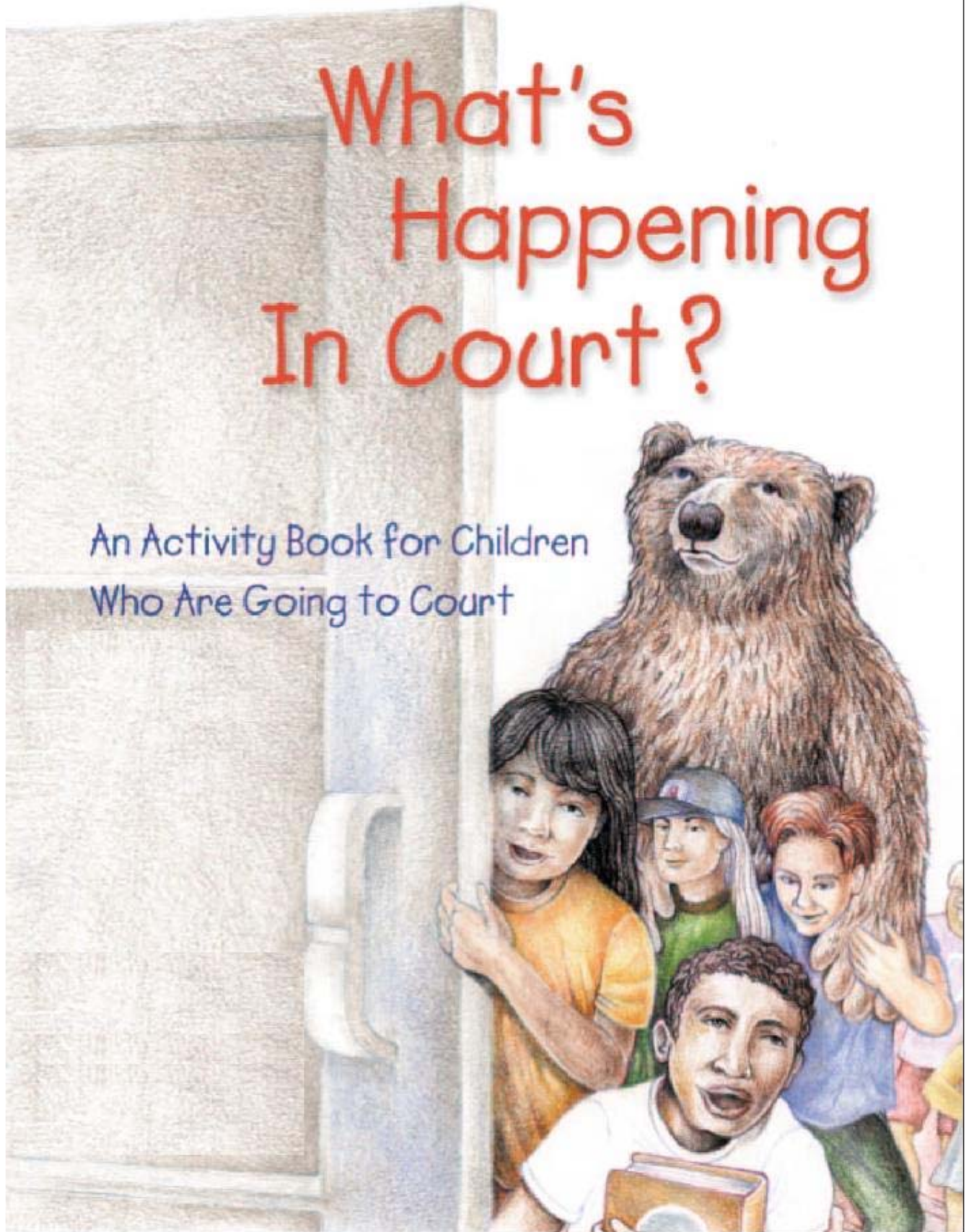


What's Happening In Court?

An Activity Book for Children
Who Are Going to Court



“What’s Happening in Court?” was written in 1999 by the Office of the General Counsel, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) for the State of California. It was illustrated by San Francisco artists Andrew DeWitt and Robert Gutierrez and was produced by the dedicated staff of the AOC. In 2003, the AOC granted permission for The Listening Place, Howard County’s Child Advocacy Center to modify the book to correspond to Maryland law. In 2005, the AOC and The Listening Place granted permission to the Maryland Judiciary to republish the book and distribute it to children throughout Maryland.

The Listening Place is a collaborative partnership of the Howard County Department of Social Services, the Howard County Police Department, the State’s Attorney’s Office, the Office of Citizen Services, the Health Department, the Domestic Violence Center, and the STTAR Center. The Listening Place’s adoption and modification of the book was made possible by the generous support of the Maryland Department of Human Resources through a grant from the Children’s Justice Act.

*For additional copies or more information about the book, please call the Maryland Judiciary’s Court Information Office at 410-260-1488 or download a copy at:
<http://www.courts.state.md.us/publications.html>.*

WELCOME

Going to court can be scary or intimidating for anyone – especially children. Yet children go to court every day, for all sorts of reasons. We want to make the experience of going to court easier for you to understand.

This book will tell you what happens in court: who works there, what the rules are, and how you might be involved in a case. Remember that you can always ask questions if you are in court and feel afraid or confused.

THE MARYLAND JUDICIARY



“What’s Happening in Court?”

An Activity Book for Children Who Are Going to Court

is presented by

**the Maryland Judicial Conference’s
Committee on Public Awareness.**

The book was adapted for the children of Maryland by

The Listening Place,

Howard County’s Child Advocacy Center.



This book is designed for children of all ages who visit court for any reason – whether they are witnesses, visitors to the courthouse, or involved in a case.

It is meant to be used as a teaching tool that may foster conversations about the court system, and an activity book that gives children who are in court something to do while they wait.

This book is not intended to give or substitute for legal advice.

