

Tips for Working With Your Attorney

- Let your attorney know how (Phone? Facebook? Text?) AND when to contact you
- Ask to schedule regular calls or meetings
- Tell your attorney about changes in your life
- Let your attorney know what's important to you, your goals for the future, what you need and what you want
- Keep notes of your thoughts, needs and questions; remember them when you meet with your attorney

What can I do if I do not think my attorney is doing their job or I cannot get in touch with them?

- **TALK** with **your attorney** about your concerns and what you want to change
- **WRITE a letter** OR **TALK** to your judge and tell him/her what problems you are having with your attorney. You can talk to the judge in court or maybe in his/her chambers (office)
- **CONTACT** whoever you feel most comfortable with, like your caseworker, caregiver or another adult you trust

CONTACTING YOUR ATTORNEY

NAME: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

TEXT: _____ **YES** _____ **NO**

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED IN YOUR CASE?

JUDGE: _____

CASE WORKER: _____

CASEWORK SUPERVISOR: _____

IL WORKER: _____

OTHER: _____

If you do not know who your attorney is:
Ask your caseworker!

Who Represents Me In Court?

ALL YOUTH IN CARE HAVE AN ATTORNEY!



Office of Children & Families in the Courts



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So, I have an Attorney?

YES! Because you have rights!

Every child who is dependent is assigned an attorney whose job is to represent you in your child welfare case.

Your attorney will play the role of “guardian ad litem” or “legal Counsel”

- A **Guardian ad Litem (GAL)** is an attorney who tells the judge your wishes and what the attorney thinks is best for you to be safe and have your needs met
- **Legal counsel** only represents your wishes to the judge and follows only your direction in the case

Ask your attorney about their role if you do not know if you have a GAL or legal counsel



How can my attorney help me?

Your attorney can:

- Help you understand your case & learn what to expect in court
- Tell you about choices you can make about services, placements, school, your health, & things that are important in your case
- Prepare you for court & make sure you are able to attend
- Make sure you are able to speak in court about what you want
- Help with visitation & connection with family, friends and supportive adults
- Listen to your concerns & wishes

How does an attorney decide what is in my “best interest”?

The attorney will consider:

- What you want
- What your parents want
- How you are doing at home, school and in the community
- Whether you have mental or physical health needs
- How your parents have met their responsibilities as parents
- Whether there is violence or criminal activity

Your “best interest” may be the same as what you want **BUT** could be very different.

Is what I tell my attorney confidential?

In most cases yes, BUT there are times when your attorney may share some information you have told them:

- When you or another child is being abused
- When the information would help protect your best interests

How often should my attorney contact me?

- When they get your case and regularly after the case begins
- In enough time before your court dates to make sure you are prepared
- If you change placements, there is a problem with the case, or an emergency

Every time you call your attorney they should call you back. Make sure to leave your current contact information.

Are there special issues that I should talk to my attorney about as an older youth?

- The option to remain in care until age 21
- The option to re-enter care if you leave at 18 or older and are under 21
- Making sure you have a good transition plan
- Any benefits you may be eligible for when you leave care, like: aftercare services, Education and Training Grant, and Medicaid coverage