

## 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 who are there.
- Don't eat or drink in court.
- Don't chew gum.
- You can't listen to a Walkman in court.
- There may be other cases before yours. You have to be quiet and wait.
- You can read a book or play quietly with this book while you wait.
- When your case starts, 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.



## I Am a Witness

Children can go to court and sometimes they can be witnesses, too. The most important thing for every witness to do is to tell the truth. Sometimes it hurts to say what really happened, but if you are a witness you still have to tell the truth. 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 not to guess, and not to say something that you think 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 OK, too. Just let the judge or the lawyer know that you do not understand the question, and the judge will take care of the situation.

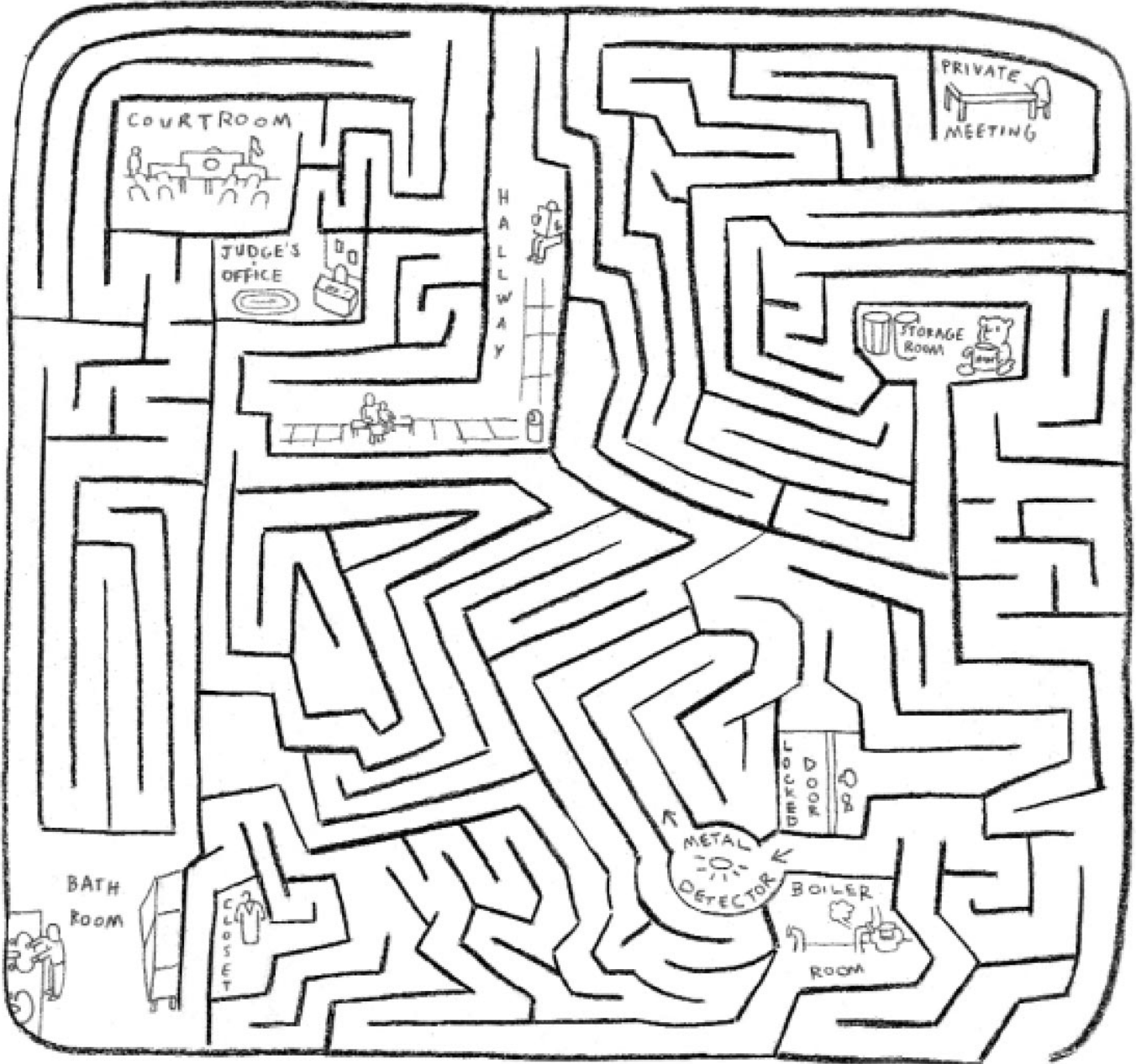
Sometimes children are scared to go to court. If you have to go to court, it's OK to feel scared. Adults get scared about court, too. Just remember the judge is there to make sure everything is fair.