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Some Important Information

I have to go to court. My next court date is _____

The judge's name is _____

My lawyer's name and phone number are _____

My social worker's name and phone number are _____

My CASA's name and phone number are _____

My Victim Advocate's name and phone number are _____

Names of other important people and their phone numbers:

On My Way to Court

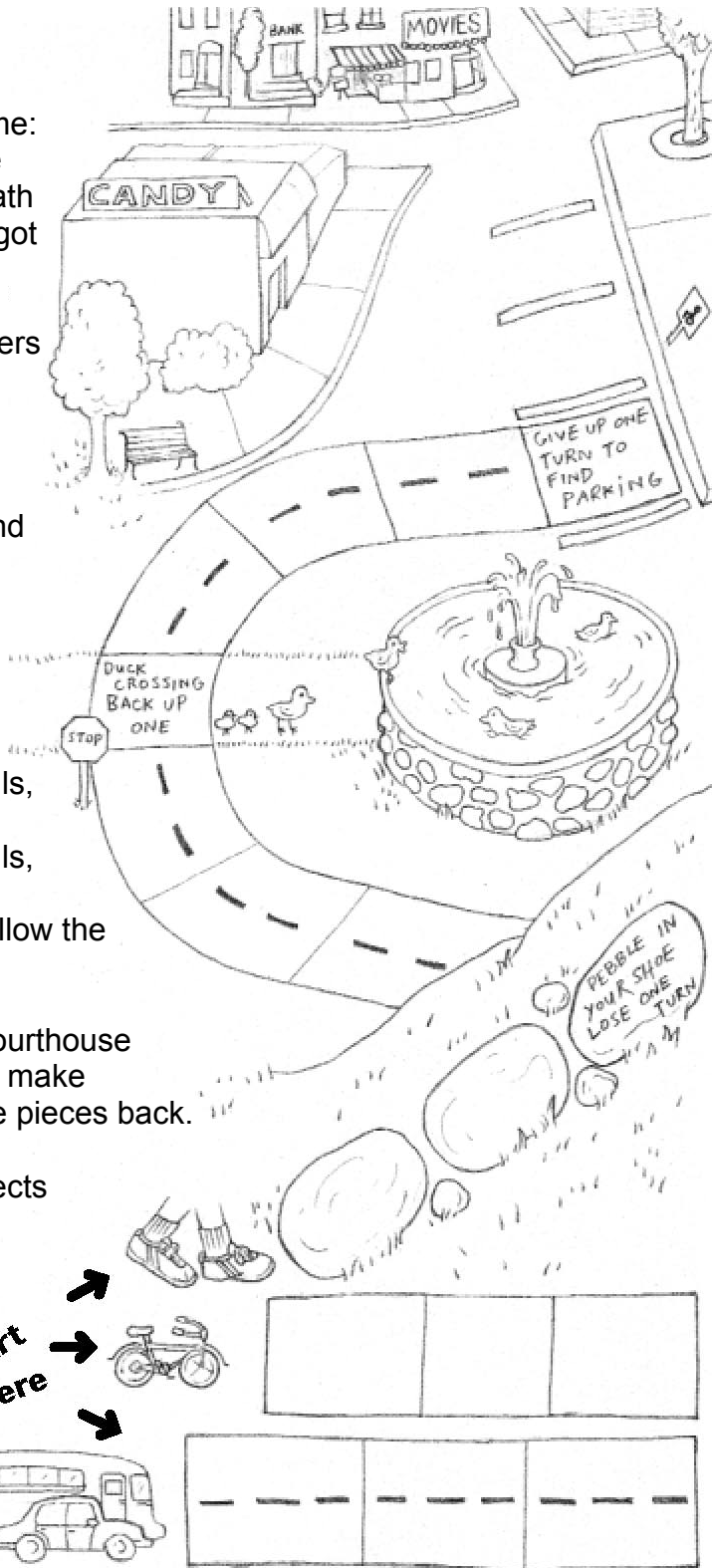
These are the rules of the game:
 Be the first player to get to the courthouse by following the path that has a picture of how you got to the courthouse.
 1-4 players can play.
 Use coins, paperclips, or erasers as game pieces.
 Drop 3 extra coins on a flat surface.

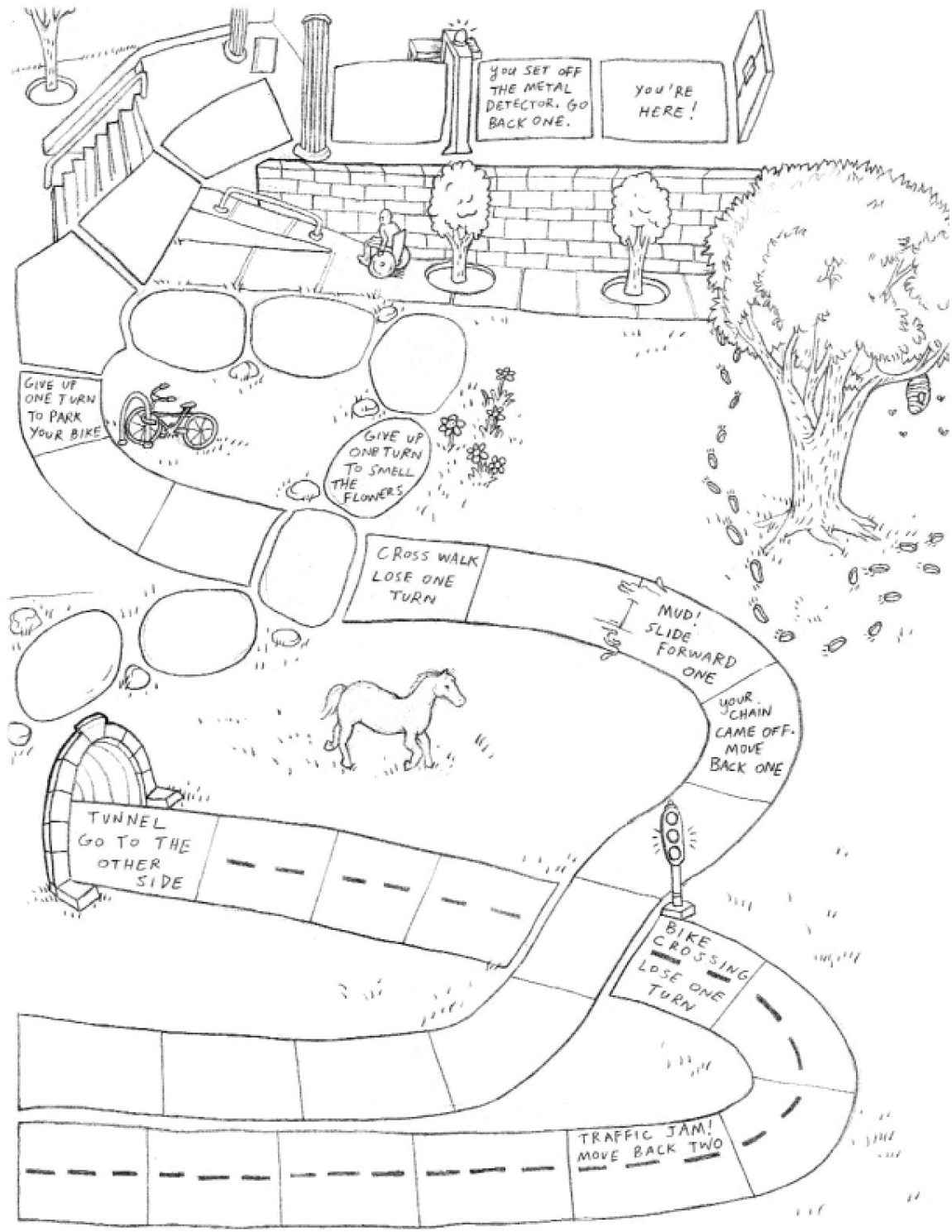
Count the number of heads and move ahead that number.

