

A Maryland Judiciary Production  
*My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland*  
**Child Welfare – The Court (Part 1)**

Hello ... And welcome to the Maryland Courts video series about the legal process in child welfare cases. These cases are also known as child dependency cases. This three-part series is for parents whose children have been removed from the family home.

For families, this is a difficult time. The court process can be stressful. Parents just like you arrive to their first child welfare hearing and report feeling scared, confused, angry, and alone. It is the court's hope that these Child Welfare videos will guide you as you navigate the courts.

**CHAPTER HEADING FULL SCREEN TEXT: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COURT**

But before we get started, I'd like to explain the responsibility of the court in your child welfare case. Where the court is able, it will re-unite you with your child or children. Moving forward, we will refer to your "child," even if your case involves multiple children. If reunification is not immediately possible, the court looks to identify other family and non-family members who may care for your child. The goal is to have your child in state custody for the shortest time possible. Let me repeat that: The goal is to have your child in state custody for the shortest time possible.

Another thing you need to know: The courts give child welfare cases the highest priority and attention. The court's goal is to ensure privacy and confidentiality at all times. The courtroom is always closed to the public while your case is being heard. Your privacy is of utmost importance to the court.

The lawyers, judges and others working in the child welfare system know how difficult this process is for parents whose children have been removed from the home. It is the courts' hope

that these videos will help you understand the process and, perhaps, make your experience less challenging.

#### **CHAPTER HEADING FULL SCREEN TEXT: OTHER VIDEOS IN THE SERIES**

In part two of this series, we go over the different court hearings that are likely to take place throughout your case. In Part three, we will introduce you to the people who may be involved in your case, for example lawyers and representatives of the Department of Social Services.

Please take time to watch these videos. On behalf of the Maryland Courts, we hope this information will help you with your child welfare case. Thanks for watching.