

What Is Juvenile Dependency?

When children come to court because a parent has hurt them or not taken care of them, this is a **juvenile dependency** case. Until a child grows up, he or she is dependent on adults and needs their protection. If parents can't or won't take care of their child properly, the juvenile court may step in and the child may become "dependent" on the court for safeguarding. When this happens, the child may have to live with relatives or another family for awhile. This temporary family is called a **foster care family**.

Usually, parents want to have their child live with them. The judge and social workers will work with parents to make their home healthy and safe. If they succeed, then the child can move back home with the parents. This is called **reunification**.

Sometimes parents can't make their home safe for the child. Then the judge and others may have to find another home where the child can live safely for a long time. They make a **permanent plan** for a child.

What Does the Social Worker Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

A social worker is a person who tries to protect children and keep them safe. A social worker may help children who are being hit or touched in bad ways (this is called **abuse**). The social worker may also help children who don't have proper food, clothes, or other things they need (this is called **neglect**). If the abuse or neglect is very bad, the social worker may have to find another place for the child to stay. Then the family and the social worker may have to go to court so that a judge can decide how to help the child and the family.

What Does the Judge Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

You read about judges on page 6 of this book. Judges in dependency court do all the jobs judges usually do, except that there is no jury in dependency court. The judge is the one who makes the final decision about what happens in a case.

It is the judge's job to listen to what everyone says in court. The judge knows what the law is and decides what needs to happen to keep kids safe. If the judge asks you a question, it is very important for you to tell the truth. The judge needs to know the truth to make the best decision for you.



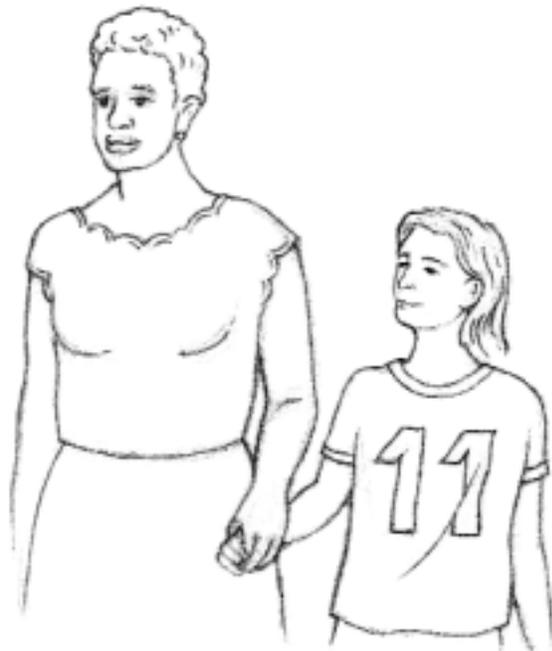
Draw a picture of the place you live.

What Do Lawyers Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

On page 7 of this book, you learned about the job of lawyers, who are also called attorneys. People involved in a case usually have a lawyer to speak for them in court. The people in a dependency case who might have a lawyer are the social worker, mother, father, children, and sometimes others.

What Does a CASA Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

Sometimes the judge will assign a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) to help with a dependency case. CASAs are volunteers who help by talking to people, especially children, and telling the judge what they learn. CASAs spend a lot of time with the children they're assigned to. They listen to the children and tell their story to the court. The CASA also suggests to the court what can be done to make the child safe and healthy.



What Do Children Do in Juvenile Dependency Court?

This book tells about witnesses on pages 8 and 12. A child might be a witness. If you are a witness, the lawyers and sometimes the judge will ask you questions. Of course, it is very important to tell the truth when you answer questions in court. You even have to make a special promise, called an oath, to tell the truth before you answer questions. It is also important to answer just the questions that you understand. If you don't understand a question, it is OK to say so and have the question explained to you.

If you're afraid to answer questions in the courtroom, be sure to tell your lawyer, if you have one, or the judge. They will do everything they can to make you feel more comfortable. They may let you answer questions in the judge's office or have your CASA sit with you in court.



Connect the dots to draw the animal on the California state flag.