If there are 1 head and 2 tails, move forward 1 space.
 If there are 2 heads and 1 tail, move forward 2 spaces.
 If there are 3 heads and no tails, move forward 3 spaces.
 If there are no heads and 3 tails, do not move.
 When you land on a space, follow the instructions on that space.

The first player to get to the courthouse wins. At the end of the game, make sure everyone gets their game pieces back.

Circle on the game all the objects that you saw on your way to court today. If you saw a horse, then circle the horse. If what you saw today is not here, draw a picture of it on the game.





Why Am I Here?

Check the box that tells why you are at court today, then color the pictures.

I am at court today with

who has come here to



I am at court today on a field trip

with _____



I am here because I am involved in a case or I am here as a witness to tell what I have seen or heard.

I do not know why I am at court.



Who Are the People in Court?

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

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 on the **bench**. The judge's name is often on a sign near the bench. Some types of cases are heard by **masters**. A master is a lawyer who the judge has asked to sit at the bench instead of the judge.



The judge does many things. First, the judge is like a referee at a ball game. The judge makes sure that everyone plays by the rules. Sometimes the judge is also the person who decides the argument that people came to court about. 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.

Other times, a group of people 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**.



When people go to court, they often have **lawyers**. Lawyers are also called **attorneys**. Lawyers give advice to people on their disagreements in court. You don't have to have a lawyer to go 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, even children! Lawyers usually sit next to the person they represent in the court.

You can probably spot the bailiff very easily. The **bailiff** is the person who makes sure the people who go to court obey the rules. The bailiff is usually wearing a uniform, like a police officer's uniform. The bailiff is a special police officer just for the court.



Courts also have **interpreters** for people who don't speak or understand English. The interpreter's job is to translate what is said in court.

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. Court reporters type very fast, and everyone in court has to speak slowly and clearly so the court reporter can hear what they say.



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 decisions or orders that the judge makes during court and also keeps the court's schedule.

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.



Now that you know about some of the people in a court, can you solve this puzzle? Draw a line to connect the name of the person with the job they do. Good luck!

Lawyers	These people come to court to tell the truth and talk about what they have seen or heard.
Judge	This person types everything that is said in court into a machine.
Bailiff	This person organizes all the papers and keeps track of the judge's decisions.
Jurors	This person translates what is said in court.
Clerk	This person's job is to make decisions and make sure that everyone follows the rules in court.
Witnesses	These people give advice and talk in court for the people who have disagreements.
Court reporter	This person keeps order in the courtroom and usually wears a uniform.
Interpreter	These people listen to both sides of a disagreement in court and then decide who wins.

Answers on page 35.

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.

Not Like This!



WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? CIRCLE THE THINGS IN THE PICTURE THAT ARE WRONG. Answers on Page 35.

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.

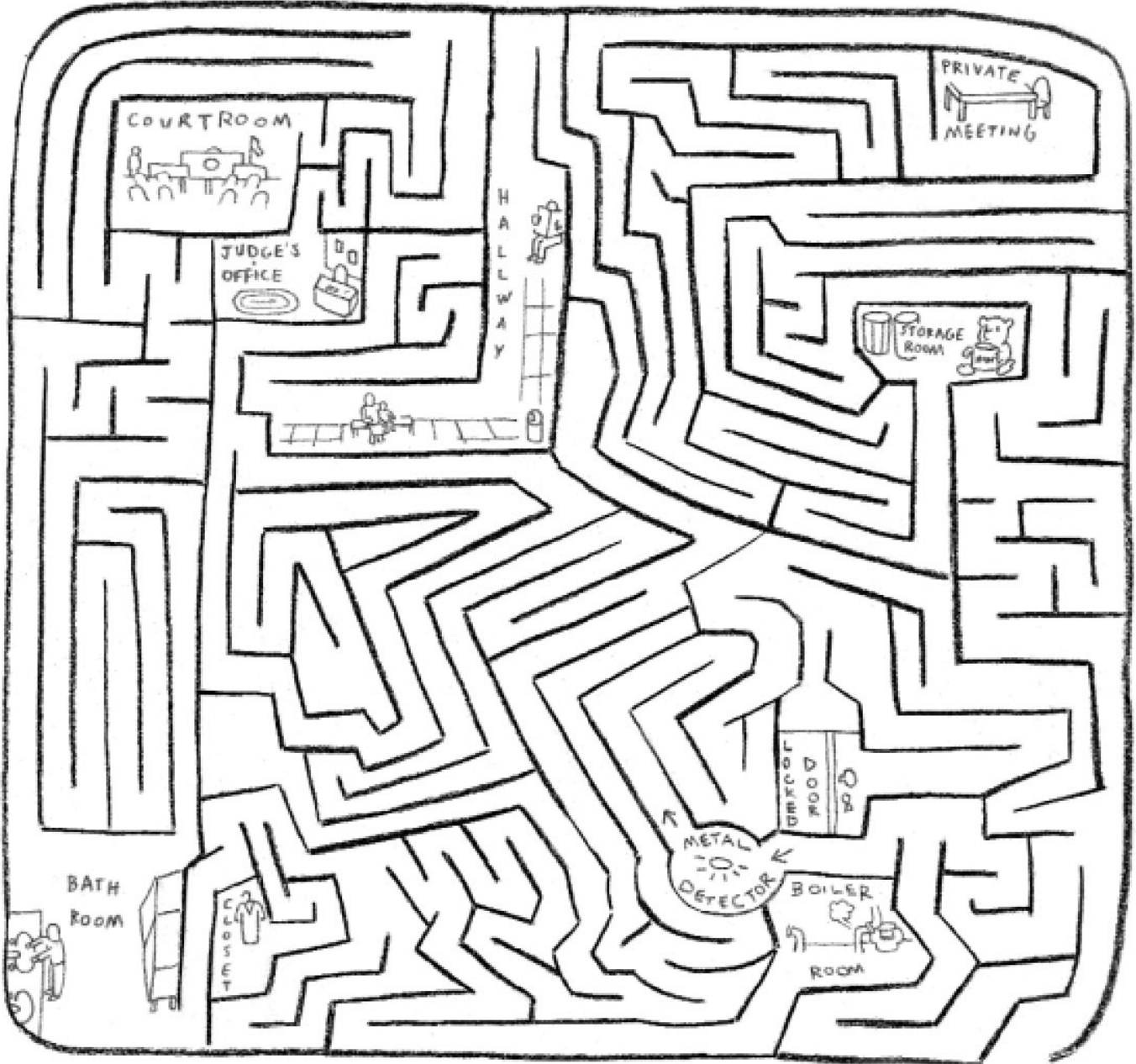
Sometimes children are scared to go to court. If you have to go to court, it's OK to feel scared. Adults get scared about court, too. Just remember the judge is there to make sure everything is fair.

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.

