

Juvenile Court Improvement Project
Oregon Judicial Department
Office of the State Court Administrator
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OREGON'S JUVENILE DEPENDENCY COURT: A Guide for Foster Parents



As a foster parent (including preadoptive parents and relatives caring for children in foster care), you have a right to notice and a right to be heard (section 9 of HB 2190) in any juvenile dependency court review or hearing regarding your foster child(ren). This guide explains the juvenile court dependency process in Oregon and describes how you can provide information to help the court make its decisions.

OREGON COURTS PROVIDE JUSTICE AND UPHOLD THE RULE OF LAW. You are key to our ability to ensure safety, permanency, and well being for Oregon’s abused and neglected children. As a foster parent, you may have information that will help the court make decisions about the dependent child in your care. This guide has valuable information to help you understand the juvenile court dependency process in Oregon. This guide will also help you prepare to share important information with the court involving a dependent child in your care.

LOCAL COURT CULTURE

Although this guide provides a general overview of the process, local courts may have additional specific procedures or policies regarding juvenile dependency cases. The child’s attorney, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate),* or caseworker can tell you local procedures and policies that affect your foster child’s case.



** CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) are trained volunteers available in most counties. The court appoints them to advocate for the best interests of the child. For more information on the CASA program and to determine whether a program is available in your county, contact the statewide CASA Program Coordinator at 503.373.1283.*

This information may help the court make decisions about your foster child. You need address only issues related to the child’s case. Because court time is often limited, you need not repeat information provided by parties. Some judges may ask you specific questions related to these topics.

Educational Information

- The child’s grade in school and whether the child is performing at grade level.
- The dates of any school conferences you have attended and the results of those conferences (especially if the child is in special education classes).
- Any educational testing the child has had, who administered the testing, and the results of the testing.
- The child’s progress in meeting developmental milestones.

Behavioral Information

- A brief description of the child’s behavior in your home.
- Any services the child is receiving to address behavioral difficulties, who provides the services, and how often.

Visitation

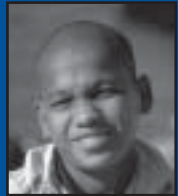
- The dates of visits between the child and the child’s parents or other family members.
- If you supervised the visits, a brief description of the behaviors of the child and the other family members present at the visits. Carefully describe only the behavior; do not comment on the reason for the behavior.
- A brief description of any arrangements for sibling visits.
- The dates of any telephone contacts between the child and parents or other family members.

Recommendations

- A brief description of any services you believe the child would benefit from and why.
- Your recommendation as to the plan for the child.

Thank you for your commitment to Oregon’s foster children.

INFORMATION THE COURT MAY FIND HELPFUL



Placement Information

- The date the child came into your home and a brief description of the child's physical and emotional condition at that time.



Medical & Dental Information

- Doctor/dentist visits or hospitalizations since the last court hearing, and the results of those visits.
- Any medications the child is taking and the dosages.
- Any adverse reactions the child has had to medical procedures or medications.
- A brief description of the child's physical development, and any developmental lags you have observed.



Child's Cultural Interests and Other Special Activities

- A brief description of any special activities in which the child participates (scouts, music lessons, church groups, etc.).
- A brief description of how the child's cultural interests are supported.



THE RIGHT TO NOTICE & THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD

Oregon law requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide notice of a hearing concerning the child to a foster parent (including preadoptive parent or relative) who is currently providing care for a child. The law also requires that the court give the foster parent the right to be heard.

Oregon courts are committed to giving all care providers the right to **share information about the day-to-day experiences, behaviors, and needs of children** in their care. Although judges have a limited amount of time for each case, they want to gather as much information from you and all parties present before making their decisions. **Some judges will ask you specific questions about the child in your care; others will ask or allow you to make a short statement.**

The most effective short statements focus on the child's physical, emotional, educational, and social development and your thoughts about the best plan for the child.

As a foster parent, you are not considered a legal party to the juvenile court proceeding even though you have right to notice and a right to be heard. "Legal parties" include the birth parents, the agency (DHS), the CASA, and certain others designated by Oregon law. These people have special legal rights in addition to notice and an opportunity to be heard.

Oregon's Juvenile Dependency Court Proceedings

This hearing must be held within 24 Judicial hours after placement (excluding weekends and holidays). The purpose is to determine issues about removal of the child from parental custody.

This time line shows the **maximum** times permitted by state and federal law. Courts may schedule proceedings sooner than the times shown due to the special circumstances of a case and parent progress with the case plan. Courts sometimes schedule additional hearings following jurisdiction to review parental compliance and progress on the case plan.