Children usually go to court because of cases involving their family. 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.



# Can You Find Your Way to the Courtroom?

(The courthouse isn't really this confusing!)



Start Here

## What Are Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) Hearings?

When children come to court because a parent has hurt them or not taken care of them, this is a **Child In Need of Assistance case**. For short, this is called a “**CINA**” hearing. 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 their child properly, the juvenile court may step in and the child may become “dependent” on the court for safeguarding. When this happens, the child may have to live with relatives or another family for a while. This temporary family is called a **foster care family**.

Usually, parents want to have their child live with them. The judge, master and social worker will work with parents to make their home healthy and safe. If they succeed, then the child can move back home with the parents. This is called **reunification**.

Sometimes parents can’t make their home safe for the child. Then the judge or master and others may have to find another home where the child can live safely for a long time. They make a **permanent plan** for a child.

### What Does the Social Worker Do in a CINA Case?

A social worker is a person who tries to protect children and keep them safe. A social worker may help children who are being hit or touched in bad ways (this is called **abuse**). The social worker may also help children who don’t have proper food, clothes, or other things they need (this is called **neglect**). If the abuse or neglect is very bad, the social worker may have to find another place for the child to stay. Then the family and the social worker may have to go to court so that a judge can decide how to help the child and the family.

### What Does the Master or Judge Do in a CINA Case?

Sometimes a person called a **master** might be sitting at the bench in the courtroom instead of a judge. A master hears custody, visitation, and child support cases just like the judge does. A master is a lawyer who the judge has asked to sit at the bench instead of the judge. The master looks just like a judge except the master does not wear a robe. Your father and mother and the other witnesses, and sometimes you too, will tell the master your story. Then the master tells the judge what everybody said and did in the courtroom. This is called a report. After the judge reads the report, he or she decides what is going to happen and tells everybody what they have to do.

There are four main types of CINA hearings. A **Shelter** hearing is an emergency hearing where the master or judge decides where you will live temporarily. There is also an **Adjudication** hearing where the master or judge decides whether the

allegations (a statement of what happened) of abuse or neglect are true. A **Disposition** hearing is where the master or judge decides whether you need help from the court and if so, what services will be offered to you and your family. The services may include a parenting program, a substance abuse program, or counseling/therapy. The master or judge will review your case every six months to make sure that everyone is doing what they are ordered to do. This is called a **Review** Hearing.

