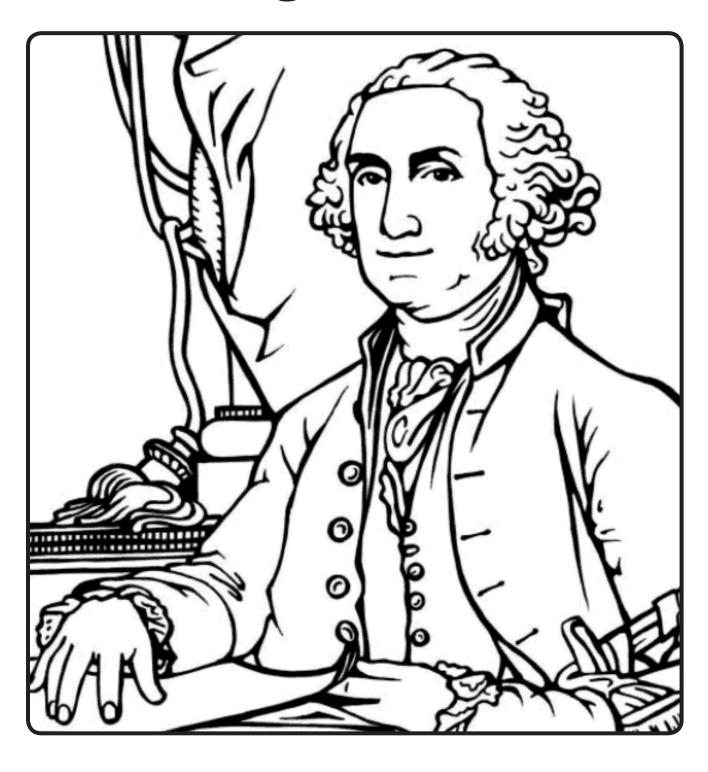
GRADES 6-12

What's Happening in Washington Courts?





Welcome to Court

Judges know going to court can be scary or unfamiliar for anyone — especially young people. Yet young people go to court every day, for all sorts of reasons.

We want to make the experience of going to court easier for kids. This book will tell you what happens in court: who works there, what the rules are, and how you might be part of a case. Remember that you always can ask questions if you are in court and you feel afraid or confused.

I hope you enjoy this book, learn from it, and have fun with it. You can keep this book to help you remember what you want to know about going to court.

Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst Supreme Court of Washington

About this Book

What's Happening in Washington Courts? is intended for youth who are in court for any reason — whether they are witnesses, visitors to the courthouse, or involved in a case. It aims to introduce youth to the court processes in which they are or could be involved, the people who work in the judicial system, and the vocabulary that may foster conversations between youth and adults about the court system and a game book that gives youth who are in court something to do while they wait. This book is not intended to give or substitute for legal advice.

Specific pamphlets have been created for youth in grades K–5 and 6–12. This activity book is intended for grades 6–12. Depending on their age, ability, and interest, youth may look at and color the pictures, read the text, play games, or do the activities.

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Who Will You Meet in Court?

Many people work in a court. Everyone has a job to do.

Judge

First, there is the judge. In many courts, the **judge** will be wearing a black robe. The judge usually sits at the front of the courtroom at a very large, raised desk, called a bench. The judge's name is often on a sign near the bench.

The judge does many things. First, the judge is like a referee, or an umpire at a ball game.

The judge makes sure that everyone is treated fairly.

Sometimes the judge is also the person who makes the decision about the problem (called a case) that the people came to court to solve. For example, if two people come to court because they disagree about money, the judge might be the person who finally decides who gets the money.





Juror

Other times, a group of people, instead of the judge, decides who wins the argument. These people are called **jurors**. Jurors are people who come to court to listen to each side of a disagreement. Then the jurors decide how the disagreement will be settled. A group of jurors is called a jury.

Bailiff

Some courts have uniformed bailiffs. You probably can spot the bailiff very easily. The bailiff is the person who tells everyone to stand up by saying, "All rise" when the judge comes in. The bailiff makes sure the people who go to court obey the rules.



