

Get Ready for Court



Get to the courthouse 15 minutes early.

- Find the courtroom.
- When the courtroom

opens, go in and tell the court staff you are present. When your name is called, go to the front of the courtroom.

Get ready.

- Bring proof of why the changes you are asking for would be best for the children. You can explain or you can bring evidence and/or witnesses.
- Bring “File-Stamped” copies of all your court forms.
- Bring proof of your income, like bills paycheck stubs, bank accounts, tax returns. Or you can bring a letter from your employer, social security or the welfare office.

Do I *have to* bring witnesses?

If the other parent does **NOT** agree with the change you are asking for, it’s a good idea to bring a witness.

Make sure the witness knows about your family situation and understands why you are asking for the changes.

What if my witness does not want to go to court?

You can ask the Clerk to order (subpoena) the witness to go to court.

Practice what you want to say.

Make a list of the changes you want and why. Practice saying them.

Do not take more than 5–10 minutes to say what you want.

If you get nervous at the hearing, just read from your list.

What if the other parent agrees but cannot go to court?

Bring a notarized statement from the other parent. The judge may accept it.

What if I don’t speak English?

When you file your papers, tell the clerk you will need an interpreter.

If a court interpreter is not available, bring someone to interpret for you. Do not ask a child, or a witness to interpret for you.

What if I am deaf?

When you file your papers, ask for an interpreter or other accommodation.

The judge may ask questions.

The other parent or his or her lawyer may also ask you questions. Tell the truth. Speak slowly. Give complete answers.

If you don’t understand, say, “I don’t understand the question.”

Speak only to the judge unless it is your turn to ask questions.

When other people are talking to the judge, wait for them to finish. Then you can ask questions about what they said.

What happens after the hearing?

The judge or magistrate will decide. Then the court will mail you a copy of the decision (order). Keep a copy of this order for your records.

If you do not agree with the court’s decision, you can file papers and ask them to reconsider. If a judge decided your case, you have **30** days to file an appeal. If a magistrate decided, you have **14** days to file your objection.

Need help?

Southeastern Ohio Legal Services
Phone: **1-866-LAW-OHIO**
www.oslsa.org