CHILDREN'S COURT INFORMATION

Foster parents and relative caregivers have the right to attend court hearings to understand what is going on with the child in their care and provide input on how the child is doing.

Common Questions about Court:

Q: When should I appear for scheduled hearings?
A: It is best to arrive 15-20 minutes before the scheduled hearing. The judge likes to start on time, so it is important to be prompt. Be prepared to wait as multiple hearings are scheduled for each half hour time slot and some hearings may be delayed due to previous hearings going beyond their scheduled time.

Q: What should I wear?
A: A good rule of thumb is to wear something that you would feel comfortable wearing to a job interview. It's OK to dress casually, but clothing should be neat and not revealing.

Q: What is basic court etiquette?
A: You must show the judge respect and always address him or her as "Judge" or "Your Honor". Use good eye contact, and be polite and attentive. No food or drinks are allowed in the court room. Also, do not interrupt the judge or talk when others are talking. It's OK to ask to be heard on a certain issue if it's not addressed by other court parties.

Q: Who attends the court hearings?
A: The parents and their lawyers, the child or children (if age appropriate), the ongoing case manager, the foster parents/relative caregivers, the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) if applicable, the Guardian Ad Litem, and the Assistant District Attorney.

Q: What if I don't understand the questions I am asked?
A: If you do not understand, ask the judge to explain. Do not guess at an answer and always tell the truth. If you do not understand the judge's or an attorney's question in a court hearing, do not answer the question until you understand it.

Q: Does everyone have to do what the judge says?
A: Yes, court orders must be followed. All parties must follow the directions of the judge. If you are not sure what a court expectation is, you can ask the judge to write it down for you.