

I AM STILL



ISABELLA

## **You're going through a lot right now.**

Things probably feel really confusing. You might have a lot of questions and different feelings about what's going on.

This book is here to help you figure some of that out. It's another chapter to the book "I Am Isabella."

In it, you'll find stuff about:

- Who the people you might see or talk to are
- What could happen next
- How to deal with your feelings and ways to feel better

This is Isabella's story. Her experience might be different than what you're going through, but it might help you understand what's going on.

No matter what happens, you should know that you're not alone. These kinds of things happen to other kids, too.

There are lots of ways to get help and support. Don't be afraid to ask for it.

This book is yours to keep. Read it, write in it, draw on it, or do whatever you want with it. We hope it helps.

**Part 8.**

# **Aunt Diana's House**

It felt good to just hang out after all the court stuff.



I thought we were done for good.



But the next day Mom said we had to go back to meet with the caseworkers.



It's so nice to see you, Isabella.  
I wanted to talk to you about  
what the judge decided.

The judge thinks your mom needs  
more help taking care of you and  
keeping you safe. He wants you to  
stay somewhere else for a while.





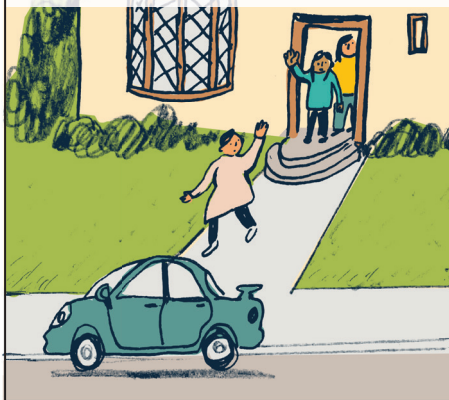








I thought staying at my aunt's would be like a long sleepover.



But I've never stayed this long at my aunt's before and she said I needed to learn her rules.



She was really picky about some things like:



She didn't like shoes on in the house.



She didn't like the bed unmade.





She didn't like uncapped toothpaste.



But everything else was the same...



I went to school everyday.



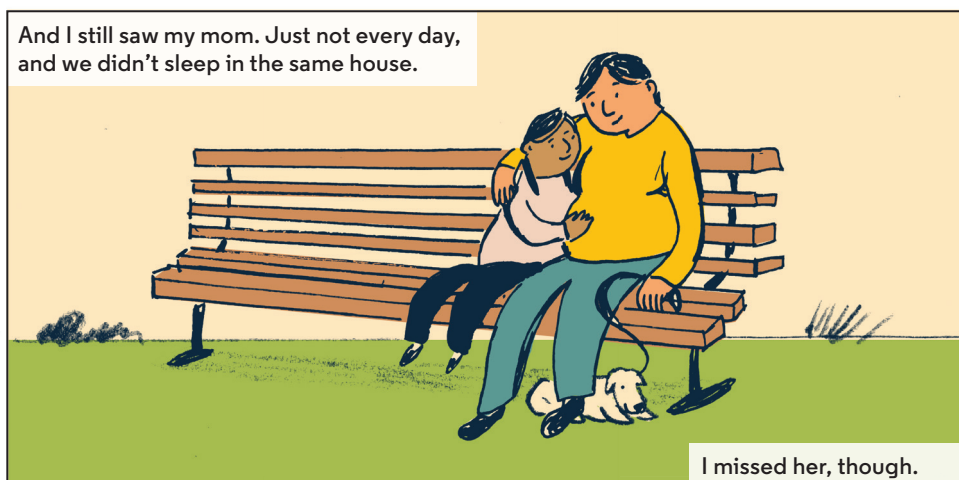
I hung out with Alex.

I played soccer.



I saw Ms. Mary.







# Writing Your Feelings

Ms. Mary suggested Isabella write down some of her feelings instead of keeping them all inside.

At first Isabella didn't like talking about her feelings, but writing about them made her feel better. Drawing about your feelings can also be a good way to get them out.

How are you feeling today?

This year has not been easy.



I get so mad sometimes.



And then sad.



School is so hard sometimes.



But some days are better than others.



My cousins aren't so bad.

I'm starting 5th grade soon. Alex and I will be the big kids in school, finally.



I can't wait.

# What Changed? What's the Same?

---

Staying in a different place can bring some changes. Those changes might feel good or bad, and can include things like it taking longer to get to school, or learning new things.

Some things will stay the same, though, like hanging out with friends and doing things you like to do.

In Isabella's story, she had to learn her aunt's rules, which were different than what she was used to. But some things didn't change, like playing soccer, seeing Ms. Mary, and hanging out with Alex.

You can use this space to write or draw about what has changed and what's the same.

## **What has changed for you?**

Are some of the changes better than others?

Can you think of one really good change?

## **What has stayed the same?**

What do you still do that you enjoy?

What reminds you that you are still you?

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Isabella had to stay with her aunt's family while her mom worked to make home safer. Sometimes families need help to care for their kids. If the caseworkers think a kid is unsafe and the family needs help, they may order a "removal," which means the kid has to stay somewhere else until it's safe to be at home again.

Isabella stayed with her aunt. In a removal, kids might stay with a family member, a friend of the family, or another helping family, depending on their situation. The person they stay with is called a caregiver.

It's important to remember that a removal is not the kid's fault, and is not because of anything the kid did.

The caseworkers will keep checking in on the family to make sure they are working towards making home safer. They will also check in with the kid to see how they are feeling and how things are going with the new caregiver.

In most cases, the kid will have visits with their family, usually with the caseworkers around, too.

The caseworkers will also work towards getting the kid back home, or they might make plans to find another safe place to live.

The whole process is over either when the court thinks it's safe for the kid to go home again, or the kid has another permanent place to live where they can be safe and healthy, and have all their needs met.





The Center for Court Innovation's Child Witness Materials Project is a collaborative effort between the Center for Court Innovation and the Center for Urban Pedagogy, and is supported by cooperative agreement #2016-VF-GX-K011, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Center for Court Innovation works to create a more effective and humane justice system by performing original research and helping launch reforms around the world.

[www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org)

The Center for Urban Pedagogy is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, in partnership with historically marginalized communities.

[www.welcometoCUP.org](http://www.welcometoCUP.org)

Illustration: Ryan Hartley-Smith

Design: Anabelle Pang

The Center for Court Innovation is grateful to the project partners and stakeholders; and the children, caregivers, and justice system practitioners all over the country who contributed to the development of this product.

NCJ 300646

The Office for Victims of Crime is committed to enhancing the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime.

[www.ovc.ojp.gov](http://www.ovc.ojp.gov)

The Office of Justice Programs is a federal agency that provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the Nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Its six program offices—the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking—support state and local crime-fighting efforts, fund thousands of victim service programs, help communities manage sex offenders, address the needs of youth in the system and children in danger, and provide vital research and data.



Office for Victims of Crime  
**OVC**





