



WHO IS EVERYBODY?

In Criminal Court

There are lots of people working with you and your family.

Here are some of the people you might see and what their jobs are.



Police

A police officer's job is to try to keep people safe and make sure they follow the laws. They investigate crimes, and might ask you questions to help them understand what happened.

Some police officers wear uniforms but others wear regular clothes.



Victim Advocate

This person is there to help you understand what's happening and to answer any questions you have. If you have to go to court, they might be able come with you if you want them to.

Don't be afraid to ask them questions or for help!

Defendant

Some people think this person maybe did something wrong. In court, this person is called “the defendant” because they have the chance to defend themselves and explain what happened.

Who is the defendant in your case?



Judge

The judge is the person in charge of the courtroom, who makes sure everyone follows the rules. Their job is to listen and make decisions about the case.



Jury

The jury is a group of adults that listen to everyone in court and decide if they think the defendant did something wrong. If you go to court, they will listen to what you and others say to help them decide.



Prosecutor

The prosecutor is a lawyer who represents the community. If someone broke the rules or made other people unsafe, the prosecutor's job is to make them stop so everyone is safer. They're sometimes called the "District Attorney," or "DA." They might ask you questions about your experience to understand what happened.



Defense Attorney

The defense attorney is the defendant's lawyer. Their job is to help the defendant and try to prove that they didn't do anything wrong. They may say things that sound like they're mad at you, but they're not. They are doing their job.



Court Officer

The court officer tries to make sure everyone in the court is safe. They call everyone into the courtroom when the judge is ready. They wear uniforms and may carry guns.

Court Reporter

The court reporter's job is to write down everything people say in the courtroom.



Interpreter

The interpreter's job is to help anyone who doesn't speak English well or who is deaf or hard of hearing understand what other people are saying in court.

If you need an interpreter, ask one of the adults working on your case, like the prosecutor or your advocate.



Probation Officer

When someone is found guilty of a crime but not sent to jail or prison, they are usually given rules they have to follow. The probation officer's job is to meet with them to make sure they are doing those things.



Parole Officer

When someone comes out of prison, they are usually given rules they have to follow. The parole officer's job is to meet with them regularly to make sure they are doing those things.

Victim

A victim is someone who was harmed by a crime.

Witness

A witness is someone who saw or heard a crime, or who has other information about what happened.



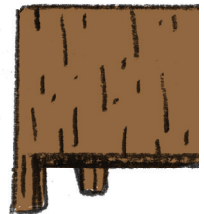
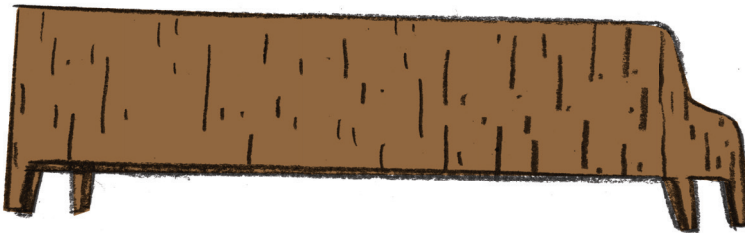
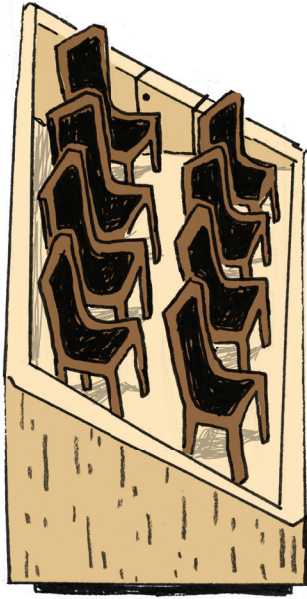
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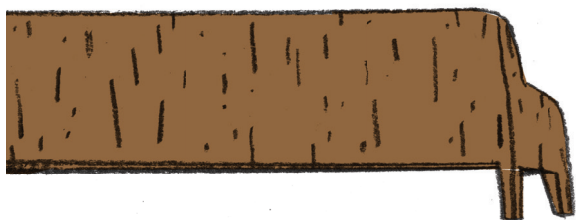
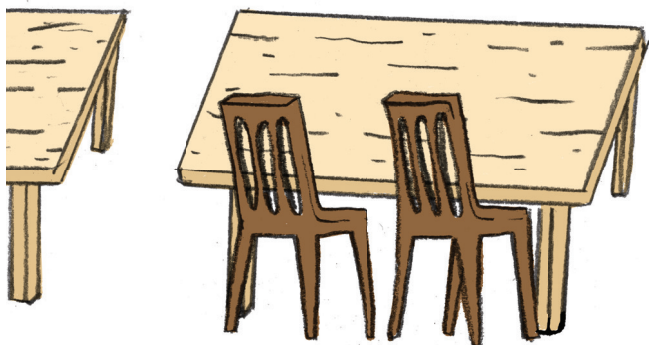
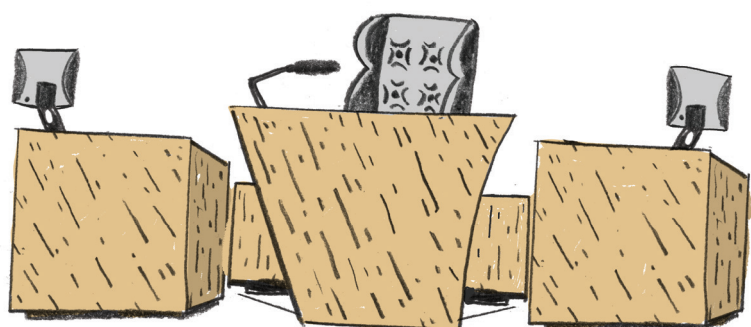
You are a witness, and you might be a victim, too. Your story is one piece of the puzzle. Your job is to answer questions and tell the adults what you know and remember about what happened.

