



**Policy Brief:**

## **Explaining the Child Welfare System**

### **Brooklyn Defender Services**

**This poster will help parents involved in the child welfare system in NYC understand their rights and how to advocate for themselves when faced with an Administration of Children's Services (ACS) investigation.**

### **About the advocate**

Brooklyn Defender Services provides legal representation and related services to low-income Brooklyn residents. Responding to the many financial and knowledge barriers within the legal system, they advocate for their clients through legal representation, social work support, and access to resources, with the overall goal of changing the criminal justice and family welfare systems.

### **The issue**

Parents living in low-income communities and communities of color are more likely to become involved in ACS investigations. They often face unjust allegations of neglect because of their lack of resources. Parents' actions are critical to the outcomes in their case. Knowing their rights and how to handle the process of an investigation can make the difference between a family staying together and suffering the long-lasting effects of a child being put into the child welfare system.

### **The impact**

This poster will help parents understand the process of an ACS investigation and what steps they can take to prevent their child from entering foster care. Parents who understand their rights and actions they can take during the process,



# MAKING POLICY PUBLIC

particularly during the critical first part of the investigation before they are entitled to a lawyer, will be able to ensure the best outcomes for their families.

## **The distribution network**

Brooklyn Defender Services will distribute the poster directly to their clients and share it through their network of social service partners and community organizations across NYC, especially in communities with high rates of ACS investigations. They will also distribute it in their community office and use the poster as training material during know-your-rights presentations.



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