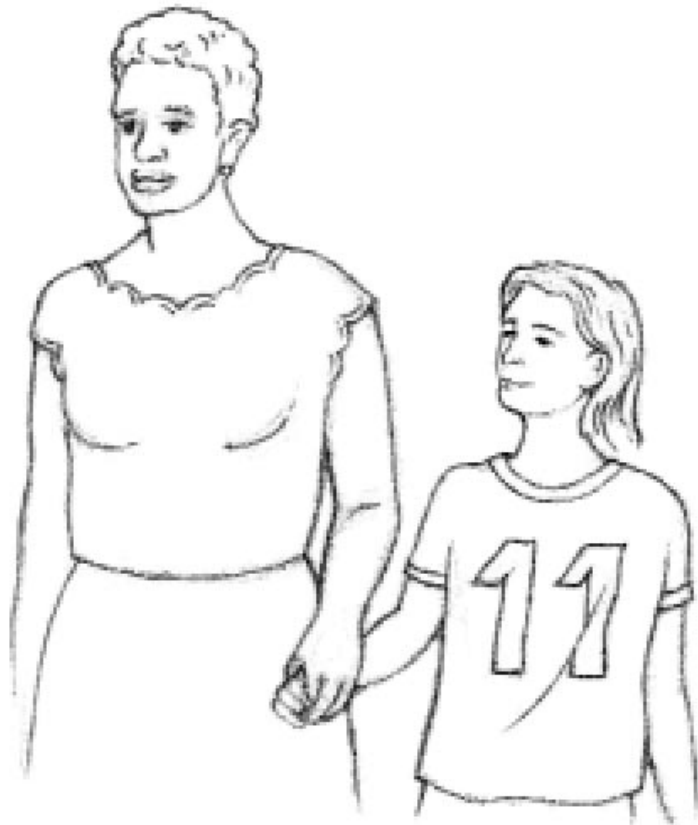
It is the master's and judge's job to listen to what everyone says in court. The master or judge know what the law is and decides what needs to happen to keep kids safe. If the master or judge asks you a question, it is very important for you to tell the truth. The master or judge needs to know the truth to make the best decision for you.

### What Do Lawyers Do in a CINA Case?

People involved in a case usually have a lawyer to speak for them in court. Lawyers are sometimes referred to as attorneys. The people in a CINA case who might have a lawyer are the social worker, mother, father, children, and sometimes others.

### What Does a CASA Do in a CINA Case?

Sometimes the master or judge will assign a **Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)** to help with a CINA case. CASAs are volunteers who help by talking to people, especially children, and telling the master or judge what they learn. CASAs spend a lot of time with the children they're assigned to. They listen to the children and tell their story to the court. The CASA also suggests to the court what can be done to make the child safe and healthy.



