

TIP 2

Before Court: Tips on Preparing for Your Day in Court

Going to court can be very stressful. Use these tips to prepare for your day in court:

If Possible, Hire a Lawyer to Represent You

- Without one you may be at a disadvantage, especially if the other side has one.

Write Down and Meet Deadlines

- Put important dates on your calendar. Be sure to file responses and motions (requests to the court to take action) on time.
- Read everything. If you don't understand something, ask. Keep any paperwork that the court or the other party sends to you.
- Arrive at court early. Confirm the information about your case is displayed on the monitor or posted on the wall.

Find Childcare

- Hearings can be unpredictable. A hearing scheduled for 9 a.m. may last for hours or may be continued to another day. You don't want children to hear information that might be upsetting or inappropriate.

Look at the Court's Rules

- The court rules will tell you what the court expects of you. Visit the court's website at www.mdcourts.gov and look at the Maryland Rules to find out what the court will require.
- Find the Maryland Rules online or at a law library. Visit <http://www.lawlib.state.md.us/researchtools/sourcesmdlaw.html>.

Research the Law Relevant to Your Case

- You must present the facts of your case and prove that they show that the result you want is the correct one under the law. For help researching the law, visit the Maryland State Law library at www.mdcourts.gov/lawlib.

Organize What You Want to Say, Arrange for Witnesses, and Bring Evidence

- It is up to you and you alone to prove your case. Practice what you are going to say. Make an outline.
- Gather evidence such as photos and documents in advance and organize them. Print out electronic evidence. You must present the facts in the courtroom through exhibits and testimony. The judge may not consider any information that is not presented in court. If you think a piece of evidence might be relevant, bring it to court.
- If there are witnesses to the incident, ask those individuals to testify about the case. Use a subpoena to formally request that they come to court. Get subpoena forms from the clerk of the court.



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