

**Following a Case  
of Alleged Child Abuse/Neglect  
Through Juvenile Court**

REPORT & INVESTIGATION -- A Case enters Juvenile court when a report of child abuse and/or neglect has been received by law enforcement, investigated, and substantiated. If the case is not diverted through voluntary services, law enforcement gives the evidence to the County Attorney.



PETITION -- The County Attorney decides whether to file a petition. For abuse/neglect a petition would be filed under §43-247(3a). At this time the allegations of the problem/crime are stated. Nothing is determined, found, or ordered at this point. A petition must be filed within 48 hours of a child being removed or the child goes home.



DETENTION HEARING -- Finds if probable cause exists to warrant the continuance of court action or the child remaining in out of home care. The case is either set for an adjudication hearing or the child is returned home and charges dropped. If set for adjudication, a Guardian ad Litem, also known as a GAL, [attorney representing the child's best interests] should be appointed at this time.



ADJUDICATION HEARING -- By law this must occur within 90 days of the child entering out of home care. In practice the 90 day rule is not always adhered to. An adjudication hearing can be either contested or noncontested. Contested means that the parents deny the allegations and full trial with evidence ensues. At this hearing the finding of fact occurs, the allegations of the petition are found to be either true or false, and the child is either made a state ward or not.



DISPOSITIONAL HEARING -- At this time a plan is ordered which addresses the reasons why the court action began. A rehabilitation plan for the parents is ordered.



DISPOSITIONAL REVIEW HEARINGS -- Per PL 96-272, this hearing is to occur at least every six months to review the progress made on the dispositional order until conditions warrant the court terminating jurisdiction. The focus should be on whether progress is being made to correct the problem that brought the child into care or not. A Journal Entry should be filed recording what was ordered.

**Following a Case  
When the Case Involves the Actions of the Child  
Through Juvenile Court**

REPORT & INVESTIGATION -- A Case enters Juvenile court when a report of one of the following is received by law enforcement, investigated, and substantiated: status offense [an offense that would not be an offense for an adult, such as truancy], misdemeanor, or felony offense. If the case is not diverted through voluntary services, law enforcement gives the evidence to the County Attorney.



PETITION -- The County Attorney decides whether to file a petition. For a status offense a petition would be filed under §43-247(3b). For a misdemeanor it would be under §43-247(1), for a felony under §43-247(2). At this time the allegations of the problem/crime are stated. Nothing is determined, found, or ordered at this point.



DETENTION HEARING -- Finds if probable cause exists to warrant the continuance of court action or the child remaining in out of home care. The case is either set for an adjudication hearing or the child is returned home and charges dropped. An attorney for the child may be appointed at this time.



ADJUDICATION HEARING -- By law this must occur within 90 days of the child entering out of home care. In practice the 90 day rule is not always adhered to. At this hearing the finding of fact occurs, the allegations of the petition are found to be either true or false.



DISPOSITIONAL HEARING -- At this time a plan is ordered which addresses the reasons why the court action began. A rehabilitation plan is ordered.



DISPOSITIONAL REVIEW HEARINGS -- Per PL 96-272, this hearing is to occur at least every six months to review the progress made on the dispositional order until conditions warrant the court terminating jurisdiction. The focus should be if progress is being made to correct the problem that brought the child into care. A Journal Entry should be filed recording what was ordered.