

Use of "Dismissed," "Termination of Jurisdiction," and "Reunification"

Minnesota Chapter 260C and the Minnesota Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure specify when the court should order "dismissed," "termination of jurisdiction," and "reunified." It is important to understand the differences between those legal concepts, not only because of legal ramifications, but also because incorrect use of these phrases impacts your county's data. Performance data for your county, such as length of time to permanency, is based, in part, on data entered into the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) from court orders. For your county's permanency data to be accurate, it is essential for court orders to include correct dispositions as follows:

Dismissed: Court orders should state a case is "dismissed" *only when* the case is being closed and there has been no prior adjudication, such as when:

- At an EPC hearing the court finds the petition does not state a prima facie determination ([Juv. Prot. Rule 30.08, subd. 1\(a\)](#)), or
- The county has withdrawn their petition prior to adjudication, or
- The case has proceeded to trial and the court found that the petitioner did not meet the burden of proof ([Juv. Prot. Rule 39.05, subd. 2](#)).

NOTE: When a case is dismissed, the child is returned to the care of the parent.

Termination of Jurisdiction: [Minn. Stat. 260C.101](#) specifies the types of proceedings over which the juvenile court has jurisdiction, including CHIPS, TPR, permanency (e.g., transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative), and adoption. Orders should state the court is "terminating jurisdiction" *only when* the court ceases to have jurisdiction, such as when there has been an adjudication that the child is need of protection or services and the case is now being closed. Keep in mind that this disposition explains what has happened *to the case* (it's closed), but does not specify what happened *to the child*. So when a child is being permanently returned home and the case is being closed, the order should state both "termination of jurisdiction" and "reunified." If an order includes only "termination of jurisdiction" without also including "reunified," the MNCIS data will show "termination of jurisdiction without a permanency order" because there is no order indicating the permanency status of the child (e.g., reunified).

Reunified: Throughout the Juvenile Protection statutes, "reunify" refers to situations where, following a CHIPS adjudication, the child has been in ordered into foster care and is now being permanently returned to the care of the parent. See Minn. Stat. [260.012](#), [260C.001, subd. 2\(a\)\(7\)](#), [260C.505\(b\)](#), 260C.223, 260C.515, 260C.517. Court orders should state the child has been reunified *only when* the child has been permanently returned to the care of the parent and the case is being closed.

NOTE: Do not used "reunified" when ordering a child into a trial home visit or protective supervision because under [Minn. Stat. 206C.201](#) those are interim dispositions not final dispositions.