Lawyer

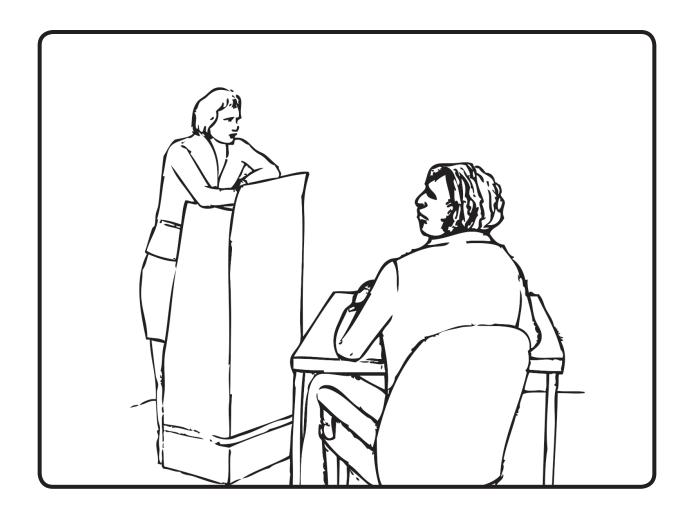
When people go to court, they often have **lawyers**. Lawyers also are called attorneys. Lawyers give advice to people about their disagreements in court. It is the lawyer's job to talk to the judge and jurors for the people who come to court.

When a lawyer talks for someone who has come to court, it means that the lawyer "represents" the person. Each lawyer represents only one person in court. So, if many people are involved in a disagreement, there might be more than one lawyer in court. All kinds of people have lawyers, including young people! Lawyers usually sit next to the person they represent in the court.



Interpreter

Courts also have **interpreters** for people who don't speak or understand English. The interpreter's job is to tell the person in their own language what is said in court and tell the court what the person is saying.



Court Reporter

In many courts there is a **court reporter**. The court reporter is the person who writes down everything that everybody says in court. Wow! Can you imagine writing down all the words people say? The court reporter usually sits near the judge and types on a small machine. Even though court reporters type very fast, everyone in court must speak slowly and clearly so the court reporter can hear what they say.

Clerk

All courts have clerks as well. A court **clerk** keeps all the papers about the cases in the court and organizes them. The clerk keeps track of the names of the lawyers, the people who come to court to testify and anybody else who was a part of the case.

Witness

Witnesses are people who come to court to tell what they have seen or heard. For example if someone is accused of stealing something, a witness might come to court to say what they saw happen. When witnesses come to court, they have to raise their hand and make a special promise, called an oath, to tell the truth. They take a special seat and the lawyers ask them questions. Cases that last a long time may have lots of witnesses.



Are You a Witness?

If you are called as a witness, the lawyers and sometimes the judge will ask you questions. Of course, it is very important to tell the truth when you answer questions in court. You even make a special promise, called an oath, to tell the truth before you answer questions. It is also important to answer just the questions that you understand. If you don't understand a question, it is OK to say so and have the question explained to you. If you are afraid to answer questions in the courtroom, be sure to tell the lawyer, if you have one, or the judge. They will do everything they can to make you feel more comfortable.

