

**CHILD PROTECTION COURT INFORMATION
FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES
ABUSE, NEGLECT & DEPENDENCY MATTERS**
(All cases are in accordance with the Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1987
705 ILCS 405/1 et seq.)

Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Court of Illinois
Rock Island County

PARENT(S)' RIGHTS:

Right to Notice. You have the right to be notified and present at every court hearing.

Right to be heard in court. You have the right to be heard and present relevant evidence at the hearing.

Right to an attorney. You may hire a private attorney to represent your interests. If you cannot afford an attorney and meet income guidelines, the court will appoint an attorney to represent you.

Right to appeal. You have the right to appeal certain Court decisions, such as Dispositional Orders and Termination of Parental Rights Orders.

Right to examine pertinent court files. You may view court pleadings; agency reports and other records related to your child(ren)'s case(s).

Right to cross-examine. You have the right to ask questions of witnesses called to testify.

Termination of Parental Rights. The PARENTAL RIGHTS of a parent may be TERMINATED if the parent fails to cooperate with the agencies and/or fails to comply with the court ordered service plan and correct the conditions that led to the removal of the child(ren) and be in DCFS care.

COURT PROCESS:

1. Petition for Adjudication of Wardship is filed by the State. This is a document filed with the Circuit Clerk by the State's Attorney's Office explaining the allegations (how the child was abused, neglected or dependent). The parent(s) will make a "first appearance" to be advised of their rights and, if necessary, appoint an attorney to represent each of their parental interests.
2. Shelter Care Hearing/Temporary Custody Hearing. This is a court hearing to determine if the child can remain home safely or needs to be removed from the home while the parents work on reunification services. Options:
 - Temporary custody of the child(ren) to DCFS:
 - Child remains home with parent(s) with Order of Protection and conditions in place; OR
 - Case is dismissed.
3. Pre-Trial Conference. This is a court appearance where the parent(s) with their attorney(s) appear in court. Also in court will be the assistant state's attorney, the guardian ad litem (who represents the child(ren)'s interests, DCFS caseworker and social service agency assigned to the matter. The parties may or may not come to an agreement regarding the steps to be taken in the pending juvenile matter.
4. Adjudicatory Hearing. This is the court hearing where the State must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the child(ren) is/are abused, neglected or dependent. If the State proves the allegations in their petition, the matter is set for a Dispositional Hearing.
5. Dispositional Hearing. Court hearing to determine if the child(ren) should be made a ward(s) of the Court and remain in DCFS custody and to determine what services should be imposed upon the parent(s) for reunification purposes.
6. Permanency Hearing. These are held every 3 – 6 months to evaluate the parent(s)' progress and efforts towards completion of the recommended services towards reunification. The Court will also review in light of that progress and effort whether the child(ren)'s long term goal is appropriate. Most common goals the court may choose from:
 - Return Home
 - Guardianship
 - Independence (minor is 15 years of age or older)
 - Substitute Care pending termination of parental rights
 - Adoption (parental rights have been terminated)
7. Discharge. The court enters a discharge order closing the case when DCFS custody and guardianship are no longer needed due to custody and guardianship being returned to a parent or an adoption or guardianship has been entered.

Guardian Ad Litem. Guardian ad litem (GAL) is an attorney appointed by the court to represent the best interests of the child(ren). The GAL may investigate the child(ren)'s situation, interviews the child, parents, caregivers, and other relevant parties, reviews reports and records and provides the Court with recommendations regarding the child(ren)'s safety, permanency and well-being.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). A CASA is a highly trained volunteer agency appointed by the judge to advocate for the best interests of the child(ren). CASA volunteers work closely with the child(ren), parents, caregivers, and others involved in the case to ensure the child(ren)'s safety, well-being, and permanency while in foster care. They provide ongoing monitoring and support and ideally serve as a consistent presence in the child(ren)'s life throughout the legal process.

Parents are encouraged to COOPERATE with GAL and CASA.

Prepare for court:

- Meet with your attorney BEFORE court date telephonically, e-mail or in person. Provide a copy of ALL paperwork to your attorney.
- Eat well and stay hydrated the morning of court.
- Be present and arrive ON TIME at ALL court hearings. Dress appropriately.
- Listen carefully; speak clearly; treat EVERYONE with respect.

3C's for parents:

- COMMUNICATE with your caseworker, supervisor, case aides, attorney and CASA;
- COMPLY quickly with services in your service plan and sign releases for the agency to confirm your progress;
- CORRECT the conditions that brought your child(ren) into DCFS care otherwise you risk termination of your parental rights.