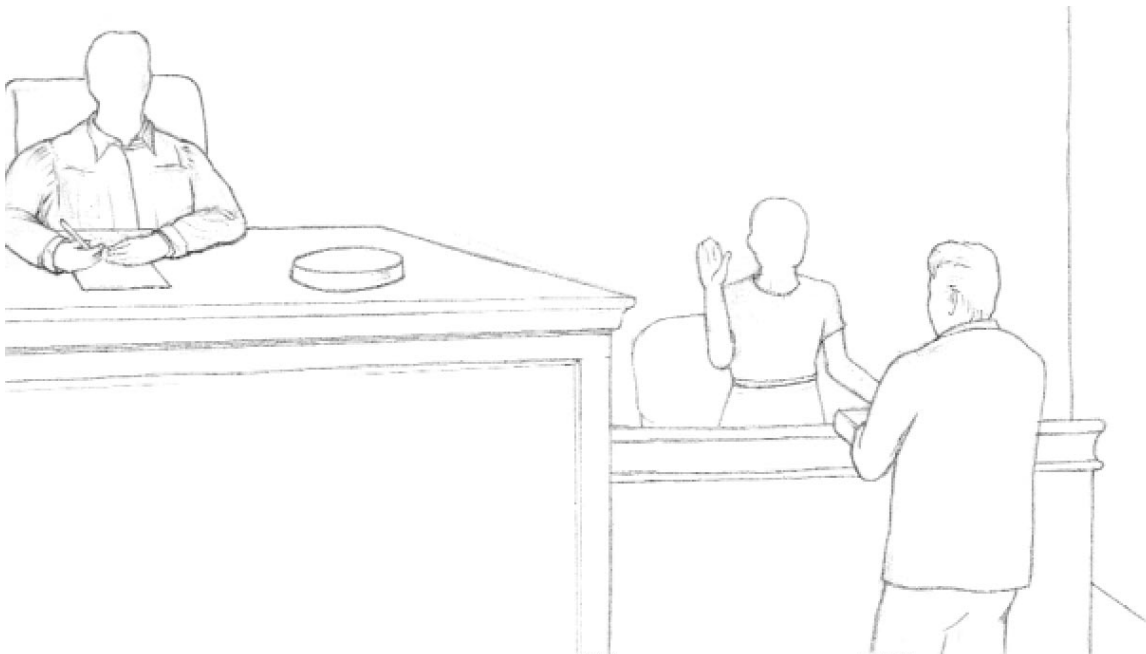
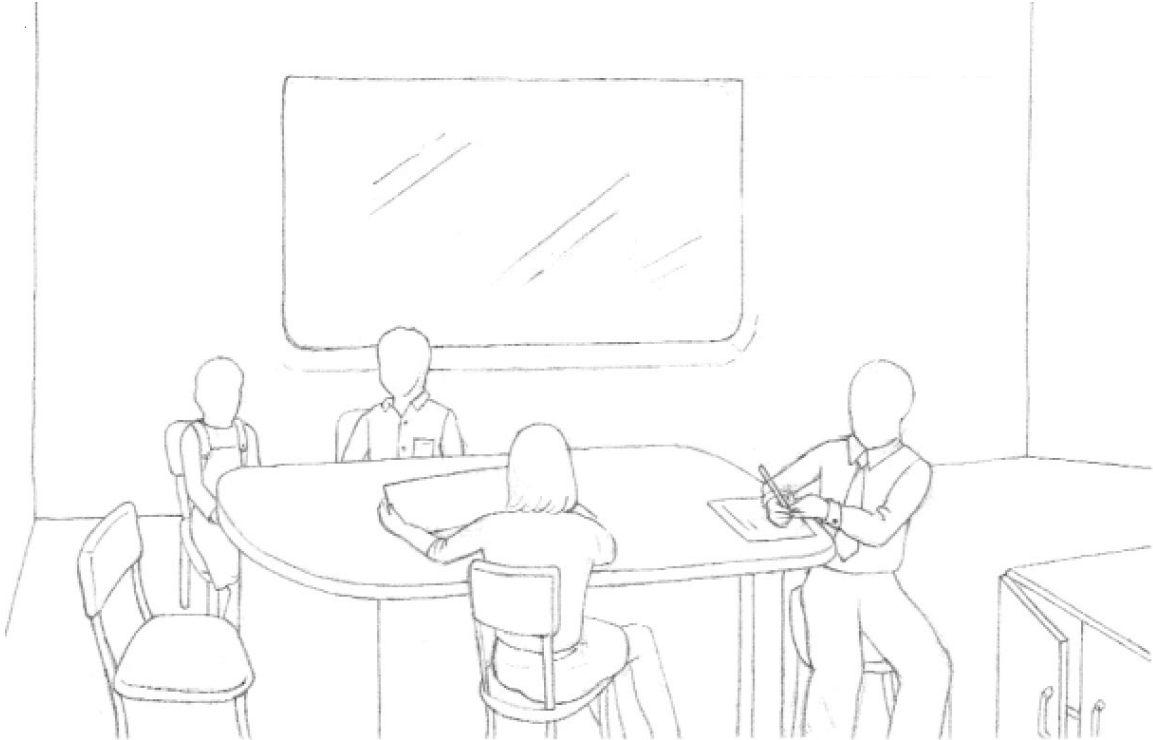
## What Do Children Do in a CINA Case?

A child might be a witness. If you are a witness, the lawyers and sometimes the master or judge will ask you questions. Of course, it is very important to tell the truth when you answer questions in court. You even have to 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.

