

JUVENILE COURT  
POLICY/PROCEDURE

**SOCIAL WORKER ATTENDANCE AT HEARINGS**

POLICY

Social Workers are expected to attend Court Hearings according to the following guidelines:

1. **Plea Hearings**

a. Workers should attend any Plea Hearing in which they have not already met the client/family.

b. For Plea Hearings set with the Commissioner, workers have the option of not appearing but must notify the Clerk of the Juvenile Court Commissioner prior to the scheduled hearing, either in writing, e-mail, or by phone (266-4407) that they will not be attending and verifying who the worker assigned to the case is.

c. Workers should attend any Plea Hearing in which their presence will expedite completion of a Consent Decree and/or further meeting the treatment/intervention needs of the family/court. If the worker is not recommending a Consent Decree be entered, the worker should notify the Court Clerk of that recommendation (preferably sent via e-mail) prior to the hearing.

If a Worker does not attend the Plea Hearing, he/she will be notified of the results of the hearing by the Clerk (by sending a copy of the Plea Hearing minute(s)) and the time/date set for pre-trial, trial, and/or disposition.

2. **Physical Custody Hearings**

a. In cases involving **Emergency Custody**, the worker who takes custody shall attend the Physical Custody Hearing, unless there is a previously assigned worker, so as to provide the Court with the necessary information related to the taking of custody and other case factors.

b. Workers have the option of appearing at a Physical Custody hearing or review that is initiated by another party. However, the worker if not attending, must communicate to JRC (for delinquency/JIPS only) information related to the current case plan, status of the case, and his or her immediate recommendation regarding placement. Further, workers should indicate their availability by phone at the time of the hearing for possible contact for a phone conference.

### 3. **Hearings before Judge**

Workers shall attend all hearings scheduled before the Judge unless otherwise excused by the Judge with the exception of **Trials and Jury Draws**. In those cases set for Trial/Jury Draw, the worker shall attend if, based on consultation with the attorneys, it is expected that the case will settle and "go to disposition" at the time set for trial.

### 4. **Hearings for Juveniles in Detention**

For juveniles held in Detention, workers are to attend all scheduled court hearings except trials/jury draws unless the worker has already met the juvenile/family and one of the following is arranged:

- a. The hearing may be covered by one of the court Social Workers, or
- b. The social worker notifies JRC of their intent **not** to appear at least two hours prior to the hearing, informs JRC of relevant information by FAX or e-mail, and provides JRC with 2 telephone numbers (direct number and main office number) at which he/she might be reached during the hearing (this requires the worker be available at the office or other designated number during the approximate time of the hearing).

### EXCEPTIONS/COMMENTS

In many cases, it may be appropriate for workers to utilize the services of the Juvenile Court Intake Coordinator who also has the authority to act on behalf of workers and the department at court hearings.