

NAME: _____
D.O.B.: _____

CASE NO: _____

STATEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND COURT HEARINGS

All youth may ask to attend their court hearings. Because you are 13 years old or older, it is important to the Court that you are given the opportunity to express whether you wish to attend your court hearings. During the case, there will be various hearings to review progress and problem-solve. You can attend as many or as few of these hearings as you wish.

You are not required to attend hearings if you do not wish. You may change your mind at any time regarding attendance at a hearing – even during hearing. If you tell a supportive person that you wish to leave, you may quietly exit at any time. You may wait in the waiting room or you may ask to wait in a quiet, private space as long as an adult accompanies you.

Hearings are likely to involve a number of people who are familiar to you – your social worker, Guardian Ad Litem, foster parents, and of course your family members. Hearings will also involve a number of people who may not be familiar to you like the Judge or Magistrate and attorneys. Hearings may be very long or relatively short. Many different things may be talked about at a hearing, including the events that brought your family to the Court’s attention and your family’s current situation. If you become uncomfortable with what is being said in the hearing it is o.k. if you need to leave at any time. The Judge or Magistrate will make sure that everyone has a chance to talk during a hearing – including you, if you choose. It is important that people attending hearings wait for their turn to talk.

During the hearing you may have an opportunity to talk to the Judge or Magistrate. You may be asked questions about your daily life, activities, and how you are feeling. You may have the opportunity to tell the Court where you want to live and with whom. You may also choose to tell the Court about visiting with family, school and counseling. You also may ask to talk to the Judge or Magistrate privately. You should tell your Guardian Ad Litem before the hearing if you wish to speak with the Judge or Magistrate in private.

You may bring a supportive person with you to a court hearing. That person might be a foster parent, a counselor, a mentor, a family member, your Guardian Ad Litem, your attorney or someone else. You should talk to your Guardian Ad Litem if you wish to bring a supportive adult with you to a hearing.

The Judge or Magistrate’s job is to consider all the information from all parties and make decisions that they believe to be in your best interests. The Judge or Magistrate may need to decide where you live, whom you live with, where you go to school, and how you visit with family. Ultimately, it is the job of the Judge or Magistrate to decide a permanent plan for you and your wishes are important to the Court!

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YOUTH'S WRITTEN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My name is _____. I have reviewed the Statement of Opportunity with my Guardian Ad Litem and choose:

_____ To attend Court hearings

_____ To attend some Court hearings

Comment: _____

_____ Not to attend Court hearings but wish to speak with the Judge or Magistrate in private.

_____ Not to attend Court hearings and do not wish to speak with the Judge or Magistrate in private.

Youth's signature

Date

As the child's Guardian Ad Litem I have discussed his/her options regarding attendance at hearings and an in camera interview with the Judge or Magistrate. I certify that the youth made the choice as indicated above and was not pressured in any way to choose as he/she did. I will continue to ascertain the youth's wishes regarding attendance at hearings or in camera interviews and report any change to the Court.

Guardian Ad Litem signature

Date