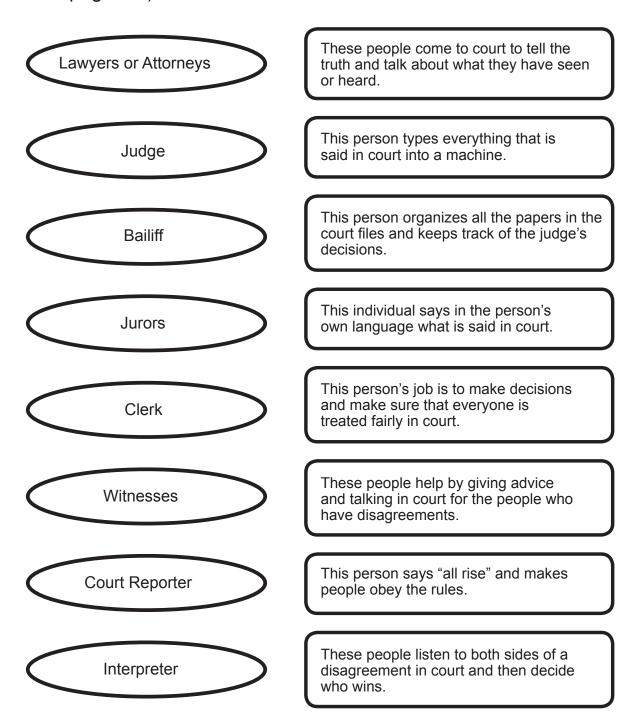
Sometimes a lawyer can ask you a question and you do not remember the answer. If that ever happens, all you have to do is say you don't remember. If you do not know the answer to a question, you can say, "I don't know." It is important to tell the truth and not to guess. Do not give an answer just because you think that is what the lawyer or the judge wants to hear. Lawyers sometimes ask questions in a funny way. If they do, you may not understand what they mean. That's okay, too. Just let the judge or the lawyer know that you do not understand the question, and the judge will explain, or clear up the issue.

Sometimes young people are scared to go to court. If you need to go to court, it's okay to feel scared. Some adults get scared about court, too. Just remember the judge is there to make sure everything is fair.

Young people usually go to court for many reasons. If problems are handled by the court, they are called cases. It could be a criminal case, where someone is charged with a crime. Or it could be a family law case if a mother and father need the judge to decide something. Sometimes it is a case where someone in the family hurt someone else in the family. These cases are hard for everyone.

What Do They Do?

Now that you've read about the people you may meet in court, draw a line to connect the name of the person with the job they do. (Answers are on page 33.)



How Should I Act in Court?

- · Be on time.
- Dress neatly.
- Don't go in alone. Make sure there is an adult with you.
- Show respect to the people that are there.
- · Don't eat or drink in court.
- · Don't chew gum.
- Don't listen to music in court.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- There may be other people in court who have cases before you.
 You will have to wait and be quiet.
- You can read a book or play quietly with this book while you wait.
- When it is your turn, call the judge "Your Honor." This is what people call the judge to show respect.
- Don't speak unless the judge or a lawyer asks you to.
- If you don't understand something, say that you don't understand. Someone will explain it again for you.

What Is Juvenile Dependency?

A juvenile dependency case is when a young person comes to court because someone thinks that their parents might have hurt them or not taken care of them. Until a child grows up, he or she is dependent on adults and needs their protection. If parents can't or won't take care of the child properly, the juvenile court may help the family. The child may become "dependent" on the court for protection. When this happens, the child may live with relatives or with another family for a while. This temporary family is called a kinship or foster care family.

Usually, parents want to have their child live with them. The judge and helpers known as social workers will work with parents to make their home healthy and safe. When the home is safe, then the child may move back home with the parents. It is called reunification.

Sometimes parents can't make their home safe for the child. Then the judge and others may find another home where a young person can live safely until they become an adult. They make a permanent plan for a young person.

What Does the Social Worker Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

A social worker is a person who tries to protect young people and keep them safe. A social worker may help young people who are being hit or touched in inappropriate ways. This is called abuse. The social worker also may help children who don't have enough food, clothes, or other things that they need. This is called neglect. If the abuse or neglect is serious, the social worker may have to find another place for the young person to live. Then the family and the social worker may go to court so that the judge can decide how best to help the young person and the family.

What Does the Judge Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

Judges in dependency court do all the jobs judges usually do, except that there is no jury in dependency court. The judge is the one who makes the final decision about what happens in a case. It is the judge's job to listen to what everyone says in court. The judge knows what the law is and decides what needs to happen to keep young people safe. You can talk to a judge at the hearing on your case or ask a question. If the judge asks you a question, it is very important for you to tell the truth. The judge needs to know the truth to make the best decision for you.

What Do Lawyers Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

On page 8 of this book, you learned about the job of lawyers, who also are called attorneys. People involved in a case usually have a lawyer to speak for them in court. The people in the dependency case who might have a lawyer are the young person, mother, father, social worker, and sometimes others.