This Is A Courtroom.

Many of the people in this book work in the court.

Where do you think all of the people go? Ask one of the people working on your case to show you.





COPING WITH COURT.



Going to court can be stressful, but there are things you can do to feel a little better. These tips come from other kids, who said these were the things that helped them most.

Getting ready.

- Try to get lots of sleep the night before.
- Eat something before you go to court. It will help you feel better and have the energy to get through the day.
- You don't have to dress up, but wear something nice if you can, something that makes you feel good and helps you feel confident.
- You'll probably spend a lot of time waiting, so bring something to read, play, or do while you wait. Some kids listen to music, read, draw, write in a journal, or do homework.
- If you have a special object that helps you feel calm, bring it with you. Some kids like things like a stress ball you can squeeze, but others like more personal things like a special lucky charm.

Getting nervous.

If you feel nervous, try one of these things:

- Try to picture how you want the day to go, and how you will react if different things happen. It may sound silly, but picturing things can help you feel calmer.
- Try taking deep breaths in and out from your belly a few times. It really helps!

- Tighten your muscles and then relax them. Do this a few times.
 - If you can, take a walk, dance, run, jump or move your body to get rid of some of your extra energy. You can also try walking really fast for a few seconds, then taking a deep breath and walking really slowly for a few seconds, then going fast then slow, fast then slow a few more times.
 - If you have a special prayer or song that is important to you, try saying or singing it, either out loud, or in your head.
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Getting support.

- Think about who you can talk to about how you're feeling and who can support you in court.
 - Is there an advocate, friend, or family member who can come to court? If so, you can look at them if and when you get nervous.
 - If you have a therapist or another grown-up you can talk to, talk to them before and after court.
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Getting through it.

- It can feel good to do something nice when it's over, like watch a movie you love, eat a favorite meal, or just spend some time with a friend. Think of something to look forward to.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.



If you're part of a case in Criminal Court, you have rights. This means the grown-ups have to make sure certain things happen. Don't be afraid to ask!

You have the right to...

1. ...be in court and have your voice listened to!

You should always be heard when talking to judges, lawyers, and police.

2. ...be treated with respect.

3. ...an advocate to help you understand what's going on.

That means you have the right to ask as many questions as you want!

4. ... live in a place where you feel safe.

This means you have enough food, go to school, and see a doctor or counselor when you need to.

