

Advocate Refresher – Court Etiquette

Court has certainly been a bit different since March of 2020! Some of our courts are still operating via Zoom while others are back fully in person. We thought that some reminders about courtroom etiquette might come in handy for all; especially in the judicial districts that are transitioning from Zoom to in-person. Please see below for some important things to remember when appearing in court:

Attire:

- Casual business attire is always a safe bet.
- Please no blue jeans or denim skirts.
- Shorts, super short dresses or skirts, sleeveless shirts, or t-shirts are generally not allowed in any courtrooms. Not to mention, we strive for professional appearance.
- Courtrooms are often cold so a light jacket or sweater is nice to have on hand.

Cell Phones, Kindles, I-Pads, Laptops, Etc.:

- Many court systems prohibit these items so please be prepared to leave them in your car.
- If the court allows cell phones to be brought in, please make sure that it is on silent and out of view.
- We prefer that you leave your other electronic devices in your car, even if they are allowed in the courthouse. Juvenile court is confidential and we do not ever want to cause suspicion that we are recording courtroom testimony. This is prohibited by law and your device may be subject to confiscation if recording is suspected.
- While it is tempting to play games on phones, text, or scroll through social media, cell phones should remain out of sight and if you need to make a call or text, please excuse yourself from the courtroom.

Miscellaneous Things to Remember:

- Please arrive on time. If your case is called before you arrive, your child misses out on having your input heard during the case.
- Wait times are sometimes long. While we are extremely sorry that this is the case, we have no control over when our cases are heard.
- Our cases are hard, but please remember to maintain your composure when rulings are made that do not align with CASA's recommendations. We can discuss after court but we should be respectful of the court's authority while in the courtroom.
- If you do not understand a question that is asked by an attorney or judge, please simply state that and ask them to repeat the question. It is always acceptable to say when you do not know the answer to the question.
- Please be prepared to stay all day. CASA Supervisors cannot predict when your case will be called. Communicate with your supervisor if you are unable to do this so a plan can be made to assure that your child has advocacy in court.
- It is generally a good idea to ask your supervisor to join you for conferences with attorneys prior to court.
- CASA Volunteers should never discuss their case with the presiding judge outside of court.
- CASA Volunteers are bound by confidentiality. This not only applies to your case, but to all of the cases that are on the docket. It is never acceptable to discuss any of the cases or to disclose the identity of parents, relative caregivers, children, foster parents, etc. to anyone.

Please know how valuable your court reports and testimony are to the children that you serve! CASA Staff and Volunteers participated in 1,305 hearings in 2020 and have participated in 660 so far this year. That is a lot of advocacy for children across 10 parishes!

Thank you for your time and dedication. The Advocate Supervisor team is honored to serve with you.