What Does a CASA Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

Sometimes the judge will assign a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) to help with a dependency case. CASAs are people who volunteer to help by talking to people, especially children, to get more information to help the judge make the best decision. CASAs spend a lot of time with the children they work with. They listen to the young people and tell their stories and needs to the court. The CASA also suggests to the court what can be done to make the young people safe and healthy.

What Does a Guardian Ad Litem Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

Sometimes the judge will assign a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to help with a dependency case. A Guardian ad Litem is hired to help with the case. The GAL does the same things that the CASA volunteer does. The GAL talks to people involved in the case and spends a lot of time with the children involved. The GAL also tells the young person's story in court and makes suggestions to the court about what can be done to make the young person safe and healthy. In Washington State, some county courts use CASA volunteers and some use GALs. Both types of people are very helpful to the court and are present to help make sure the young people in the case are safe and well cared for.

What Do Youth Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

This book tells about witnesses on pages 10 and 11. A youth might be a witness. If you are a witness, the lawyers and sometimes the judge will ask you questions. Of course, it is very important to tell the truth when you answer questions in court. You even make a special promise, called an oath, to tell the truth before you answer questions. It is also important to answer just the questions that you understand. If you don't understand a question, it is OK to say so and have the question explained to you.

If you are afraid to answer questions in the courtroom, be sure to tell the lawyer, if you have one, or the judge. They will do everything they can to make you feel more comfortable. They may have your CASA or GAL sit with you in court.

Special Court Words

Paternity

Sometimes if your parents were not married, a judge may have to decide who your parents are. If it is not certain who your father is and there is no father's name on your birth certificate, they may go to court to have a judge decide who is the legal father. This decision is called **paternity** or parentage.

Domestic Violence

Some parents hurt each other or their children. This is called **domestic violence**. If one parent hurts or really scares the other parent, that other parent can ask the judge for help. The judge can make a court order that tells the parent who is hurting or scaring the family to get help or to stay away and not hurt the family anymore. This kind of court order can be called a domestic violence protection order, a restraining order, or sometimes a TRO, for temporary restraining order.

Custody Evaluation

If your parents and the mediator can't work out a parenting plan, the judge may tell your parents to get a parenting plan evaluation. The evaluator will spend some time getting to know both you and your parents. After that, the evaluator will think about what would be the best way for you to spend time with your parents. Then the evaluator will tell the judge what he or she thinks is best.

What Is Family Law Court?

When parents decide they aren't going to live together anymore, they may decide to separate and live in different homes. If they've been married and don't want to live together or be married anymore, they can either get a legal separation or a divorce. Divorce is also called dissolution. To get a divorce, married people go to court. In court, the judge will help the parents plan for how they will take care of their children. A judge also will decide how they will share the things they owned while living together.

Most of the time, children don't have to go to court even if their parents have a case there, but sometimes they do. If you need to go to court, remember, it is not because you have done something wrong. Courts are different than other places you may have been, but you don't have to be afraid. Lots of children have parents who go to family court. If you're wondering about this or are a little scared, it helps to talk to someone about your feelings about going to court.



If your parents aren't living together, Family Court helps decide how you can spend time with your parents. A plan about where and when you live with your parents is called a parenting plan.

If you live mostly with one parent, you usually will get to spend time with the other parent. The plan for how often you spend time with your other parent is part of the parenting plan.