5. ...stay with your own family, except if there's an emergency, or if the judge thinks it's not safe for you at home.

6. ...understand what the people in your case are saying and doing.

If you don't understand what's happening for any reason, ask your advocate!

If you want to talk in a different language, tell your advocate. They can have someone translate for you.

Victims' Rights

If you are a victim, you have other rights, too.

You have the right to...

1. ...say what happened to you and how you feel.

This could include making a “victim impact statement” to let the people making decisions about the case know how what happened affected you.

2. ...know what's going on with your case, and what kind of help you can get.

Ask your advocate what's going on and to explain any decisions that are made.

3. ...understand what the people in your case are saying and doing.

That means you have the right to ask as many questions as you want!

If you don't understand what's happening, ask your advocate.

a. If you want to talk in a different language, tell your advocate. You can ask for someone to translate for you.

b. If you have a disability, or something makes it hard to understand what's going on, tell your advocate right away. There are lots of ways you can get help. See the next page about disabilities for more.

4. ...go to all court hearings if you want.

You don't have to go to every hearing. But if you want to, you can.

5. ...privacy.

This means that most of the time, the court can't share your name and address with other people.

And you don't have to talk to anyone outside the court system about what happened if you don't want to.

6. ...get back any of your things that are taken for the case.

If any of your things are taken as evidence, though, it could take a long time.

Depending on where you live, you could have even more rights. Ask one of the adults working on your case.

If you have questions, or your rights aren't being respected, talk to your advocate, the prosecutor, or one of the other adults working on your case right away.

A note for caregivers



You also have the right to apply for money to cover costs related to the child's case. Costs that can be covered include (but aren't limited to) things like counseling, medical bills and insurance co-pays for treatment, relocation expenses, and funeral expenses. You'll have to meet some requirements to qualify, so talk to the child's advocate or the prosecutor about applying. If you're approved, you'll have to provide receipts to get reimbursed. You won't get the money up front.

If you have a disability...

You ALWAYS have the right to understand what's going on with your case and what the people working on it are saying and doing. You also always have the right to express what happened and how you feel. This means you can get support so people can understand you. It's the law!

You should always be able to get to (and around) the court or any other place you have to go for a meeting.

Let the people working on your case – like your advocate, lawyers, and police – know about your disability and what you need help with right away. You might have to ask more than once!


You can ask for help to address your needs. These are called “reasonable accommodations,” and you have this right under the law. Examples include (but aren't limited to):

- A sign language interpreter (for non-American sign language, ask for a Certified Deaf Interpreter, or CDI for short)
- An interpreter who can type out what other people are saying (called Communication Access Real Time, or CART services)
- A transliterator to make sure people around you understand what you have to say
- Different kinds of aids like videos with subtitles, and devices to help you see or hear
- Wheelchair access, or accessibility for any kind of physical disability

There are many more accommodations you can get that aren't on this list! Talk to your advocate to find the right ones for you. And don't be afraid to ask.

If your parent or guardian has a disability, they have the right to request reasonable accommodations, too!

If you want, you can write down the names of the people working with you here.



Police Officer(s):

Name:

Contact Info:

Victim Advocate:

Name:

Contact Info:

Judge:

Name:

Contact Info:

Prosecutor:

Name:

Contact Info:

Social Worker/Therapist:

Name:

Contact Info:

Other:

Name:

Contact Info:

The Center for Court Innovation's Child Witness Materials Project is a collaborative effort between the Center for Court Innovation and the Center for Urban Pedagogy, and is supported by cooperative agreement #2016-VF-GX-K011, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Center for Court Innovation works to create a more effective and humane justice system by performing original research and helping launch reforms around the world.

www.courtinnovation.org

The Center for Urban Pedagogy is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, in partnership with historically marginalized communities.

www.welcometoCUP.org

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The Office for Victims of Crime is committed to enhancing the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime.

www.ovc.ojp.gov

The Office of Justice Programs is a federal agency that provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the Nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Its six program offices—the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking—support state and local crime-fighting efforts, fund thousands of victim service programs, help communities manage sex offenders, address the needs of youth in the system and children in danger, and provide vital research and data.



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