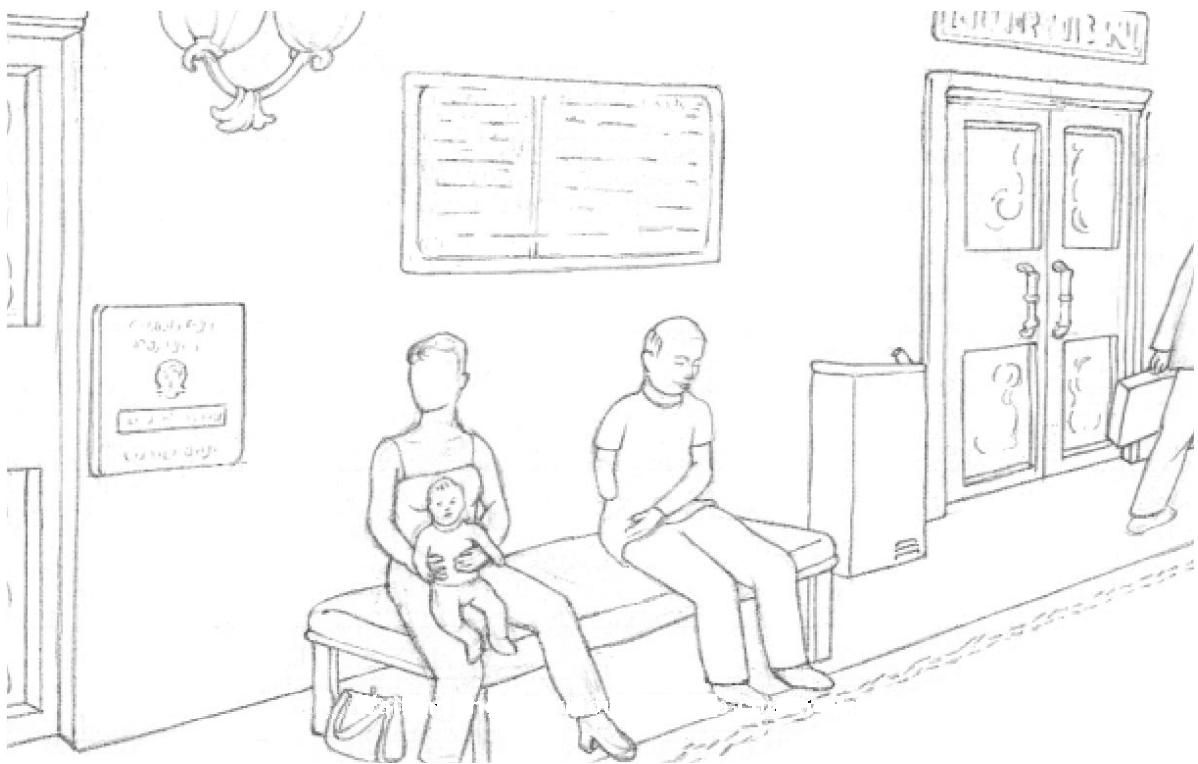
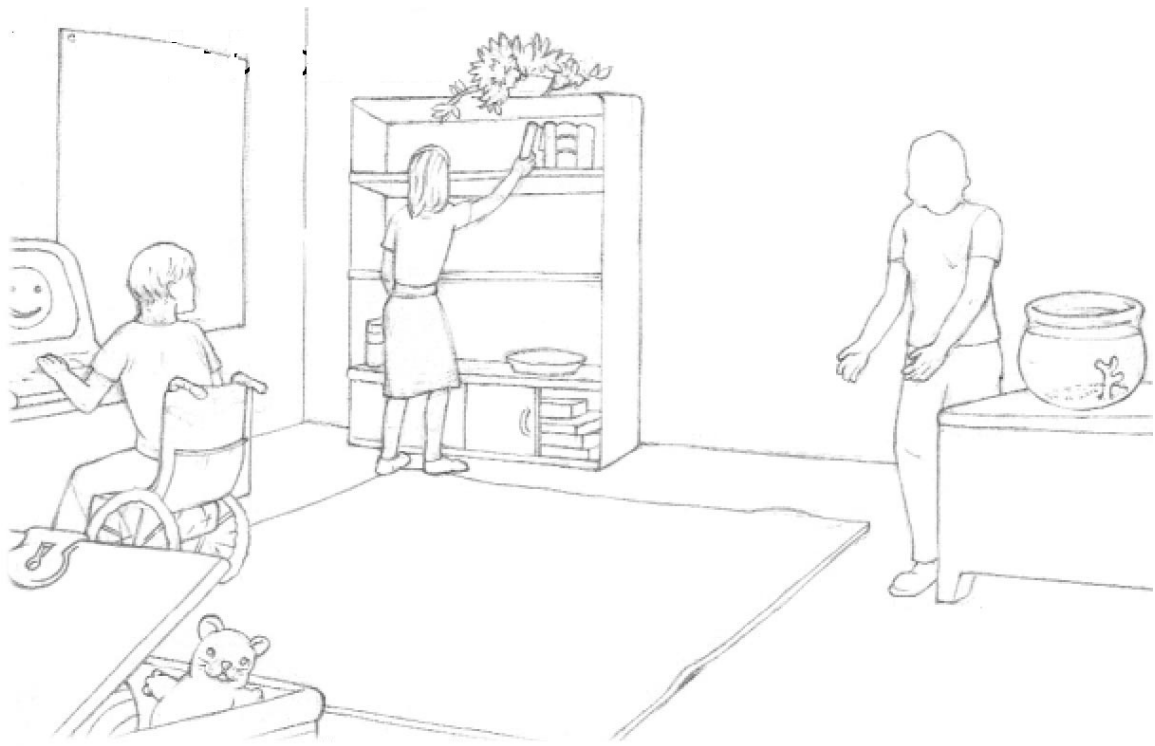
If you're afraid to answer questions in the courtroom, be sure to tell your lawyer, if you have one, or the master or judge. They will do everything they can to make you feel more comfortable. They may let you answer questions in the judge's or master's office or have your CASA sit with you in court.