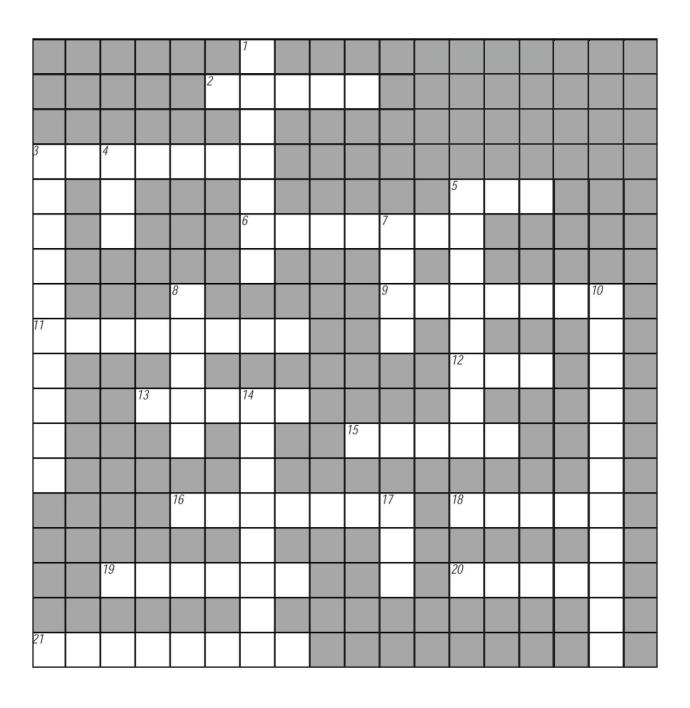
If your parents need help deciding about where and how you will spend time with your parents, they can see a court mediator. The mediator is a person who listens to each parent's ideas about how best to take care of you. The mediator helps them work out a plan that will be best for you. Sometimes mediators also want to meet the children. If your parents' mediator wants to talk to you, he or she probably will ask you questions about how things are going for you at home, at school, and with your friends. The mediator will not ask you to choose which parent you want to live with or to say if you like one of your parents more than the other.

If your parents cannot agree on a parenting plan even after the mediation, the judge will have to decide on a parenting plan for the children. Sometimes the court will ask a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to help provide information about the best possible parenting plan. The CASA or GAL are adults who may talk to you, your parents, and sometimes other people as well to get information that will help the judge decide the best place for you to live. The CASA or GAL will give a report to the judge. The judge will consider the report and use it to help make a decision on the parenting plan.

The judge decides how much money is needed to take care of you after your parents separate. The money that is paid from one parent to the other is called child support.

Family Law Court Crossword Puzzle

Use the clues on page 21 to solve the crossword puzzle. (Answers are located on page 34.)



Across

- 2. Person who makes decisions when parents cannot agree
- 3. Money one parent pays the other to help take care of children
- 5. Shortened name for mother
- 6. Get unmarried
- 9. Person for the court who says, "all rise."
- 11. Another name for a lawyer
- 12. Judge's order to protect somebody
- 13. Place where the judge sits
- 15. Person who helps the judge stay organized
- 16. Person who tells what they know or saw to the judge
- 18. Place where the judge works
- 19. Someone you can talk to
- 20. Time spent with a parent you don't live with
- 21. Person who types up everything that is said is a court

Down

- 1. Plan for where a child lives
- 3. Parents who decide to live in different places
- 4. Nickname for dad
- 5. Person who helps parents decide together where children will live
- 7. Clothing that the judge wears
- 8. What the judge tells you to do
- 10. Person who helps the parent with child support
- 14. What a judge does when a case can't be heard that day
- 17. Short name for a sister

What Is a Guardianship?

Sometimes a parent cannot take care of their children. This can happen if the parents have drug or alcohol problems, are in jail, are very sick or have died. There can be other reasons, too. Another family member or a friend will need to take care of the children. This works best if a judge gives the friend or relative the legal right to act as the parent. When a judge selects someone else to care for children instead of their parents, that person is called a guardian. This plan is called a guardianship.

Like a parent, the guardian cares for the children until the parent can do it again or until the children grow up and don't need anyone to take care of them. Like a parent, the guardian finds a home and a school for the children, provides food and clothes, and takes the children to the doctor when they are sick. The children are part of the guardian's family. The guardian also listens to them when they want to talk and helps them with their homework and other things if they need help.

The fact that parents cannot take care of their family does not mean that they do not love you. If they are able, the parent may visit or phone the children at the guardian's home or other allowed places. If the parents get better, the judge may allow the parents to take care of the children again.

The judge gets information from the guardian to make sure the guardian is doing a good job. The parents, the children, and the guardian may see the judge to talk about any help the children need.

