

CAREGIVER'S REPORT TO COURT – EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

What is the Caregiver's Report to the Court?

The report provides an opportunity for caregivers to share their valuable information about how the child is doing in their care directly with the court. Your information can help the court better understand the child's progress and needs. **A picture of the child attached to the report is encouraged.**

What goes in the report?

Focus on giving firsthand information about the child in your care. Do not offer opinions about others involved in the court process; i.e., birth parents, the social worker, attorneys, or GAL or CASA.

How do I get my report to the Court for the child's hearing?

It is important for the judge to have enough time to review your report. Here are several ways the court can receive your report:

- Send the report to the worker 2-3 weeks before the hearing; it will be filed with the worker's report.
- If the report arrives after the worker's report has been sent, the worker will send/take it to court.
- It is helpful to let the social worker know you are sending your report, otherwise he may not know to watch for it.
- Caregivers are encouraged to come to the court hearing and bring their report with several copies.

What should I expect when I go to Court?

Different courts have different procedures:

- Most courts hear a large number of cases each day and only have a short time to hear each case.
- Some courts schedule multiple hearings at the same time, so be prepared to wait.
- Hearings may last less than ten minutes in total.
- Hearings can be postponed or continued at the last minute.
- Some courts ask the caregiver to make a short statement.
- Others ask caregivers specific questions about the child.
- Others only allow you to submit your written report.

How should I prepare if I'm asked to speak at the Court hearing?

- It's helpful to write down two or three important points you want to share ahead of time.
- The Caregiver's Report to the Court form can help you plan and organize what you want to share.
- You're oral report should be factual, brief, organized and describes behavior you have observed in the child first hand.
- Try to avoid words like: "think", "feel", "believe", they are emotional; you want to stick to observations and facts.
- The child's social worker can offer suggestions on what to expect.

Caregiver's Report to the Court Outline:

Focus on what has occurred since the last court review. *You **do not need to address every area.*

****Do not write in the margins on the form** – the court scans documents and your comments may be lost.*

Placement Information:

- Date child was placed in the caregiver's home/how long has the child been placed in your home?

- Description of child's physical and emotional condition at that time.

Child's Strengths, Special Interests and Activities:

- Describe talents, interests, hobbies, or skills you have observed in the child.
- Special activities the child does (scouts, sports, music lessons, religious groups, etc.)

Describe Child's Social Interactions with Caregiver Family, Siblings and Peers:

- Child's social skills and peer relationships.
- Does the child do well in one-on-one situations, in groups of children/youth
- How child interacts with other members of the caregiver's family.
- Arrangements/frequency of sibling visits, if applicable. Describe behaviors before/after visits.

School Progress and Adjustment:

- Child's grade in school, favorite subjects, is the child performing at grade level?
- Behavior at school and on the school bus.
- Dates of any school conferences caregivers have attended, and results, especially if the child is in special education classes.
- Any educational testing the child has completed, and results of the testing.
- Last Individual Education Plan (IEP) and we discussed:

Child's Physical Health:

Summary of all doctor or dental visits or hospitalizations since the last court hearing.

- Any medication the child takes and the dosage.
- Any adverse reactions the child has had to medical procedures or medications.
- Describe the child's physical development and any developmental lags observed.

Child's Emotional Health and Well Being:

- Describe the child's behavior in your home – what changes have occurred in the last six months?
- Any therapist services the child receives, who provides the services, and how often child goes for services?
- How does the child express his/her feelings and needs?
- Describe the child's eating and sleeping patterns and any problems.

Child's Adjustment to Caregiver Family and Expectations:

- How does the child participate within your family, does child follow rules and expectations for behavior, age appropriate chores?

Child's Visits with Parents and Siblings:

- Dates of visits between child and parents, siblings, or other family members.
- Factual description of the Child's behavior before and after visits. *Please be careful to describe only the child's behavior.*
- Dates of contacts between child and parents or other family members, including telephone, letters, and e-mail.

You Could Also Include:

- What you think the child needs (other supports or services)
- Comments on the child's permanent plan: (Is the plan in the child's best interests?)
- Other child/case specific information you wish the court to consider.