

GUARDIANSHIP COURT HEARING INSTRUCTIONS

Where to Go

Your hearings will be on the 5th Floor of the San Diego Central Court House. The building is located at , 1100 Union St., San Diego, CA 92101, (619) 450-7676. There are three courtrooms on the 5th Floor – 504-B, 503-K and 502-L. Your petition will tell you which courtroom to go to.

What to Bring

It is important to bring all paper work pertaining to your case with you to each court hearing. If the San Diego Volunteer's Lawyer Program Guardianship Clinic has provided you with specific papers to hand to the Judge, please have those documents separate and ready to hand in when your case is called. Bring paper with you to take notes on. The Court may give you additional dates or instructions that you will need to follow. It is important that you do not forget subsequent hearing dates or instructions the judge gives you. Bring a self-addressed-stamped-envelope.

What to Wear

In many cases, your appearance is your first opportunity to make an impression on the Judge. Please wear conservative clothes that you might wear to your place of worship, to work, or to a nice social function. If you wear a uniform to work, it is generally ok to wear that uniform to Court.

Length of Hearing

Please be prepared to be at the courthouse for several hours. The Court schedules several hearings for the same timeslot.

Childcare

Children who are the subject of the guardianship case may appear in Court if they are 12 years old or older. Please do your best to arrange for childcare for children under 12 as they generally will be prohibited from entering the courtroom.

What to Do When You Arrive

When you arrive it is important that you check the court calendar. Be sure to arrive atleast fifteen minutes before your scheduled hearing to go through security screening. The court calendar is located on the bulletin board just outside the courtroom doors. Every person with a hearing will be called according to their number on the court calendar or by the child's name. After locating your name and number on the calendar, please wait in the lobby until the bailiff allows you to enter the court room. If you arrive late and the hearing has commenced, quietly enter the court room. When you enter the court room, please take a seat in the audience chairs. Ensure that your cell phone is turned off. If you need a Spanish interpreter, tell the bailiff before court begins. Provide the bailiff with the number of your case. You should always bring a family member or friend with you to interpret in case the Court cannot provide you with an interpreter.

What to Do When Your Number/Case Is Called

When your number is called approach the podium. Speak into the microphone and clearly state your name and your relationship to the child. After you state your name, the Judge will begin to ask you questions regarding your case. If the Guardianship Clinic has provided you with papers to turn in, provide those papers to the Judge either when the Judge is questioning you or after the Judge is finished. Simply let the Judge know that you have documents that you would like to submit and then hand the documents to the bailiff.

Continuances

A continuance moves your hearing to a later date. The purpose of a continuance varies and the Judge will tell you the reason. If the Judge continues your hearing, please note the reason for the continuance. You may return to the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program - Guardianship Clinic for assistance. If you are currently the court appointed temporary guardian of a minor and the judge continues your hearing, ask the Judge to extend your temporary guardianship before you leave the podium.

What to Do Before You Leave

If the judge orders an investigation to be completed, wait in the lobby immediately following your hearing. Court Staff will bring you out paperwork regarding the investigation.

Obtaining Orders/Letters

If the judge issues any orders in your matter, please obtain an intake form from the Family Law Facilitator who sits in the back of the courtroom. Complete this form, place your self-addressed stamped envelope with the intake form, and bring the papers to the 4th floor. You will place the envelope and documents in the brown box at the window. The Court will return your orders by the self-addressed-stamped-envelope that you will provide.

Additional Tips

This is your opportunity to present your case to the Court. Take a moment before answering questions. If you don't understand the questions that are being asked, don't be afraid to say so. Speak into the microphone so you can be heard. Always call the judge "Your Honor," and do not interrupt the judge. You may always ask the judge if you can be heard when the judge has finished speaking. Don't be afraid to ask questions. When the judge is on the bench, please take all conversations outside the courtroom.