



Preparing Your Child to Testify in Court (Advocate)

Children who have to go to court may feel anxious or nervous about the process. Parents and guardians can play an important role in helping children feel more comfortable and understand the court process.

Introduction (00:20 – 01:00)

- Watch the introduction together.
- Pause and review the following concepts with the parent or guardian to check their understanding:
 - Explain that a subpoena is an order to appear in court.
 - Remind the parent or guardian that if their child saw or experienced something that requires them to testify as a witness, the subpoena will state the time, date, and location they will need to appear in court.
 - Ask them if they have any questions.

Learning About the Court and Legal Process (01:00 – 02:04)

- Watch *Learning About the Court and Legal Process* together.
- Pause and review the following concepts with the parent or guardian to check their understanding:
 - Remind the parent or guardian that their child may not understand the court process or what to do, so it is important for them to explain to their child that they are not on trial and that they are not in trouble.
 - Explain that they should not talk to their child about what their child saw or heard in the past that caused them to be a witness. Instead, they should focus on explaining how court works.
 - The prosecutor in a criminal case or the victim's lawyer in a protective order case can help explain the court process and answer their child's questions.
 - Ask them if they have a victim advocate or therapist who can provide support for their child before, during, and/or after the court hearing.
 - If they do not have a prosecutor or other lawyer, victim advocate, or therapist who can assist their child, ask if they would like to be connected to these resources.
 - Ask them if they have any questions.

2201 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218 • **24 Hour Hotline:** 410-889-RUTH (7884)

Administrative Office: 410-889-0840 • **Linea en Español:** 410-889-7889 Oprima 8

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Who They Will See in Court (02:04 – 03:52)

- Watch *Who They Will See in Court* together.
- Pause and review the following concepts with the parent or guardian to check their understanding:
 - Ask the parent or guardian if they know who the defendant or respondent is.
 - Ask them if they know what the roles of the defense attorney and prosecutor are.
 - Remind them of the role of witnesses and that they take an oath to tell the truth.
 - Review together the role of the judge.
 - Ask them if they know if there will be a jury present, and if so, discuss the role of the jury.
 - Describe the role of the bailiff or sheriff.
 - Review the role of the court clerk.
 - Ask them if they have any questions.

Visiting the Courtroom Before Testifying (03:52 – 05:04)

- Watch *Visiting the Courtroom Before Testifying* together.
- Pause and review the following concepts with the parent or guardian to check their understanding:
 - Ask the parent or guardian if anyone has taken their child to see the courtroom. If not, remind them that they can request the prosecutor, a victim advocate, or their lawyer in a protective order case do so.
 - Remind them that the prosecutor or their protective order lawyer should show their child where the defendant/respondent will sit and where their child will wait to testify.
 - Explain that during their visit, their child can sit on the witness chair and practice answering simple questions.
 - Ask them if they would like a support person who is not a witness in the case to accompany their child to court. If so, help them identify this person.
 - Ask them if they have any questions.



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Testifying in Court (05:04 – 06:00)

- Watch *Testifying in Court* together.
- Pause and review the following concepts with the parent or guardian to check their understanding:
 - Explain that the most important thing for their child to remember is to tell the truth.
 - Remind them that their child can say, “I don’t know” if they don’t know the answer to a question or “I don’t understand” if they are confused by a question. Their child can also say “I don’t remember” if they don’t recall the answer.
 - Ask the parent or guardian if their child prefers to speak a language other than English. If so, remind them that they can ask the prosecutor or their protective order lawyer to request an interpreter.
 - Remind them that when their child testifies, they may be able to bring a comfort item with them.
 - Ask them if they have any questions.

Supporting Your Child After Testifying (06:00 – 06:20)

- Watch *Supporting Your Child After Testifying* together.
- Pause and review the following concepts with the parent or guardian to check their understanding:
 - Remind the parent or guardian that it is important to have a plan to support their child before, during, and after the hearing.
 - Ask them if they have a support plan for their child. If not, work with them to create a support plan.
 - Ask them if they have any questions.
- If they ask for resources, you can direct them to the following:
 - Victim Services: <https://www.mdcrimevictims.org/victim-services/>

House of Ruth Maryland Hotline: 410-889-RUTH (7884) | www.hruth.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 | www.thehotline.org