What Is Adoption?

People adopt children because they love children and want to bring a child into their family. Foster parents, the birth parents' family, or anyone else who wants to include a child in their family can adopt children.

Sometimes birth-parents are not able to raise their child. For example, the parents may be too young. They may not be able to take care of the child so the child can be happy and healthy. Sometimes the birth-parents have died.

In these cases, children may be adopted. It is the way a child legally becomes part of a new family. The judge decides if it is best for the child to be adopted. Before the judge makes this decision, a social worker will talk with the child. The social worker also meets the potential new parents and visits the new home. After adoption a child is a member of a new family. A new family can include brothers and sisters, grandparents, and aunts and uncles.

Children can be adopted at any age. Some are babies. Others are teenagers. Even adults can be adopted. Children can be adopted into a family of a different race or religion. Children with special abilities can be adopted. Children can be adopted from other states or countries.

What Is Emancipation?

Emancipation occurs when a child turns 18 or when the court orders emancipation for a child who is under 18. After emancipation, your parent no longer has legal authority and doesn't have to take care of you or pay for things that you need. Emancipation changes your life. You will have some new rights and also many new responsibilities.

When Can a Judge Emancipate You?

In order for a judge to emancipate you, you have to be at least 16 and be able to live away from home. If you want to live on your own, your parents have to agree with your decision. They also could decide not to argue against you in court. You have to have a legal income that pays for food, clothes, and rent. The judge has to decide that emancipation is best for you.

After You Are Emancipated, Which of These Are Rights? Which Are Responsibilities?

Right – the power to have or do something (if you want) that is guaranteed by law. Responsibility – an obligation or something you must do.

Write the word "right" or "responsibility" next to each sentence. (Answers are on page 34.)

You Have Been Emancipated, What Now?

Circle yes or no for the following questions about emancipation. (Answers are on page 35.)

1. Do you still have to attend school until you are 18?	YES	NO
2. Can you work as many hours as an 18-year-old?	YES	NO
3. Can you get married without your parent's consent?	YES	NO
4. If you break a law, will you have		
to go to adult criminal court?	YES	NO
5. Can you vote?	YES	NO

Special Laws For Youth

Sometimes children do things that would be OK for an adult to do but not for a child. Although an adult may drive a car, stay out all night or drink alcohol, a child may not. A child may not drive until age 16, may not stay out past curfew until age 18, and may not use alcohol or marijuana until age 21. If you are a young person and you do these things, they are called status offenses. This means that you are breaking the law because of your age.

In Washington, attendance at school is also mandatory if you are enrolled in a public school. Unexcused absences are called truancy and will require attendance workshops or court action, depending on the number of unexused absences.

Young people do things that are status offenses for many reasons. Some young people have problems. They can feel sad, alone, or angry. They may feel so angry and alone that they disobey their parents, don't go to school, or even run away from home. But because of their age, it is against the law for young people to do these things. Young people can get help with these feelings. They can see a school counselor, a doctor, a person at their church, synagogue, or mosque, or any adult they trust to talk to about their feelings.

Usually status offenders are allowed to go home, but if you are arrested and held by the police you can call your parents, a lawyer, or someone else to help you.

Word Search

Search for the words in the list below and circle them once you find them. The words may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or backward. (Answers are on page 35.)

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FIND

ALCOHOL

ASSAULT

COUNSELING

COURT

CURFEW

DISOBEY PARENTS

DUI

GRAFFITI

JUDGE

JUVENILE HALL

LAWYER

POLICE

PROBATION OFFICER

PROBLEMS

RESTITUTION

SKIP SCHOOL

SMOKING

SPEEDING

TEACHER

TRUANCY

What If I Break the Law?

