

Social Workers' Attendance at Court

(Revised 03/22/24)

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Related Policies

Additional information can be found in the following policies:

- Testifying in Court
- Communication with Attorneys

Policy

This policy outlines social workers (SW) attendance requirements for court hearings. For information on testifying, see Testifying in Court.

For all court hearings, SWs will be on time, dress in professional business attire, and be prepared to provide information on their case(s). SWs are encouraged to attend all their hearings virtually if not attending in person.

While virtual/phone appearance may be available, SWs must attend the following court hearings:

- All contested hearings (trials)
- Pre-Trial Settlement Conferences (PSCs)
- Any hearing when ordered to appear in person

NOTE: SWs must also attend hearings on the Dual Jurisdiction calendar, however virtual attendance is accepted unless ordered to appear in person.

SW's must be available for all Detention Hearings preferably in-person. If they cannot attend in person, they must be available virtually or by telephone. SW's Protective Services Supervisor (PSS) must be available to appear or answer questions on the Agency's behalf if the SW is not available.

For all hearings, SWs will consider County Counsel (CC) advisal, support needs for children/youth or families, children/youth needing transportation to the hearing, distributing court reports, etc.

If a SW is ordered to appear at a court hearing, the SW will appear and remain until/unless excused by the judicial officer. If the SW is not able to attend a hearing, the PSS is expected to attend on their behalf. The SW will discuss any attendance availability concerns with CC, see Communication with County Counsel.

Communication with Court Officer	On the hearing day, SWs will check in with the court officer of the court department in which their hearing is being heard. SWs will inform the court officer if they have hearings in other court departments to assist with coordination of appearances.
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Communication with County Counsel	<p>It is imperative that SWs communicate with CC regarding their planned attendance for upcoming court hearings. The SW or PSS will immediately notify CC if a problem arises with their availability in attending a hearing, or of a witness's availability. If CC permits a SW or PSS to be on telephone standby, the SW/PSS will ensure availability and respond immediately to avoid court delays. For all other information, see Communication with Attorneys.</p> <p>NOTE: The court or CC may elevate concerns with SWs attendance.</p>
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Alignment with SET	This policy supports SET Value 5: A Strong Working Relationship with the Legal System , Child and Family Well-Being Department values respectful working relationships with courts, attorneys, and court-appointed special advocates by regularly working toward efforts to improve court processes to ensure that they are supportive of mutual goals.
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