

**YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE TO FACILITATE  
MEANINGFUL COURT INVOLVEMENT**

Instructions: This is a short questionnaire designed as a tool to guide the AGAL or CASA through the discussion about participation in Court. Participating in Court is important because it gives essential information to the people responsible for making important decisions about the youth's life. ***This document should not be handed to the youth or shared with others.***

This document should be completed by AGAL or CASA.

Name of Youth: \_\_\_\_\_ Next Hearing Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth's Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Judge: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Next Hearing: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION A – HOW DOES THE YOUTH WANT TO PARTICIPATE?**

There are a lot of ways a youth can participate in Family Court hearings about placement in foster care. Ask the youth what he or she thinks about the following suggestions or if he or she has idea for another way to participate.

Do you want to go to the court hearing? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**If yes**, you have some options for how you will participate, which option would you like?

- Sit in the courtroom for the entire hearing and answer the Judge's questions in the courtroom
- Sit in the courtroom for the entire hearing and meet with the Judge separately either before or after the hearing
- Sit in the courtroom for part of the hearing and leave when \_\_\_\_\_ occurs
- Remain outside the courtroom during the hearing and meet with the Judge before or after the hearing
- Other

**If no**, you still have some options for participation, which option would you like?

- Participate by phone
- Meet with the Judge at a different time than the hearing
- Write a statement to the Judge, which can be read aloud during the hearing or given to the judge
- Ask the AGAL/CASA to participate and communicate for you and report back
- Other

**SECTION B – CONCERNS ABOUT PARTICIPATION**

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Details and information about the court hearing may help youth feel prepared for the court hearing. The AGAL/CASA will tell the youth the details about this hearing. The AGAL/CASA wants to know about the youth’s feelings, concerns and needs to prepare for the court hearing. The following questions may help guide the AGAL/CASA in preparation for the court hearing:

How do you feel about participating in the court hearing in Family Court?

How do you feel about seeing your parents and other adults in the court hearing?

Would you like to talk about the topics that may be discussed at the court hearing?

Are you concerned about any topics that may be discussed at the court hearing?

Are there any special requests or needs that will make your participation more meaningful?

What times are better for you when scheduling future hearings?

**SECTION C – PREPARATION FOR FAMILY COURT**

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The AGAL/CASA should gather information that the youth would like to share in Family Court through the following questions.

Tell me three good things that are happening in your life that we can share at Family Court: (You can include things like: school, hobbies, a job, an award received, test scores, an important relationship with friends or family, etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Are there any problems you are having that you want to talk about at Family Court?

Do you want any help getting ready to participate in Family Court? (Check any that apply)

- Go over questions that you may answer
- Practice your answers
- Help writing a letter to the judge
- Practice reading the letter you wrote

Do you understand the following? (Check any that apply)

- What to wear to court
- How to address the Court
- The type of proceeding you will participate in

Would you like someone to come to Family Court with you, someone besides me and your DFS worker? (For example, a friend, IL worker, relative, teacher, therapist, nurse, etc.)

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Name of person: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anyone you think you may see at the hearing that causes you to feel concerned or nervous?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ If yes, why?

Do you have any questions about participating in the hearing?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

What would you like to do if we have to wait before the court hearing?

- Read
- Play cards or games
- Look at college catalogues
- Do homework
- Work on forms such as the FAFSA, ETV application, scholarship applications, etc.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION D – ORGANIZING FOR THE FAMILY COURT HEARING**

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There are some details that need to be discussed and completed to be prepared for the court hearing.

Do you know how you will get to Family Court?

- Transportation Company
- DFS Case Worker
- Foster Parent
- Independent Living Case Worker
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person or agency responsible: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need breaks during the hearing?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Would you like to make a list of items to remember to bring to Family Court? For example:

- A statement
- A book
- Cards or games
- College catalogues
- Homework
- An Award
- Report Card
- Forms such as the FAFSA, ETV application, scholarship applications, etc.
- Small comfort item
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION E – DURING COURT**

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Upon arriving to the courthouse, immediately go to the youth (if the CASA/AGAL has not transported the youth to Court):

- How are you? How is your day going?
- Have you checked in at reception yet?
- Do you know the people seated here waiting?
- Do you have any questions for me before we go into Court?
- Do you understand how to address the Court?
- Other than what we already prepared for, is there anything else you want to make sure is covered today?
- If any documents need to be reviewed, go over them.

Once seated in the courtroom, ask the youth a few questions:

- Do you know who everyone is ?
- Do we have our pad of paper and a pen to write notes or questions?
- If you get uncomfortable, are there ways that I can help you feel more comfortable?
- Do you understand everything that's being discussed?
- Have I covered all of your questions with the witnesses who have testified? Is there anyone else we should hear from that is present?
- Are we ready to speak up to the Judge? What does the judge need to hear from you?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION F – AFTER THE COURT HEARING**

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Reviewing what happened after Family Court can help ensure that youth understands the information from the court hearing and informs the AGAL/CASA about any concerns that the youth may have as a result of the court hearing.

Did the court hearing change anything?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ If Yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

Was anything confusing?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ If Yes, what?\_\_\_\_\_

Did you like or dislike the way you participated?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Why?\_\_\_\_\_

Did you feel like you were able to express your wishes and concerns?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Did the hearing have any surprises?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Why?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you know what is supposed to happen now?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know when the next court hearing is scheduled?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Date? \_\_\_\_\_



*Remember: Cell Phones and electronics are not permitted in the Family Court.*