

What are all these legal terms??

When a child/youth is placed in the custody of the State of Maine, there is a meeting at court, or a **hearing**. Here are some legal terms that you may hear while you are talking with adults about court.

Adjudication: A hearing to figure out if there has been a crime.

Appeals: Someone asks for a hearing to change the court's decision. Any court decision is subject to an appeal. Appeals can take several months to resolve.

Arraignment: The court hearing which gives an individual a chance to admit or deny the crime or to let the judge decide.

Cease Reunification: The court decides that since the biological parents did not do what was required of them for the child to go home, the Department is no longer required to provide services for the purpose of the child returning to their biological parent's home.

Disposition: This is the decision about the youth custody status (such as in state custody), as well as what the parents, DHHS and the youth must do to change the problems.

Judicial Review: A court review that looks at the progress of the parents and the youth in order to decide the safest place for the youth to live. There must be a Judicial Review at least every 6 months. At least every 12 months, the Judicial Review must identify your permanent plan.

Juvenile Court: A district court or another court that only addresses matters affecting children younger than 18.

Notice of Hearings: Everyone involved in the case (the "Parties") must be served with a notice telling them when and where there's going to be a court hearing. "Parties" include people like the youth, parents, attorneys, GALs and the caseworker.

Termination of Parental Rights: If family reunification has been ruled out and adoption is a possibility for the child, the Department may petition (request) for termination of parents' rights to the child. If the court terminates parental rights, it means the child is free for adoption. It also means that your biological parents have no legal rights pertaining to you anymore. (They don't have access to information about you; they don't work with your caseworker anymore, etc.)

Remember to ask questions if you do not understand what is going on.



...Answers for youth in care, by youth in care