# Courthouse Rooms

Give these people in the courthouse faces by coloring the pictures.







## Family Law Court

### Divorce, Custody, and Child Support:

When a mother and father decide they can't live together anymore, they may decide to separate and live in different homes. If they have been married and don't want to live together or be married anymore, they can either get a **legal separation** or a **divorce**. To get a divorce, married people have to go to court. In court, a mediator will help the parents plan for how they will take care of their children, and a judge will decide how they will split up all the things they shared 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 have to go to court, remember that it isn't because you have done something wrong. Courts are different than other places you may have been, but you don't have to be afraid. Most court people are nice to children. Lots of children have parents who go to family court. If you are wondering about this or are a little scared, it helps to talk to someone about your feelings about going to court. Sometimes the court will appoint a **Guardian ad litem** to represent you. A Guardian ad litem is usually an attorney who will meet with you and report back to the court.

If your parents aren't living together, they need to figure out how you can spend time with both of your parents. They need to figure out when you will live with each of your parents. This plan about where you live is called a **custody plan**, or a **parenting plan**.





Write a story about a person going to family court. Maybe you know someone who went to family court to fix a problem.



If you live mostly with one parent, you will usually get to spend time with, or **visit**, the other parent. The plan for how often you visit with your other parent is called a **visitation schedule**.

When your parents need help deciding about custody and visitation, they can see a court **mediator**. The mediator listens to your mother's and your father'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 with children. If your parents' mediator wants to talk with you, he or she will probably ask you questions about how things are going for you at home, at school, and with your friends. The mediator won't 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.

