

Child Welfare-Part 3 (People)

Many of the key players in a child welfare case are lawyers. You have important responsibilities when working with your lawyer. Your child and the Department of Social Services (DSS) also have lawyers. This video introduces you to those lawyers and the court-appointed special advocate.

Watch the Video



Parent's Lawyer

- If your income is below a certain level, the Office of the Public Defender (OPD) will provide you with a free lawyer. You may also hire a private lawyer at your own expense.
- Your lawyer will give you a copy of the petition, which outlines the reasons your case was brought to court. Tell your lawyer which statements are true and which are not.
- Share the names of family members who may be able to care for your child
- Give your lawyer all meeting notices you get from DSS, your child's school, or any other providers. Sign releases so that professionals may speak with your lawyer.
- Engage in court-ordered programs and attend every visitation opportunity. If you have problems with visitation, contact your lawyer.
- Keep your lawyer updated on your progress so he or she can make sure the court hears and understands your story.

Child's Lawyer

- Your child has the right to be at every court hearing. The judge is required to consult with your child at least once per year.
- Your child's lawyer will advocate for what your child wants.
- Considered judgment means that your child is capable of deciding what he or she wants. Your child's lawyer may evaluate whether your child has considered judgment on a hearing-by-hearing basis. If your child does not have considered judgment, your child's lawyer will substitute his or her judgment for the child's judgment.



Maryland Court Help

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DSS Lawyer

- The DSS lawyer is not the social worker. The DSS lawyer will present evidence to the court gathered by the social worker.
- The DSS lawyer will make recommendations to the court about your child's placement and about services.

Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

- A CASA's role is to make sure your child gets the services ordered by the court. Those services may include medical treatment, extracurricular activities, educational services, and transportation.
- CASA volunteers are trained by an independent agency to work with your child and report back to the court for the duration of the case.