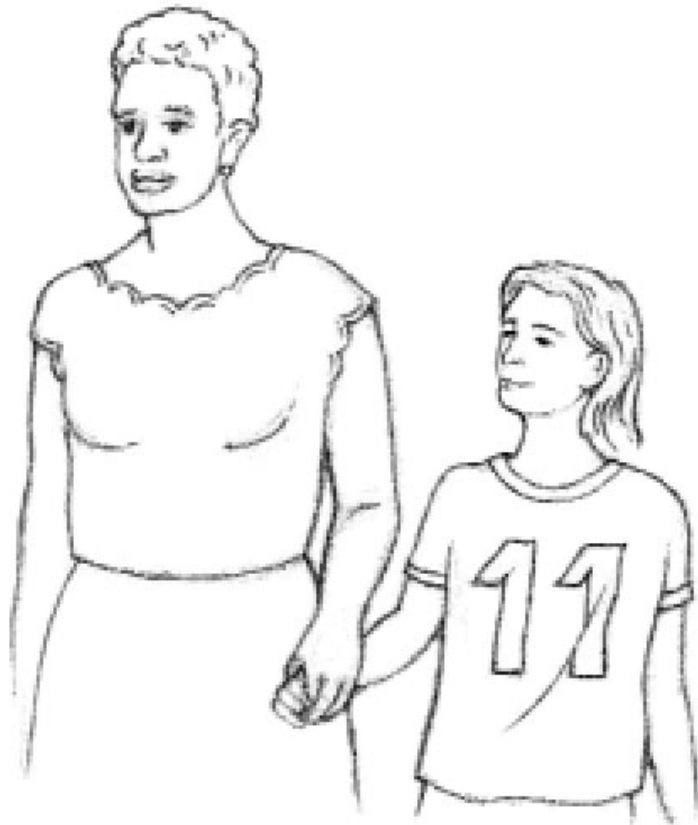
It is the master's and judge's job to listen to what everyone says in court. The master or judge know what the law is and decides what needs to happen to keep kids safe. If the master or judge asks you a question, it is very important for you to tell the truth. The master or judge needs to know the truth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



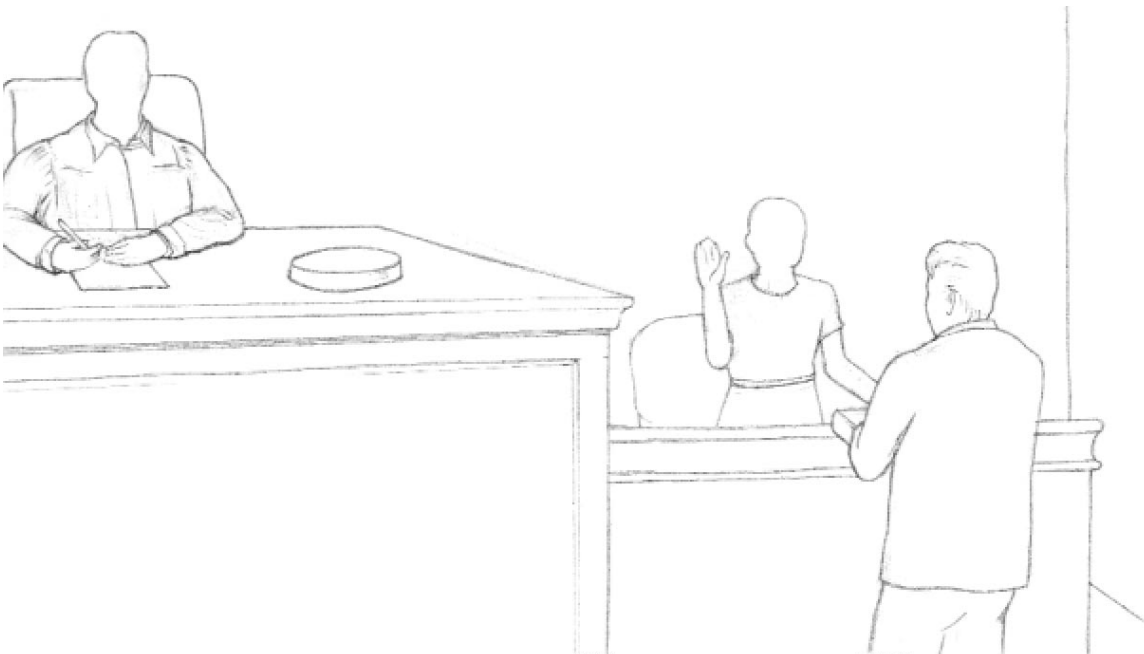
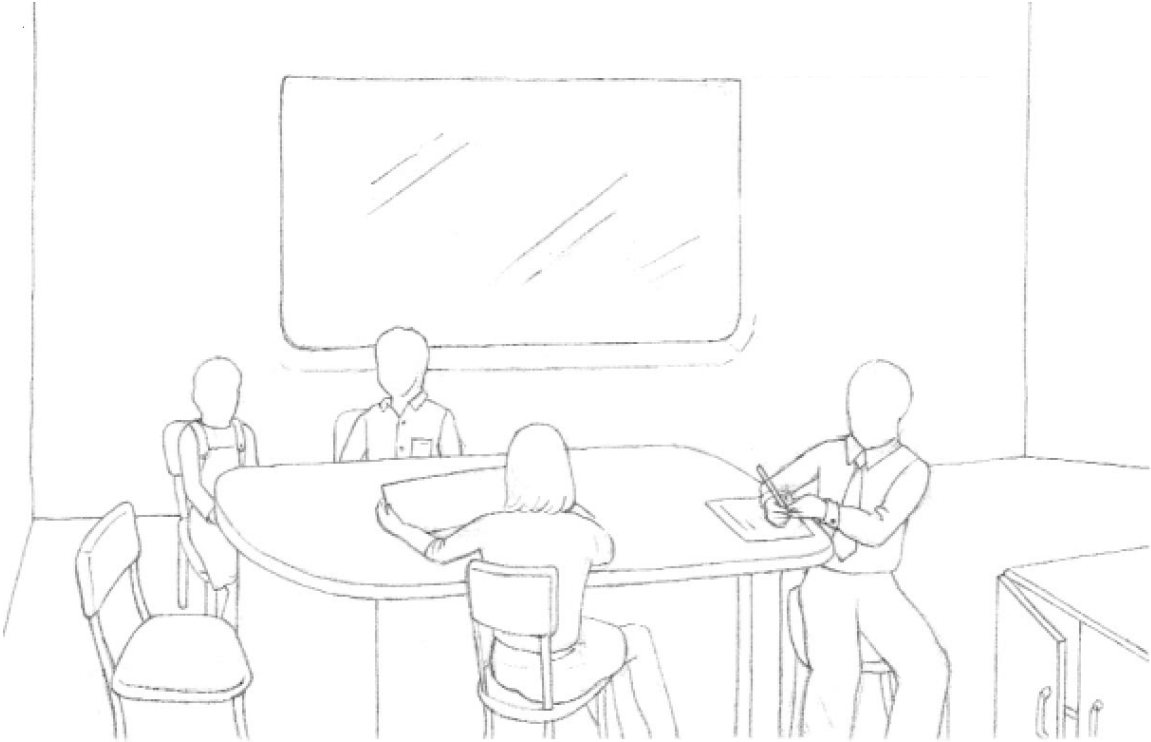
What Do Children Do in a CINA Case?

