# Can a DCPP Finding Affect Your Job or Professional License in New Jersey?



## New Jersey Family Lawyers Can Help Protect Your Career and License

A single substantiated Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) finding can follow someone well beyond family court, especially if that person works in a field that requires a background check. Teachers, nurses, home health aides, and childcare providers often discover the consequences months after their case closed, when a routine screening flags their name unexpectedly. Understanding how that screening actually works changes how someone should prepare while a DCPP finding is still being contested.

Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the Children's Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, confirms that every state, along with the District of Columbia and several U.S. territories, requires background investigations of prospective foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers. Background screening requirements also apply to many New Jersey jobs and licensed professions involving regular contact with children.

Our New Jersey DCPP attorneys at Williams Law Group, LLC have represented teachers, nurses, and foster parents whose careers were suddenly at risk because of a DCPP finding, sometimes long after the underlying case had ended. We know these situations involve more than a single

family court proceeding. We also understand how a finding moves from DCPP's file into a licensing board's hands, and what a parent or legal guardian can do to protect their livelihood while contesting it.

## What Is a CARI Check and Who Requires One?

A Child Abuse Record Information check, known as a CARI check, is the mechanism that connects a DCPP finding to the outside world. When an employer or licensing agency runs this check, it queries the Child Abuse Central Registry (the state's confidential list of substantiated findings) to see whether an applicant's name appears there.

New Jersey requires a CARI check for a wide range of positions involving contact with children or vulnerable adults. The requirement is not limited to obvious roles like teaching or childcare, and parents are often surprised by how many licensed professions fall under this screening umbrella.

New Jersey's own licensing rules for child care centers spell out these background check procedures in detail, including exactly how a CARI check must be completed before a staff member is approved to work with children.

A CARI check is separate from a standard criminal background check. It can flag someone who has never been arrested or charged with a crime, since a substantiated DCPP finding does not require criminal prosecution to appear on the registry.

## Which Professions Face the Most Screening Exposure?

Not every job requires a CARI check, but professionals who are subject to these checks can face real and ongoing scrutiny. Parents working in these fields should understand exactly where they stand:

- **Public and Private School Employees** – Teachers, aides, coaches, and administrators are screened before hire and often rescreened throughout their employment.
- **Licensed Healthcare Workers** – Nurses, certified nursing assistants, and home health aides must clear a CARI check as a condition of licensure or continued employment.
- **Childcare and Daycare Providers** – Anyone working in a licensed childcare facility, along with home-based providers seeking state certification, must pass this screening.
- **Foster and Adoptive Parents** – Every adult in a prospective foster or adoptive household undergoes a CARI check during the state's approval process.
- **Group Home and Residential Staff** – Employees at group homes or residential treatment centers serving minors face the same background screening requirement.

For parents working in any of these fields, a substantiated finding is not an abstract risk sitting in a government database. It is information that can surface the next time a background check

is conducted, whether that happens at hiring, at license renewal, or during a routine recredentialing cycle years after the original finding was issued.

## How Do Licensing Boards Actually Use a Substantiated Finding?

A flagged CARI check does not automatically end a career, but it does often trigger a review process that varies by licensing board or employer. Boards overseeing nursing, teaching certification, and childcare licensure generally have authority to deny, suspend, or revoke a credential based on a substantiated finding.

Many boards weigh the nature and severity of the finding rather than treating every case identically. A single lapse in supervision may be reviewed differently than a more serious allegation, and some boards allow a written response or a hearing before finalizing any licensing action.

Employers outside formally licensed professions, such as private daycare centers or independent schools, often have more discretion. They may decline to hire or may terminate someone based on a substantiated finding without the same formal hearing process a licensing board would typically provide.

## Does a Finding Under Appeal Still Show Up on a Background Check?

This question causes real anxiety for working parents, and the honest answer depends on timing. Once DCPP issues a substantiated finding, the finding generally enters the Central Registry right away and appears on a CARI check even while an appeal is pending.

Filing an appeal does not automatically pause the finding's visibility to employers or licensing boards. A parent could face a background check, a licensing renewal, or a new job application while the appeal is still working through the Office of Administrative Law, with the finding fully visible the entire time.

If the appeal succeeds and the finding is rescinded, the record comes off the registry going forward. That resolution can take months to reach, though, and any professional consequences from the finding showing up on a check in the meantime cannot always be undone after the fact.

## What Can Happen If a Check Flags Your Name While You Appeal?

Consider a home health aide who receives a substantiated finding while her appeal is still pending. Her agency runs a routine recredentialing check, and her name comes back flagged even though she disputes the finding entirely and later wins her appeal.

The agency's response to that flagged check often happens well before the appeal is resolved. She could face suspension, a request for additional documentation, or termination long before the Office of Administrative Law issues a final decision in her favor.

This example illustrates why acting on both fronts at once matters so much. Waiting to see how an appeal turns out before addressing the professional consequences can cost a parent a job or a license before the legal system has a chance to correct the record.

## What Steps Protect Your Career While You Contest a Finding?

Parents in licensed or CARI-regulated professions should not wait passively to see how an appeal turns out before protecting their employment. Several concrete steps taken early can make a meaningful difference in the outcome.

- **File Your DCPP Appeal Immediately** – The window to request an administrative appeal is only 20 days from receiving the finding letter, and missing it can end your ability to challenge the finding at all.
- **Notify Your Licensing Board Proactively** – Many boards respond more favorably to a professional who discloses a pending finding and appeal voluntarily rather than one flagged unexpectedly during a routine check.
- **Request Written Confirmation of Appeal Status** – Documentation showing an active appeal can support your position if an employer or board asks about a flagged result before the case concludes.
- **Coordinate an Attorney Across Both Processes** – A lawyer who handles both DCPP appeals and licensing matters can help prevent the two processes from working against each other.
- **Avoid Assuming Silence Protects You** – Most CARI checks happen automatically at set intervals, regardless of whether a parent raises the issue first.

None of these steps guarantee a particular outcome, but together they put a parent in a far stronger position than waiting passively while a finding sits in the registry and an appeal slowly moves forward. Early action gives both the legal case and the professional situation room to be managed properly.

## Why Does Timing Matter So Much in These Cases?

DCPP's appeal process and a licensing board's review process move on entirely different timelines, and they rarely wait for each other. A parent can lose ground professionally long before an appeal reaches a final decision.

Licensing boards and employers often act on the information available at the moment a check runs. They are not required to wait for an appeal to conclude before making a decision about employment or licensure.

This is exactly why coordinating both processes from the start matters more than most parents realize. A strong appeal filed too late, or a licensing response handled without legal guidance, can leave lasting damage even if the underlying DCPP finding is eventually overturned.

## How Can a New Jersey DCPP Lawyer Help Protect Your License?

Cases involving a DCPP finding and a professional license rarely move through New Jersey's legal system in a straight line. Parents or legal guardians in this position are often navigating a family court matter, an administrative appeal, and a licensing board review all at the same time.

Our New Jersey DCPP attorneys at Williams Law Group, LLC build the strongest possible DCPP appeal while also advising clients on how to communicate with employers and licensing boards in a way that protects their standing. We have guided teachers, nurses, and childcare workers through exactly this kind of overlapping legal pressure.

If you work in a field that requires a CARI check and you are facing a substantiated finding, do not wait to see what happens next. Contact us so we can help you protect both your family and the career you have worked hard to build.