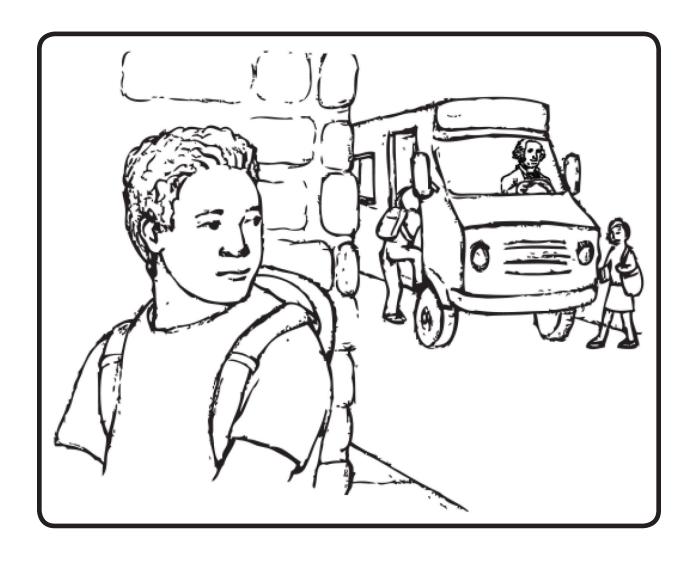
Young people can get into trouble if they disobey the law. If a police officer believes that you have broken the law, the officer can arrest you. The officer will ask you questions and decide if you can go home or if you have to go to a detention center. In detention, all of the doors are locked. Usually, youth have to stay there until a judge says they can leave. If the court decides you broke the law, you may be sent to detention.

Even if you get to go home, later you may have to talk to a probation officer about what happened. The prosecutor may decide that you have to defend your case in juvenile court.

If you ever get arrested, the first thing to remember is to get some HELP! You need to talk to a lawyer about what happened. You have the right to call a lawyer right away if you are locked up. You don't have to answer any questions until you have talked with your lawyer. If you can't afford a lawyer, a public defender who is a lawyer will be appointed for you. The public defender defends you and is paid for by the county. Your lawyer will help you talk to the police and everyone else who wants to ask you questions.

There are different kinds of crimes. Some crimes are much more serious than other crimes. Felony crimes are more serious than misdemeanor crimes.

Some crimes can be either a misdemeanor or a felony, depending how bad the behavior was. A fist fight is one example. If you get into a fist fight you could be charged with a misdemeanor. If you hurt someone badly in a fist fight, you could be charged with a felony. If you have to go to court to defend your case, don't be afraid to talk to your lawyer. The lawyer is there to help you. There may be a trial where the judge hears both sides of the story and then decides if you are guilty. If the judge finds you guilty, and the crime is not very serious, you may be put on probation. If the judge finds that you are guilty and the crime is serious, you may be put in a state facility and locked up. On probation you do what the judge and probation officer say, but you are not locked up. If you are locked up, your family usually can visit you. You and your family may even go to counseling together to learn how to get along with each other. No matter what, even if you do get into trouble, remember it's never too late to change yourself for the better. Don't ever give up on yourself!



Glossary of Terms

Abuse

To injure someone, either with physical force or by verbally attacking.

Adoption

To take a child into one's family legally and raise a child as one's own.

Attorney

A lawyer; one who is licensed to act as a representative for another in a case.

Bailiff

A bailiff's main job is to maintain order in the courtroom and to help court proceedings go smoothly.

Birth parents

Parents who gave birth to a child.

Case

A proceeding, action, cause, lawsuit or controversy started in the court system by filing a complaint, petition, indictment or information.

Child support

Financial support paid by one parent to another for the care of their child following a divorce.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

A person appointed by the judge to help with a dependency case. CASAs are people who volunteer to help by talking to people, especially children, to get more information to help the judge make the best decision.

Court Clerk

An officer of a court whose main duty is to maintain court records, preserve evidence presented during a trial, and take notes.

Court Reporter

A person who records and transcribes the verbatim testimony and all other oral statements made during court sessions.

Crime

An act committed in violation of law forbidding it and for which punishment is imposed.

Dissolution

Legal ending of a marriage. Also called a "divorce."

Divorce

Legal ending of a marriage.

Felony

A crime considered more serious than a misdemeanor and punishable by a stronger sentence

Foster care family

Certified, stand-in "parent(s)" who care for minor children or young people who have been removed from their birth parents or other custodial adults by state authority.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

A person appointed by the court to manage the interests of a child in a court case.

