



# Wyoming Juvenile Court



**A Handbook for Children**





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This handbook is intended for children ages 7-12 who are in court on child abuse and neglect cases. It aims to introduce children to the court, the people who work there, the issues before the court and the words that are used in the courtroom. It is meant to be used as a teaching tool that may encourage conversations between children and adults about juvenile court. This book is not intended to give or substitute for legal advice.

The Wyoming Supreme Court Children's Justice Project (CJP) prepared this handbook with funds provided in accordance with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 § 13712 of Subchapter C Part 1, Grant No. 0801WYSCIP from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

## **WYOMING JUVENILE COURT A HANDBOOK FOR CHILDREN**

September 2014—Second Edition

June 2010—First Edition

We deeply appreciate our colleagues in California, Colorado and Florida for their permission to use their handbooks to create one for Wyoming's children. This Book is adapted from "What Happens To Me Now?" sponsored by the State of Colorado Judicial Department, "What's Happening in Court?: An Activity Book for Children Who Are Going to Court in California" sponsored by the Judicial Council of California: Center for Children and the Courts and "What's Happening in Dependency Court?" sponsored by the Florida Office of the State Court Administrator, Office of Court Improvement.

### **Special Thanks**

Wyoming Supreme Court—Children's Justice Project Advisory Council, The Honorable Michael Golden, Chair and Its Training Committee

Thanks to the following for reviewing this Handbook: Tara Ackerman, Rose Kor, Mona Schatz

Compiled and written for Wyoming children by Anne Reiniger, Project Consultant

Editor: Marlene Chamizon

Illustrations & design: Larry Milam, [sunstudio@cablone.net](mailto:sunstudio@cablone.net)

For more information about the Wyoming Children's Justice Project (CJP), please contact the CJP Coordinator at 307 -777-7629 or [wycjpcordinator@courts.state.wy.us](mailto:wycjpcordinator@courts.state.wy.us). Additional copies may be downloaded from the CJP webpage at [http://](http://www.courts.state.wy.us/Initiatives/CJP)

[www.courts.state.wy.us/Initiatives/CJP](http://www.courts.state.wy.us/Initiatives/CJP).

## Why Am I in Juvenile Court?

Your parents' main job is to take care of you. They have to protect you from harm. They have to make sure you have food and clothing. It's the law.



Sometimes children come to court because a parent has not taken care of them. There will be a lot of people in the courtroom. There will be a lot of people to help you, too. Your parents will be there also.

# Who Are the People in Court?



The judge is in charge. The judge listens to everybody who has something to say about you and your family. The judge decides who will take care of you. The judge decides where you will live.



The bailiff

is the person who wears a uniform and makes sure that the people in court obey the

The guardian ad litem is a lawyer who represents you. This person will talk with you about any problems you might be having. The guardian ad litem helps the judge decide what is best for you.



There are other lawyers in court. They represent your parents and the state of Wyoming.



The caseworker works for the Department of Family Services. This person makes sure that you are safe, and that your parents get the help they need. The caseworker also helps the judge decide what is best



for you.  
CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. A CASA person will talk to you and visit you where you are living. This is another person who helps the judge decide what is best for you.





## How Should I Act in Court?

- Sit quietly and listen.
- It is okay to be nervous.
- Call the judge “Your Honor” when you answer his questions.
- If you do not understand something, tell your guardian ad litem.
- Do not eat, drink or chew gum.
- Turn off your cell phone or ipod if you have one.

# what Happens in Court?



What takes place in the courtroom is called a hearing. The law requires the judge to hold hearings. It may be necessary to have many hearings before the judge makes a decision. That way, he can check on how everyone is doing. You do not have to go to all the hearings.



Everyone stands when the judge comes into the courtroom. The judge is the last person to enter the courtroom.

The judge listens  
to everything that  
everyone who  
speaks before him  
has to say.



The judge may ask you  
how things are going,  
and where you want  
to live. The judge will  
think about what you  
say.



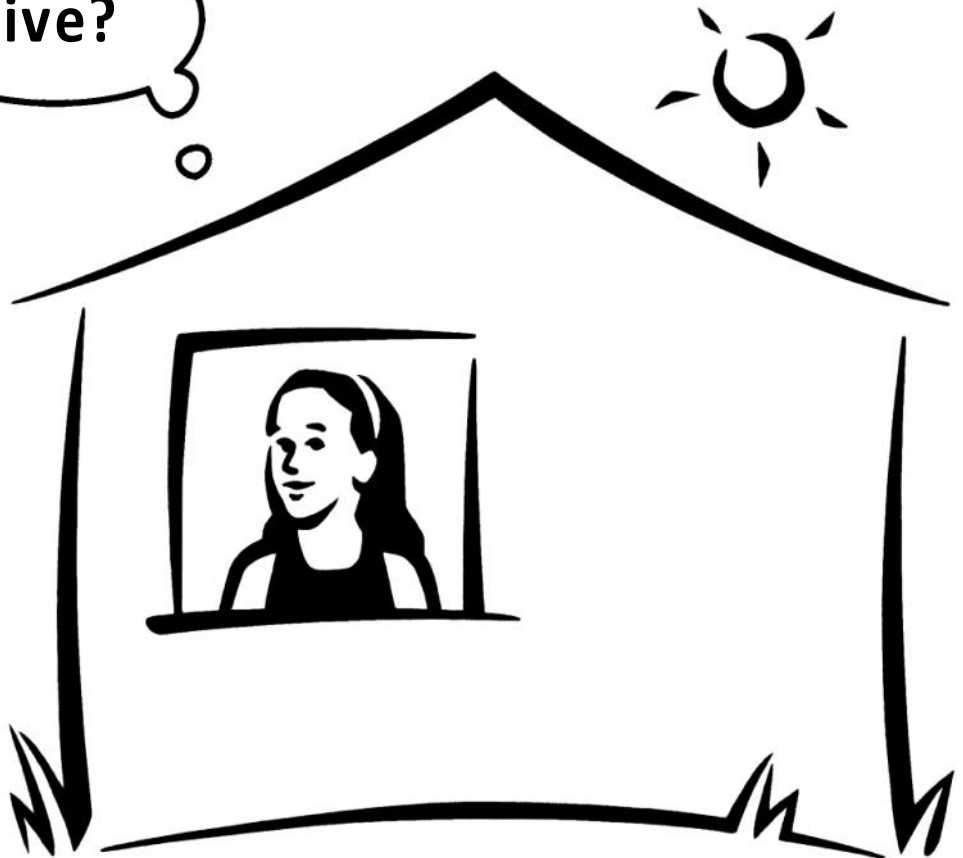
After the judge listens  
to what everyone has  
to say, he decides  
whether you should  
stay with a parent,  
live with another  
relative, or live with a  
foster family.