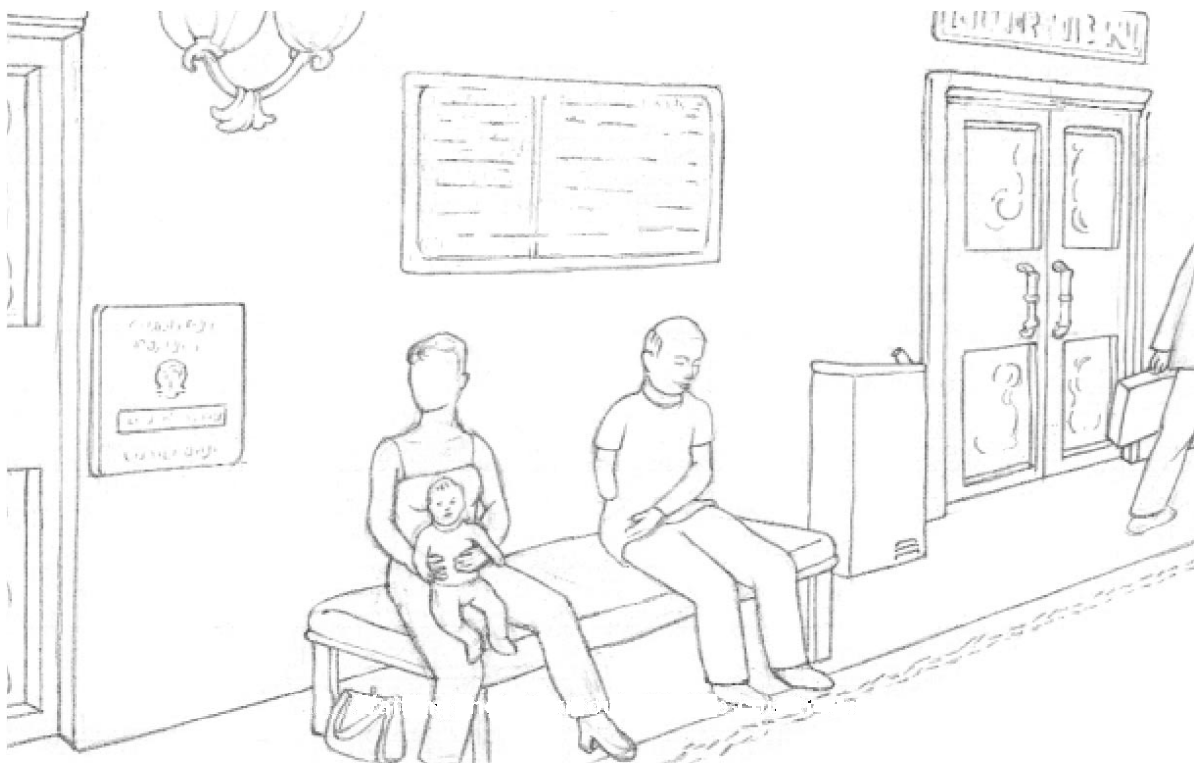
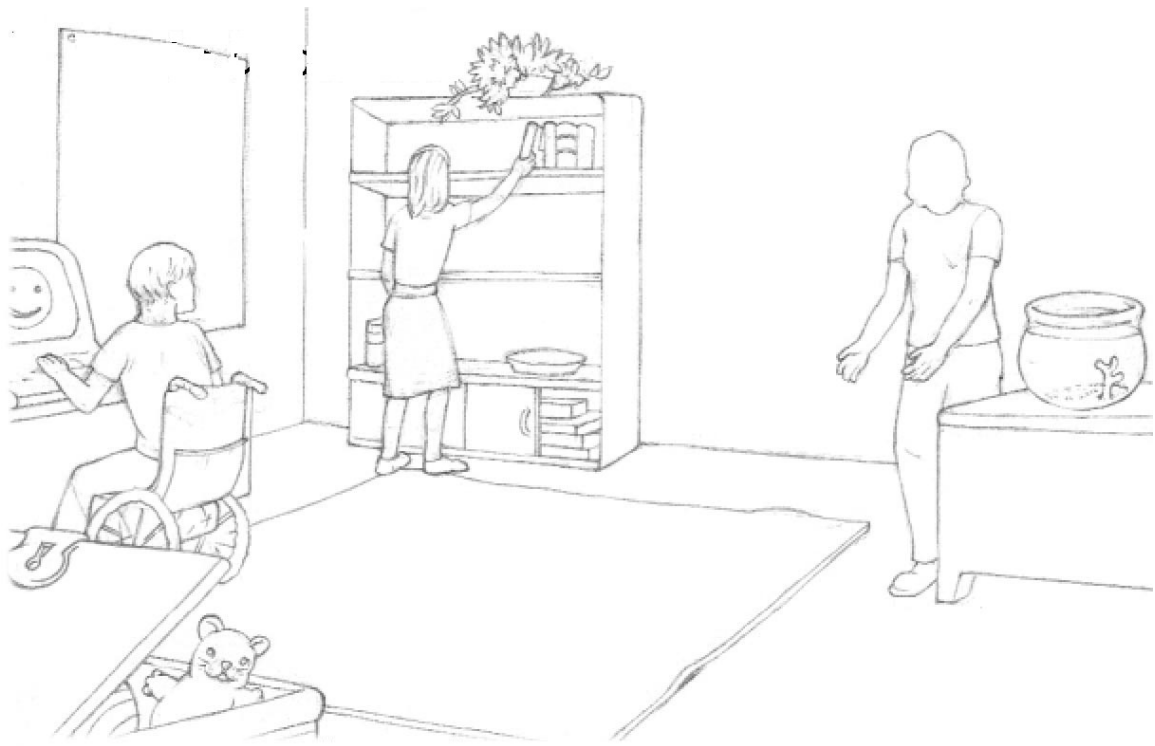
A child might be a witness. If you are a witness, the lawyers and sometimes the master or judge will ask you questions. Of course, it is very important to tell the truth when you answer questions in court. You even have to make a special promise, called an oath, to tell the truth before you answer questions.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

