

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE TESTIMONY

1. Listen to each question fully. Don't answer before it has been asked.
2. Think before answering. Do not rush into an answer.
3. Obey instructions and listen to objections. Do not continue to answer a question once an objection is made.
4. You have no right to object or refuse to answer. That is the attorney's job.
5. Tell the truth, whether, in a given instance, it seems beneficial or harmful to the case. Do not deny you met with your attorney to prepare.
6. Do not be browbeaten or make admissions that are not correct.
7. Decide the correct version of the facts and stick to it – do not minimize.
8. "I don't remember" is a perfectly adequate answer where that is the case.
9. Volunteer nothing and answer the question posed only.
10. Your duty is solely to answer questions and not to volunteer information.
11. Do not guess at an answer. Simply state "I don't know."
12. Where you are not positive, you can say, "As I remember,"
13. Control your temper, no matter what the provocation.
14. Jokes/humor are not appropriate - avoid sarcasm and informalities.
15. Do not engage in off-the-record conversations.
16. Do not discuss the case with opposing counsel.
17. It is perfectly normal to refer to notes/file - but ask to do so first.

Court Appearance Tips

You may be called into court by any attorney or the judge. You are appearing in court because of your professional knowledge and experience – act and dress like it.. Be prepared to answer the following:

1. What education and training do you have?
2. What experience do you have?
3. How do you know this child(ren)?
4. What brought this case to dependency court?

When preparing for a court appearance, it is recommended you do the following:

1. Review the file, chrono notes and facts of the case.
2. Seek assistance from CLS or your supervisor.
3. Always answer questions with facts of which you have knowledge. You were called into court for your professional knowledge, not your personal opinion. **Never be afraid to tell the court "I do not know, but I can find out and get back with you"** rather than giving an uncertain answer.

Credibility is also weighed by appearance. It is important for each of us to always retain our professionalism whether we are in court or are meeting with the family. **Remember, our appearance, demeanor and behavior reflects on both our personal reputation and the department's professionalism and reputation.**