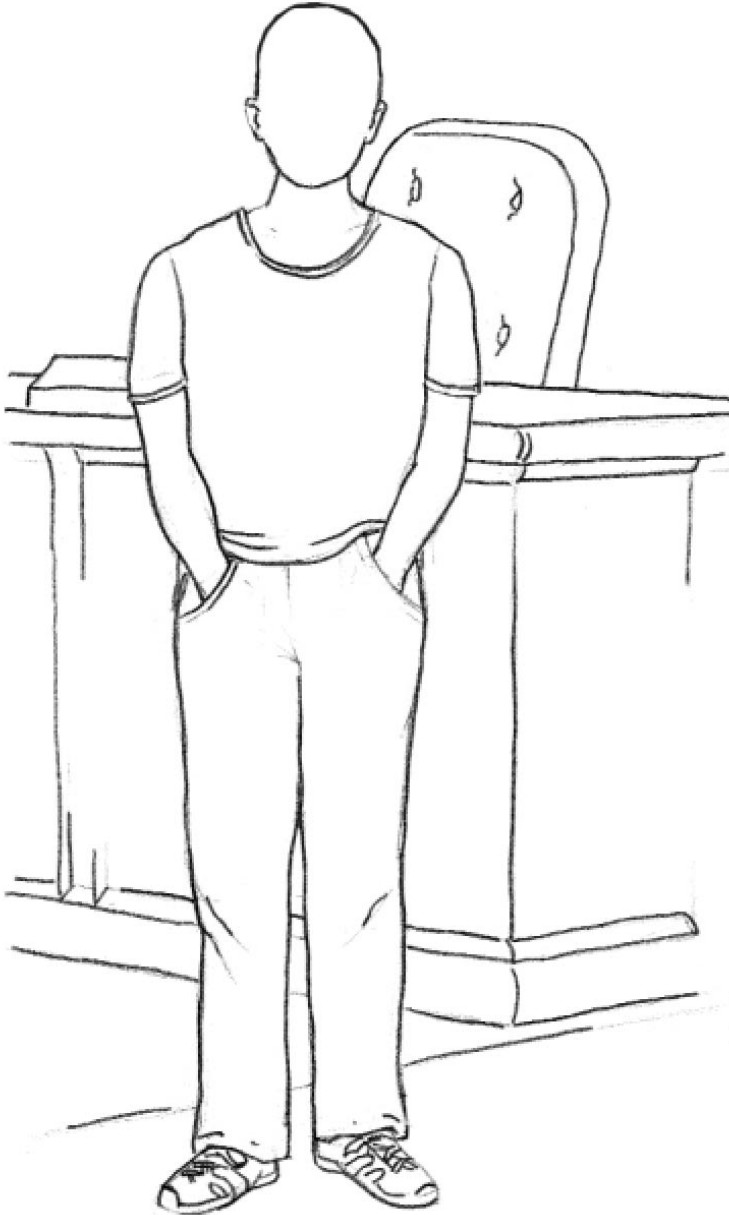
Parents also have to figure out how much money they need to give each other to take care of you after they separate. This money is called **child support**. At court there is a lawyer called a facilitator who helps parents and the court decide how much support will be paid.

If your parents and the mediator can't work out a parenting plan, the judge or master may tell your parents to get a custody evaluation. A **custody 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 or master what he or she thinks.

If parents can't agree on their own, the judge or master will tell them what to do. When the judge or master tells someone what to do, it is called an **order**. The judge and master have an office in the court and they sit at a desk called a **bench**. The judge or master gets help from the clerk, who keeps the judge organized. In the courtroom, there is a special police officer called a **bailiff** who keeps everyone safe. Sometimes a judge or master cannot finish a case in one day. Then the judge or master will **continue** or **postpone** the case to another day.