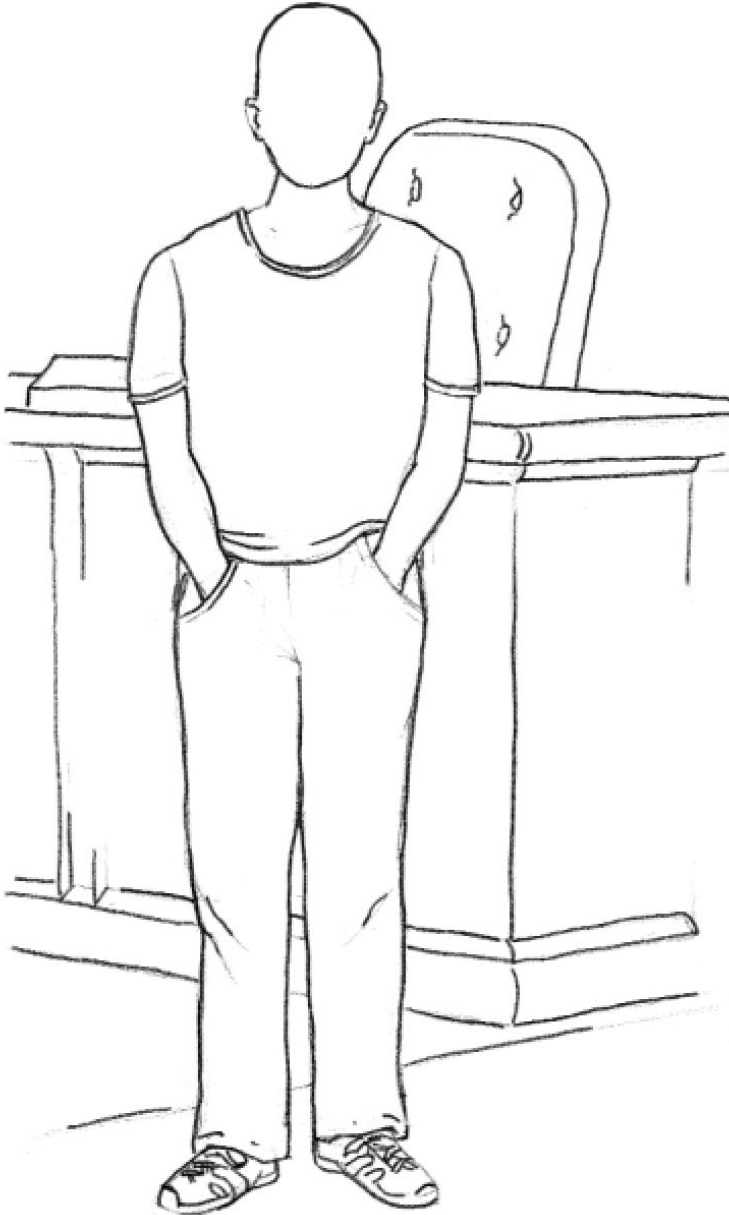
Parents also have to figure out how much money they need to give each other to take care of you after they separate. This money is called **child support**. At court there is a lawyer called a facilitator who helps parents and the court decide how much support will be paid.

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

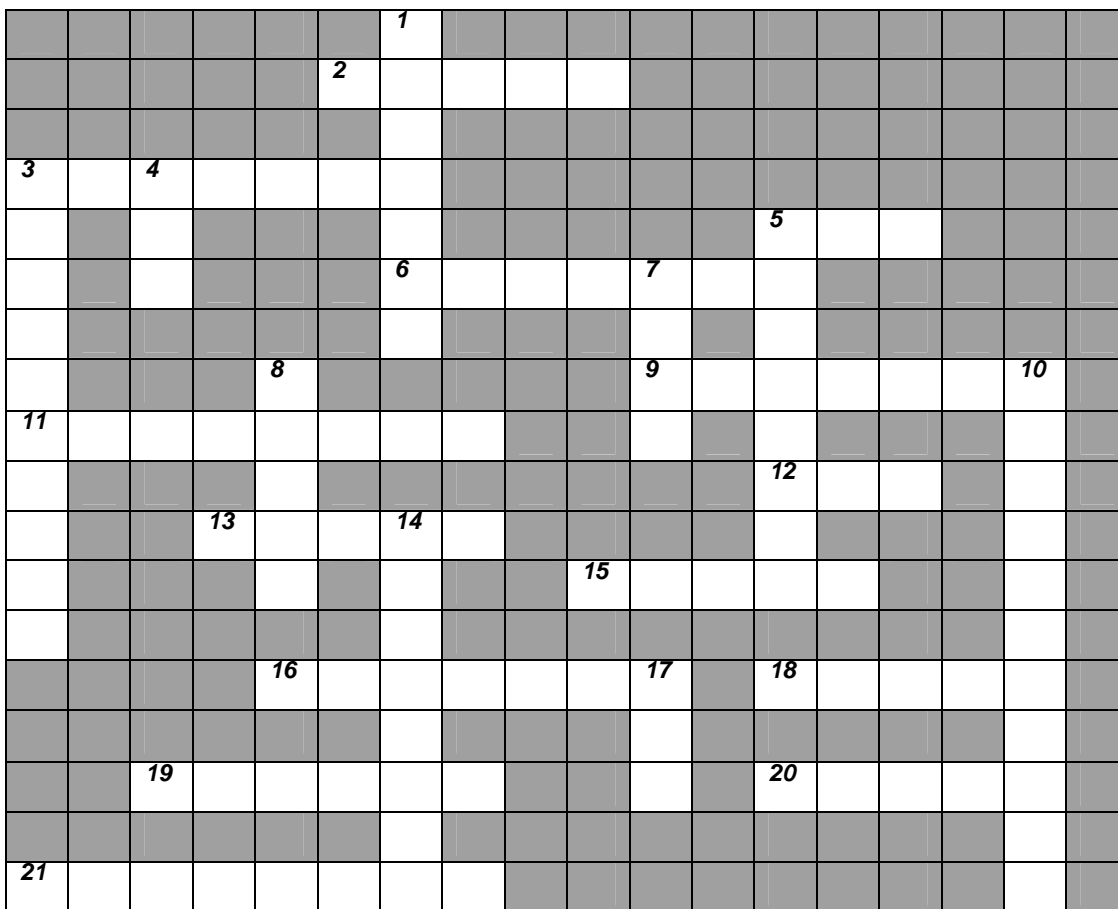
Your parents can also come to court to ask the master or judge to decide who your father is. This may be because your father's name is not on your birth certificate, or because your parents weren't married to each other when you were born. The master or judge can make a decision about who is legally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

Guardianships

Sometimes children have no mother or father to take care of them. This can happen if the parents are dead, or very sick, or in jail, or if they have drug or alcohol problems. 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 or master gives the friend or relative the legal right to act as the parent. When a judge or master picks someone else to care for children instead of their mother and father, that person is called a **guardian**. This plan is called a **guardianship**.

Like a parent, the guardian cares for the children until the mother and father can do it again or until the children grow up and don't need anyone to care for 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. The guardian makes them do their homework and helps them if they need it.