# What Happens After Court?

**Where will I live?**

No matter where

the judge decides  
you should live  
- with your  
parent, another  
relative, or with  
a foster family -  
a caseworker will  
visit your home  
to make sure that





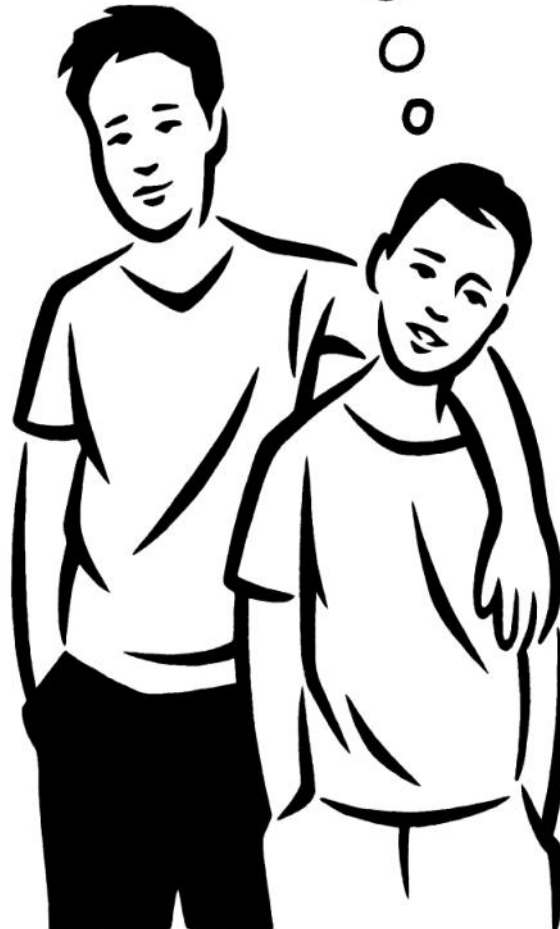
If the judge decides that you cannot live with your parents, you should not blame yourself. It is not your fault that your parents cannot take care of you or keep you safe.

The judge is going to have people help your parents learn how to give you a safe and good place to live. About one million children in the United States are not living at home.

# Will I See My Family?

## **Mom & Dad**

If you are not going to live with a parent, you will be able to visit with them. These visits may take place with another person present. As things get better for your parents, you will see them more often.



## **Brothers & Sisters**

Your brothers and sisters probably will be living with you. If they are not, be sure to let your guardian ad litem know that it is important to you to see them. The caseworker can arrange your visits with them.



## **Will I Stay at My School?**

School is very important. Everyone who is helping you knows that. Tell the people helping you if you want to stay in your same school. If you have any problems at school, be sure to tell the people helping you.

## **What if Someone Asks Why I am Not Living With My Parents?**



It is okay if you do not want to talk about it. And it is okay to say so. If you want to, you can say that your parents have some problems and you are living with someone else until they solve their problems.

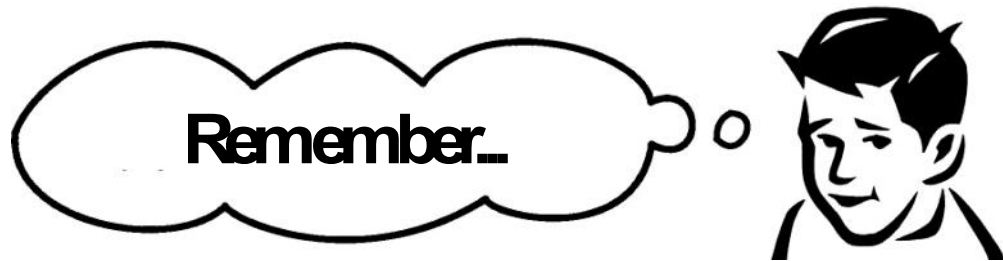


**Who Can I Talk to About  
What Happened?**

Being away from home can be very confusing. You may want to talk to someone about what has happened. Some people you can talk to include your caseworker, your guardian ad litem, your CASA worker or your foster parents.







- Everyone wants to be sure that you have a safe place to live.
- You should never be left alone with no one to take care of you.
- It is OK to feel sad if you are not living at home.
- Go to school and do the best you can.
- Ask questions and talk about what is happening and how you feel about it.
- Visit with your friends if you can.

# Who Are the People I'm Connected To?

Draw them or write their names

