial. CPS must get your request before 45 days have passed. If you don't appeal, you can't apply for another CPI for 2 years.

WashingtonLawHelp.org gives general information. It is not legal advice. Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.