Parents who cannot care for their children may still love their children. If they are able to, the mother and father may visit or phone the children at the guardian's home or other places. If the parents get better, the judge may allow the parents to take care of the children again.

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

I'm Being Adopted

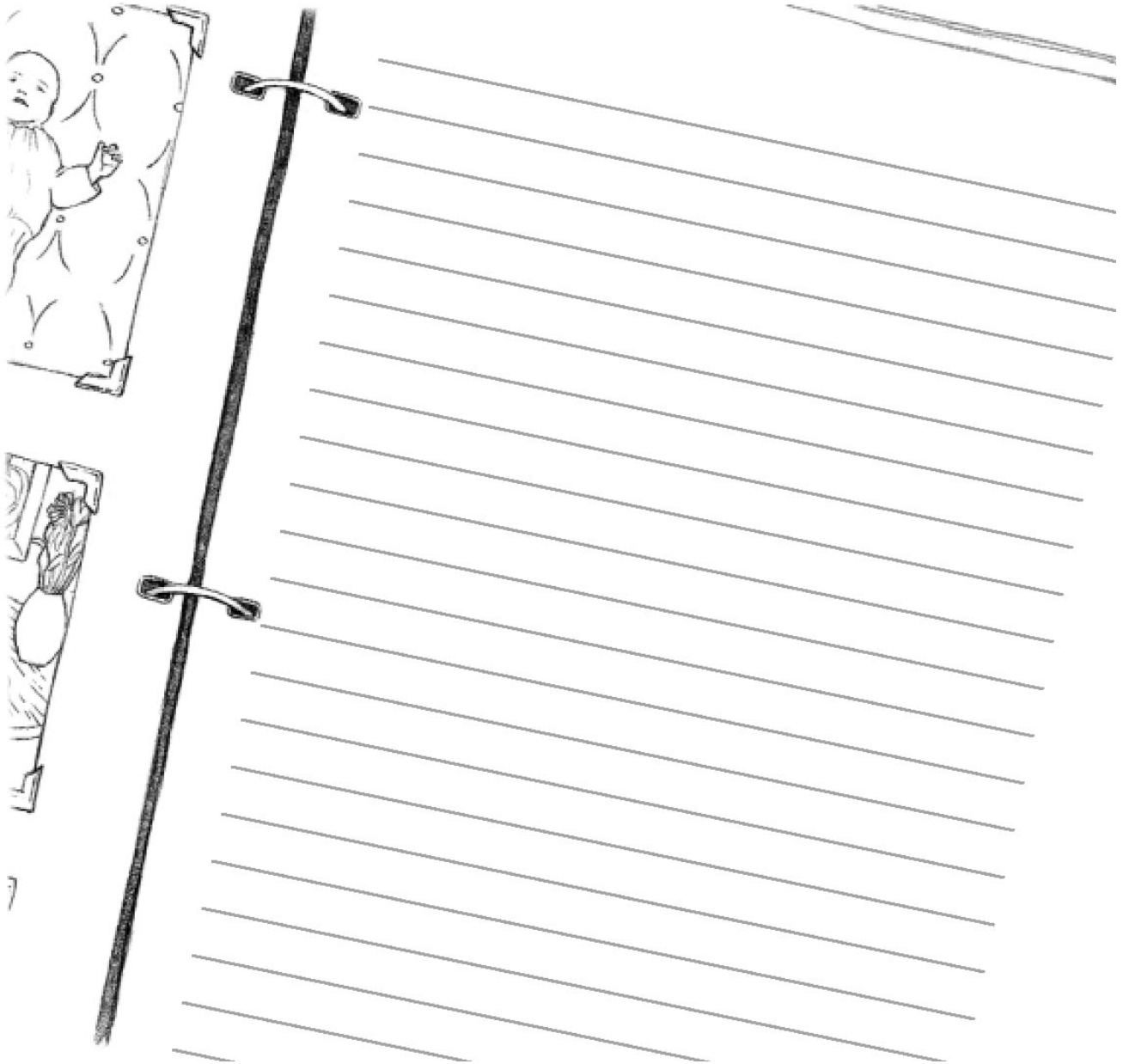
Adoption is the way a child legally becomes part of a new family. The judge or master decides if it is best for the child to be adopted. Before the judge or master makes this decision, a social worker will talk to the child. The social worker also meets the new parents and visits the new home. After adoption a child is a member of a new family. A new family can include brothers and sisters, grandparents, and aunts and uncles. As a member of the new family, the child has all the legal rights of a child born into that family.

Children become adoptable for many different reasons. Sometimes the birth parents are not able to raise the child. They may be too young. They may not be able to give the things a child needs to be happy and healthy. Sometimes the birth parents have died. If a birth parent is not able to raise their child, the court may be asked to legally end their rights as a parent. This is called a "**Termination of Parental Rights**" hearing. It is often referred to as a "**TPR.**" The judge is asked to make a decision as to who has the legal right to make decisions for the child.

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

Adoptions can involve all types of children and families. 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 even be adopted from other states or countries.





Write about someone you know who is adopted.
You can write about yourself if you are adopted, or you can make up a story.

