

Dependency/ TPR Process

Child is removed from Parents' care by CYF.

Shelter Hearing

(within 72 hours)
Is the Child in imminent danger?

Petition Hearing

(10 to 30 days after the shelter hearing)

Adjudication

Is the Child without proper parental care or control?

Disposition

Should the Child remain with Parents?
Be placed with a relative?
Live in foster care?

Review Hearing

(every 3 months)
Assessment of services, placement, visitation and reunification.

Reunification

Case is closed.

Further Review

Hearings continue.

Termination of Parental Rights Petition

(at 15 months)

Termination of Parental Rights Hearing

(usually 3 to 6 months after TPR petition)

Court of Common Pleas Judges and Hearing Officers preside over Juvenile Court. The parties are represented by County Solicitors (CYF caseworkers), Guardians ad Litem (children), and Parent Advocates (parents). A CASA can be appointed to investigate the case.

Adoption and Safe Families Act

Parents must work quickly to resolve a Juvenile Court dependency case or face the possibility of losing their child forever



Pennsylvania's recent enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) shortens the time for parents to demonstrate to the Court that they are ready to be reunified with their child.

Under ASFA, if a child is in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months a termination of parental rights petition will be filed in most cases. If granted, the parents' legal rights to the child are ended and the child can be adopted.

By law, CYF must offer adequate services to parents so that they can remedy the problems that brought their children into foster care.

A Parent Advocate attorney plays an important role in making sure that CYF offers services quickly so that parents can meet the ASFA deadline and be reunified with their child.

Mission Statement

The Juvenile Court Project is a legal assistance program of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation. Our mission is to advocate for the interests and protect the legal rights of indigent parents whose children are the subjects of Juvenile Court dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings.



JUVENILE COURT PROJECT

PARENT ADVOCATES

Representing indigent parents in Juvenile Court dependency and termination of parental rights hearings.

JUVENILE COURT PROJECT

Koppers Building • Eleventh Floor
436 Seventh Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15219

412-391-4467 phone

412-391-4465 fax

www.acbfparentadvocates.org



Parent Advocates

Parents who cannot afford an attorney have the right to a *free* Parent Advocate attorney

Parent Advocates are licensed attorneys who specialize in assisting parents who are accused of abusing or neglecting their children. This free legal service is limited to Juvenile Court dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings.

Parent Advocates represent biological and adoptive parents whose income is at or below the poverty level. They do not represent foster parents, grandparents or other family members.

Eligibility & Intake

Parents *must* complete an intake application to determine eligibility

Attorneys are assigned to cases only after intake is completed. The sooner an attorney is assigned to a case, the better the legal position of the parent.

Intake must be completed at least one week before a court hearing. An exception is made for emergency Shelter Hearings.



Intake Sites

JUVENILE COURT PROJECT OFFICE:
Monday, Wednesday, Friday
9 a.m. – Noon
Tuesday, Thursday
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY JUVENILE COURT:
Monday
8:30 a.m. – Noon
Wednesday, Friday
8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY JAIL:
Monday
1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Call the Parent Advocate office for additional sites.

Parents can assist in their case by providing vital information at the intake appointment

What to bring:

1. Proof of annual household income (DPW & SSI printouts, pay-stubs, W-2 forms, child support orders).
2. Paperwork from the case (CYF letters, court orders, medical and school records, lease).
3. Names and phone numbers of witnesses (doctors, therapists, probation officers, school officials, in-home services providers).

Intake by mail:

Parents who cannot complete intake in person due to confinement can have an application sent to the facility where they reside.

Alternatively, they can download a copy of the application from the Juvenile Court Project website at www.acbfparentadvocates.org by clicking on the Eligibility tab and then on the Application for Representation link. The completed application can be faxed to the Juvenile Court Project office at 412-391-4465.

Legal Rights

Parents who are involved in Juvenile Court dependency proceedings have constitutionally-protected rights and are entitled to the protection of the American judicial system

These rights include the following:

Notification:

Parents have the right to be notified of *all* Juvenile Court hearings regarding their child.

Legal Counsel:

Parents have the right to be represented by an attorney at *all* hearings. If a hearing takes place *before* the parent has obtained an attorney, the parent can ask the judge for a *continuance* and the hearing can be rescheduled.

Privacy:

Parents have the right to confidentiality. Parents should talk to an attorney *before* talking to CYF or anyone else about their case.

Parents should talk to an attorney *before* signing any papers allowing others to see their medical, mental health, and drug & alcohol treatment records.

Parents should talk to an attorney *before* agreeing to undergo a mental health or drug & alcohol evaluation.

