



### **Preparing for Your Hearing: General Tips**

The purpose of this handout is to give you some general information on how to prepare for your hearing. If you have additional questions or would like information on how to present your case, you should consult with a private attorney. For a referral to a private attorney you may contact the Attorney Referral Service of the Sacramento County Bar Association at (916) 564-6707.

- Schedule an interpreter, if needed.** If you did not schedule an interpreter at the time that you filed your documents, contact the court at (916) 875-2620 for Family Law hearings or (916) 875-3400 for Probate hearings. Request a court interpreter as early as possible. If an interpreter is not requested in advance, one may not be available and your hearing may be continued to a later date. You may be able to use your own interpreter if they are 18 years or older and not a party to the case.
- Schedule a court reporter, if needed.** The Family Court does not automatically provide a court reporter at all hearings. If you would like to have a court reporter present to record the proceedings, you must make arrangements in advance. To schedule a court reporter through the court, contact (916) 876-7588. Unless you have an order waiving your court fees and costs, you will be required to pay for the court reporter's services.
- Review requests and responses.** Read through the court documents filed for the hearing. Be familiar with what is being requested and what responses have been made by the other party. Only the boxes checked on the forms will be discussed.
- Prepare to speak to the Judge in court.** Think about what you want to say. Make some notes to help you remember the main points. You will give a brief explanation in court of what you are asking for and why. No one else will be permitted to speak on your behalf unless you hire a private attorney. It is your responsibility to ensure the Judge addresses all issues and to clarify anything you do not understand.
- Try to negotiate an agreement.** Unless there is a Restraining Order between you and the other party, contact the other party prior to your hearing to try to resolve the issues and come to an agreement. Even if you come to an agreement, you should appear at your hearing so that the Judge can make your agreement a court order.



- Make childcare arrangements.** Children are not permitted in the courtroom. If you must bring your children with you to court, there may be space available in the Children's Waiting Room. Otherwise, bring someone with you to watch the children.
- Dress respectfully.** Plan to dress for your court date as if going to a job interview in a business office. If you are coming from or going to work, your uniform or work clothes are fine so long as you are neat, clean, and well-groomed.
- Bring your paperwork.** Take all the papers that have been filed or served. Bring your notes to refer to during your hearing. Bring any additional documents that you think are relevant to the hearing and you may need to show the Judge (for example, pay stubs, or certificate for parenting course you were ordered to complete). For each document that has not already been filed with the court, bring enough copies (including the original) for yourself, the Judge, and any other parties to the case.
- Arrive early.** It is important to be on time for all court dates. Allow extra time for traffic, parking, entry screening, and other possible delays. If you are late, you may miss your opportunity to be heard and the Judge may make orders in your absence.
- Prepare for parking.** If you drive to court, pay for your parking before entering the courthouse. Kiosks only take coins or credit cards. Dollar bills are not accepted. Kiosks are located near the parking lot exit, elevator/stairs from the parking lot, and inside the courthouse. Once your time expires, you could receive a parking ticket.
- Prepare for entry screening.** You will be required to enter the courthouse through an airport-style metal detector. Please allow sufficient time for the security process as there may be a line when entering the courthouse. Your personal belongings will be x-rayed. Objects like knitting needles, scissors, nail clippers, pocket knives, tools and weapons are not allowed.
- Find your courtroom.** Check your documents for the department number. As you enter the courthouse, head toward the elevators. Stairs are also located to the right of the elevators. Your hearing will be on the second floor. You do not need to check in at Reception first; go directly to your hearing. The department number is posted outside of each courtroom. Once inside the courtroom, check in with the bailiff, have a seat, and wait quietly for your case to be called by the Judge.