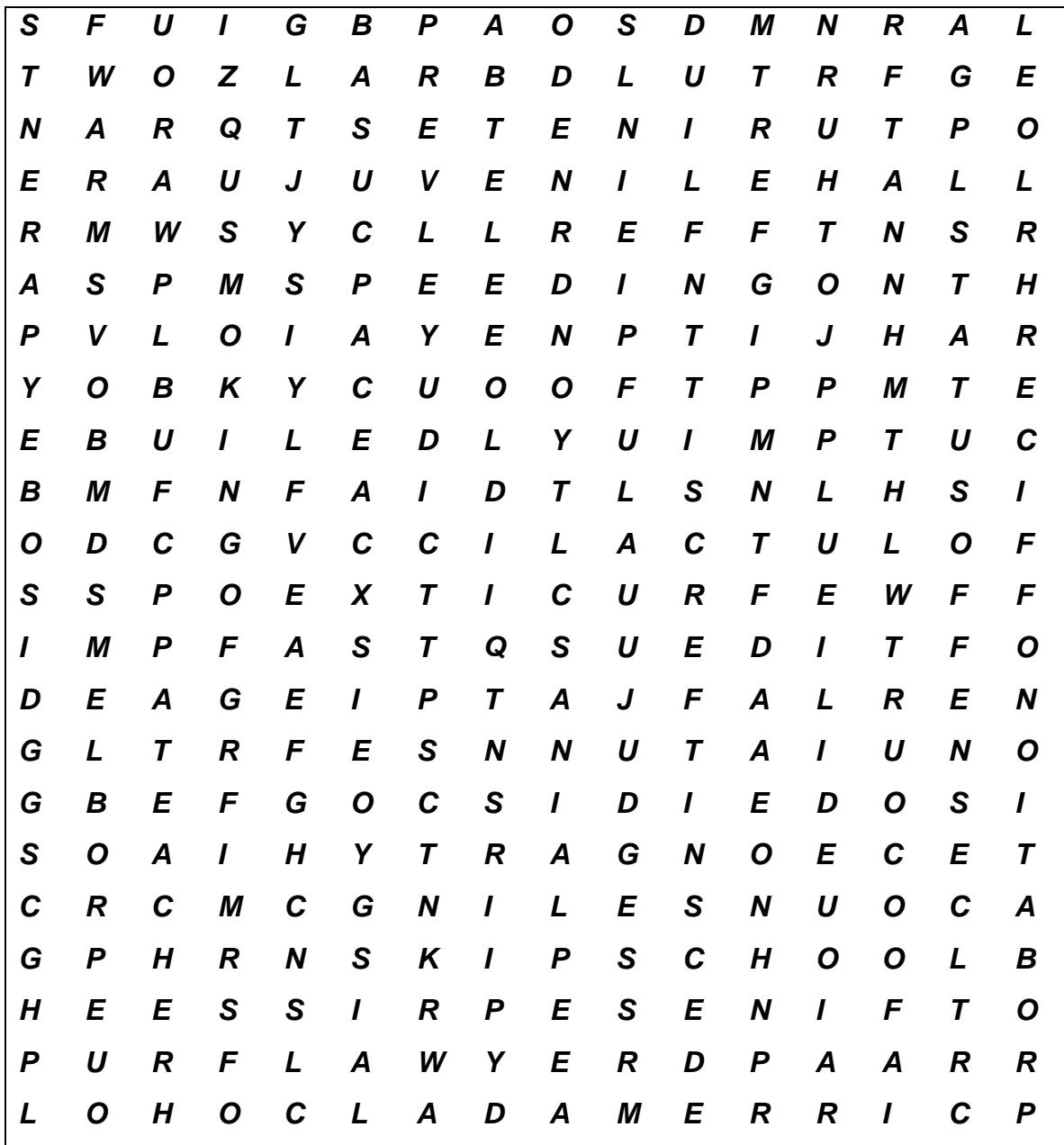
Special Laws For Children

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, and drink alcohol, a child may not. A child may not drive until age 16, may not smoke cigarettes, and may not drink alcohol until age 21. If you are a child and you do these things, they are called **status offenses**. That means you are breaking the law just because of your age.

Children do things that are status offenses for many reasons. For example, some children have problems that never seem to go away. These children feel sad, alone, and angry. They may feel so angry and alone that they always disobey their parents, never go to school, or even run away from home. But because of their age it is against the law for children to do these things. Children can get help with these feelings. They can see a school counselor, 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 detained you can call a lawyer, your parents, or someone else to help you.



Circle these words when you find them. The words may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal or backwards:

ALCOHOL
SPEEDING
OFFICER
TEACHER
JUDGE
CURFEW
TRUANCY
SMOKING

DISOBEY PARENTS
ASSAULT
STATUS OFFENSE
GRAFFITI
COURT
LAWYER
SKIP SCHOOL

POLICE
DUI (driving under Influence)
PROBLEMS
COUNSELING
JUVENILE
RESTITUTION
URINE TEST

Answers on page 35.

Did I Do Something Wrong?



Children can get into big trouble if they disobey the law. If a **police officer** believes that you have broken the law, the officer could arrest you. The officer will ask you questions and decide if you can go home or if you have to go to a juvenile detention center. Even if you get to go home, later you may have to talk to a probation officer about what happened. A **probation officer** may decide that you have to defend your case in juvenile court.

At the **juvenile detention facility**, the doors are locked. Usually children have to stay there until a judge or master says they can leave.

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. Your lawyer will help you talk to the police and everyone else who wants to ask you questions. You have the right to call a lawyer right away if you are locked up. Call the **public defender** if you don't already have a lawyer. You don't have to answer any questions until you have talked with your lawyer.



There are different kinds of crimes. Some are much more serious than others are. **Felony** crimes are more serious than **misdemeanor** crimes. Some crimes can be either a misdemeanor or felony, depending how bad the behavior was. A fistfight is one example. If you get into a fistfight you could be charged with assault in the second degree, which is a misdemeanor. If you really hurt someone badly in a fistfight, you could be charged with first-degree assault, which is a felony.

If you have to go to court to defend your case, don't be afraid to talk to your lawyer. There may be a trial where a judge, or a master, hears both sides of the story and then decides if you are guilty. If the judge or master decides that you are guilty, and the crime is not very serious, you might be put on probation. Then you would have to be on probation and do what the judge or master and probation officer say.

If the crime is serious or you have been in trouble before, you could be forced to live away from home or even be locked up. Your family can usually visit you if you cannot live at home for a while. You and your family may even go to counseling together to understand how to improve your behavior.

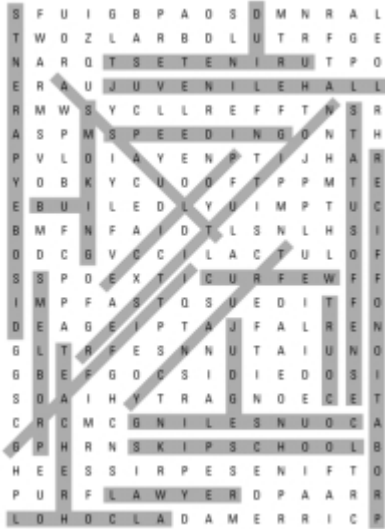
The length of time you spend locked up may depend, in part, on the seriousness of your crime. You can be locked up in a detention center until you are 21 years old. There are some crimes that are so serious that you may be charged as an adult for committing them. If you are charged as an adult, you may be sentenced to go to adult jail.



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!**

ANSWER KEY

FIND-A-WORD



Family Court Crossword Puzzle



Who Are the People in Court?

Witnesses: These people come to court to tell the truth and talk about what they have seen or heard.

Court Reporter: This person types everything that is said in court into a machine.

Clerk: This person organizes all the papers and keeps track of the judge's decisions.

Interpreter: This person translates what is said in court.

Judge: This person's job is to make decisions and make sure that everyone follows the rules in court.

Lawyers: These people give advice and talk in court for the people who have disagreements.

Bailiff: This person keeps order in the courtroom and usually wears a uniform.

Jurors: These people listen to both sides of a disagreement in court and then decide who wins.

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Looking at the picture from left to right, top to bottom: fiery torch on the wall, lawyer wearing shorts in court, judge holding balloon, no papers or files on the judge's desk, no flag pole, witness chewing gum and blowing a bubble, court reporter playing video game, chess set on desk, clerk asleep, no papers or files on clerk's desk, lawyer with feet on table, lawyer not wearing shoes, food on lawyer's table, picket fence in courtroom. People in audience are eating, reading a newspaper, talking during the proceeding, knitting, and not wearing shoes.