Judge

An elected or appointed public official with authority to hear and decide cases in a court of law.

Juvenile dependency

When a court looks after children who have been removed from their parents because of abuse or neglect. Parents are usually given some time to work on programs and classes to help them provide a safer home for their children. During this time, children are considered "dependents" of the court and it is the dependency court judge's responsibility to make sure each child's needs are being met.

Lawyer

An attorney; One who is licensed to act as a representative for another in a case.

Legal separation

A court order which allows a married couple to live apart, without a divorce, but with the rights and obligations of a divorced couple.

Mediator

A person who works with two opposing sides to reach a mutually acceptable decision, or outcome.

Misdemeanor

An offense in violation of law less serious than a felony, such as theft, disorderly conduct, trespassing or vandalism.

Oath

A written or oral pledge by a person to keep a promise or speak the truth.

Order

A decision made by a judge.

Parenting plan

A plan that states which parent will be responsible for the children and decision-making, and how disputes will be decided between parents.

Reunification

When a child is allowed to live with his or her parent(s), following a separation by the court.

Social worker

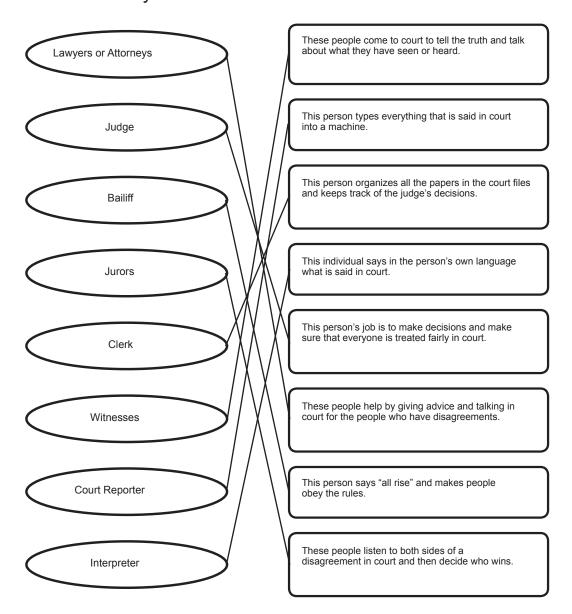
A person trained to talk with people and their families about emotional or physical needs, and to find them support services.

Witnesses

A person who testifies under oath before a court, regarding what he or she has seen, heard or otherwise observed.

Answer Key

PAGE 12 What Do They Do?



PAGE 20Family Law Court Crossword Puzzle

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					² J	J	D	G	Е								
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Emancipation Rights and Responsibilities

- 1. Right
- 2. Right
- 3. Responsibility
- 4. Right
- 5. Right
- 6. Right
- 7. Right
- 8. Responsibility

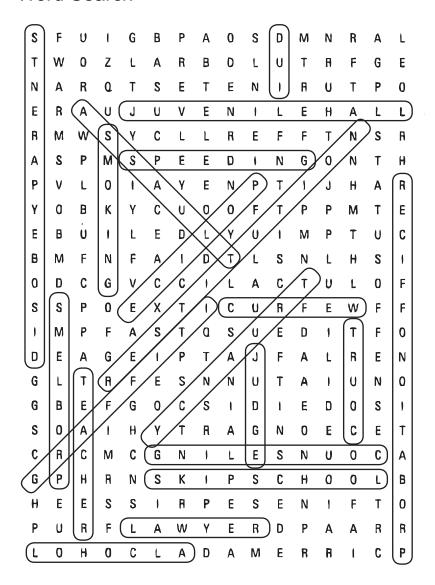
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You Have Been Emancipated, What Now?

- 1. Yes
- 2. Yes
- 3. No
- 4. No
- 5. No
- 6. No

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Word Search



Acknowledgment

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For more information about the book, write to the address below. To make additional copies, visit the <u>Public Trust and Confidence Committee</u> web page and download the digital file.

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