

# Fostering Forward

A monthly tip sheet to navigate through foster care

## Snapshot of Children's Court: Part One



You just received placement, now what? Taking placement of a child will involve multiple court hearings throughout the duration of the case.

Although it is not required that foster parents attend court, it is in your best interest. This issue has tips to help make the court process easier to understand.

## Why Should I Go To Court?

Court hearings can be inconvenient, intimidating and confusing. Regardless, there are many reasons why it is important and beneficial to attend court hearings for the child/ren in your home. Here are some of the reasons we recommend attending court:

- Due to confidentiality laws, there will be certain information about the case that cannot be shared with you outside of court. Attending the hearings will give you a chance to learn more about some of these important details.
- The main topic discussed in court hearings is the child's permanency. While no one can predict what type of permanency will be achieved, attending court hearings can provide you information about progress made, what the current permanency goal is and what is needed to achieve that goal.
- Simply being present at court hearings allows the judge and other legal parties to know that you are dedicated to supporting the child in your home.
- When foster parents attend court hearings, they are often given the opportunity to share with the judge how the child is doing in their home. This allows you to advocate for what you feel is in the best interest of the child.
- During the process of building a relationship with the biological family, it is important to take advantage of all opportunities to meet with the parents face to face. Attending court allows you to do this in a safe and structured setting, while having your family case manager present.



## What Should I Know Before Going To Court?

- Vel Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center is located at 10201 West Watertown Plank Rd. Wauwatosa, WI 53226.
- Please allow yourself plenty of time when arriving at court. You will be required to go through security.
- After going through security, look to your left to find a sign listing the branch numbers, branch location, and judges' names.
- Be sure to check in at the branch window that your case is assigned to. You will be asked the oldest sibling's name and your relation to the case.
- Although your case may be scheduled for a certain time, court schedules are unpredictable. While this can be frustrating, it is in both yours and the child's best interest for you to attend these hearings.
- Be prepared to give a brief synopsis of how the child is adjusting in your home.



## Who Will Be at Court

**Assistant District Attorney (ADA):** Represents the State and typically represents the same stance as the Family Case Manager and the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services.

**Bailiff:** Monitors actions in the court room and steps in if needed.

**Court Reporter:** Types up all dialogue that occurs during the hearing.

**Clerk:** Calls out the hearing and assembles any orders that are issued for the judge to sign

**Family Case Manager (FCM):** Provides update on the parents and children involved in the case.

**Guardian Ad Litem (GAL):** Advocates for the best interest of the child/ren. Children ages 11 years and younger are assigned a GAL to advocate for them in court.

**Judge:** Listens to the progress and recommendations from all parties. The judge makes all final decisions.

**Public Defender:** An attorney assigned to the parent or child/ren 12 and older to represent them in court. If a parent does not meet certain financial criteria, the public defender is provided for them by the court and paid for by the county.

Keep an eye out for additional information about the court process in  
April's Fostering Forward