## Paternity Hearings

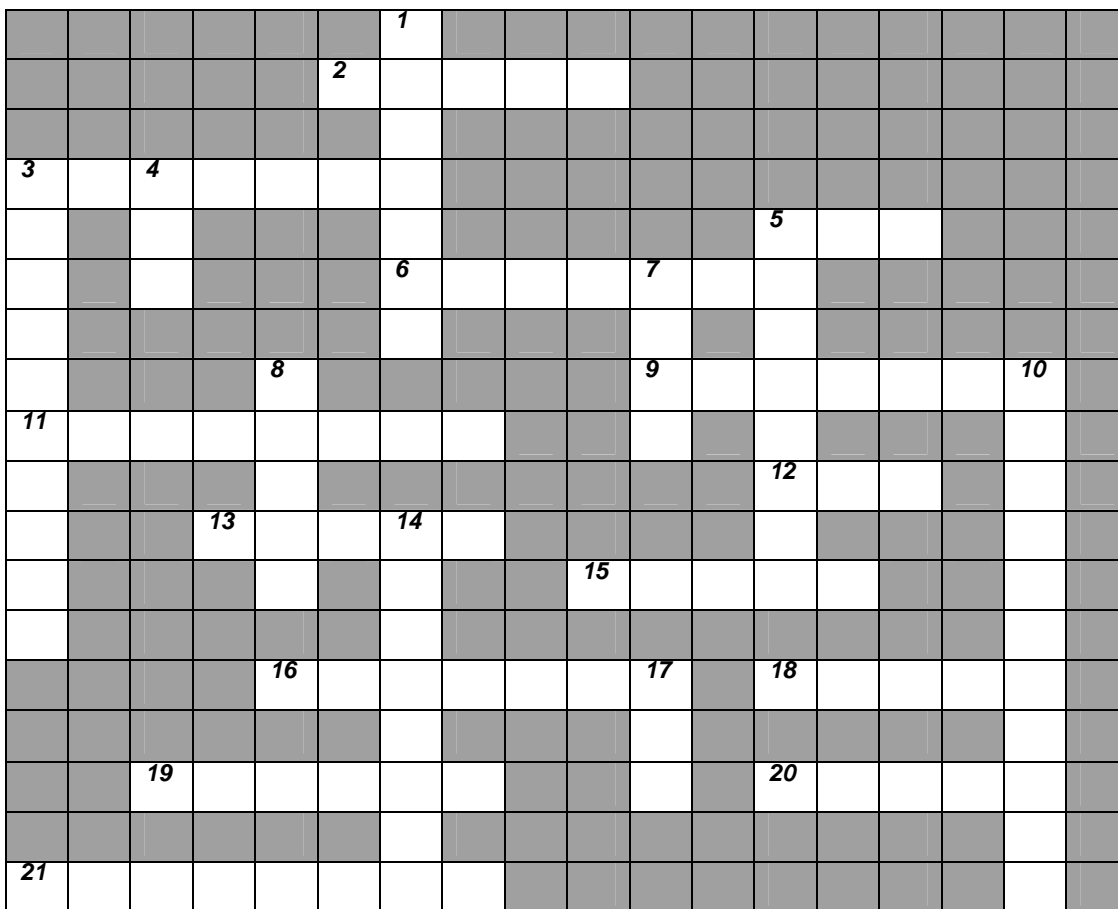
Your parents can also come to court to ask the master or judge to decide who your father is. This may be because your father's name is not on your birth certificate, or because your parents weren't married to each other when you were born. The master or judge can make a decision about who is legally your father. This decision is called **paternity** or **parentage**.



## Domestic Violence Hearings

Sometimes parents, or people who live together, get scared of each other. 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 stay away and not hurt the family anymore. This kind of court order is called an **ex parte** order or a **protective order**. In some places, it may be referred to as a **Temporary Restraining Order (TRO)**.

## Crossword Puzzle



### ACROSS

2. The person who makes decisions when parents cannot agree is the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Money one parent pays the other to help take care of children is called \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A short name for mother is \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Getting unmarried is called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The police officer for the court is the \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Another name for "lawyer" is an \_\_\_\_\_.
12. A judge's order to protect somebody may be called a \_\_\_\_\_.
13. The judge sits on the \_\_\_\_\_.
15. The person who helps the judge stay organized is the \_\_\_\_\_.
16. A person who tells what they know or saw to the judge is a \_\_\_\_\_.
18. The place where the judge works is the \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Someone you can talk to is a \_\_\_\_\_.

20. Spending time with a parent you don't live with is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
21. The person who types up everything that is said in court is \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

1. The plan for where a child lives is called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Parents who decide to live in different places are having a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A nickname for dad is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The person who helps parents decide together where children will live is the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The clothing that the judge wears is the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What the judge tells you to do is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The person who helps the parent with child support is the \_\_\_\_\_.
14. If a case can't be heard that day, then the judge will \_\_\_\_\_ it.
17. A short name for sister is \_\_\_\_\_.