

A Parent's Guide To Preparing For A Court Date

Going to court requires preparatory work on the part of the parents, including a log showing what has been attempted in the way of help for the child and the past behavior of the child. The following are suggestions for a letter to the judge (copy to the Assistant District Attorney and Public Defender).

Judge: _____

Juvenile Court: _____

County: _____

Dear Judge _____:

We wish to provide you with the relevant background information which has led to _____ [the event] _____ of our son/daughter, _____ [child's name] _____. This letter expresses our concern for our child and requests assistance from the court, which will help our son/daughter to obtain _____ [your request] _____.

Description Of Behavior

(Give objective, brief and documented description of behavior that your child has exhibited)
Examples: Has demonstrated increasingly defiant behavior such as: run away from home on the following occasions. Does not obey curfew and stays out all night. Is failing all courses, cuts school, has been expelled, etc. Takes or sells drugs and alcohol. Has been violent towards me or others. Has stolen money or objects from me or others. Has refused to obey simple requests to do chores. Has destroyed personal property. Any other pertinent items. Be sure to include dates and details.

Previous Efforts Taken To Assist

During the past _____ [number] _____ of years, I have taken the following steps to assist my son/daughter: [give specific examples, include for each: where, when, why, how long, results]. Had child tested. Sent to counseling. Sent to special school or class. Sent for tutoring. Had placed in foster home. Had placed in youth group home. Parents when to counseling. Parents joined support group. Had substance abuse evaluation done on child. Any other steps taken to correct the situation.

Petition To The Court

None of the steps taken to date have changed the course of our child's life. We feel much of his/her problems stem from _____ [explain] _____. Our financial and emotional resources are exhausted. We love our child and desire they become a functioning, loving member of our family again. Consequently we petition the court to: (state request here. i.e., place in foster home, make dependent/ward of the court, send for therapy to drug/alcohol rehab, go to outpatient counseling, etc. Do not specify unless there is a specific reason. This is a request, not a demand.

