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## JUVENILE COURT TERMS & DEFINITIONS

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### **Adjudicated**

A term used to describe a youth who has been found delinquent.

### **Admission**

When a youth tells the Court that they did the act that they are accused of doing.

### **Assessment**

A professional evaluation of a child's educational or mental health needs. The information obtained is used to determine what services are needed for successful rehabilitation or educational success.

### **Competency**

The intellectual abilities of a child to understand the legal proceedings taking place and their ability to assist their Attorney in their defense.

### **Confession**

When a youth tells the police and/or law enforcement that they did the act in question.

### **Continuance**

An order by a Judge and/or Magistrate to postpone a court date to a future date.

### **Complaint**

A document filed in the Court by Law enforcement officials that states the facts and the charges that a youth must answer to in Court.

### **Delinquent**

A legal term used to describe the youth who committed an act that if committed by an adult would be a crime.

### **Diversion**

An act by which a defendant is diverted from the traditional prosecution process.

### **Due Process**

Rules and procedures specified by law that must be followed in a court proceeding. Due process protects a citizen's rights and helps to guarantee a fair trial.

### **Expungement**

A court order for all references to a child's case, including court records of the case be destroyed.

### **Hearing**

A court proceeding which is usually scheduled in advance and all parties to the case are usually present. A record, either video or audio, is made of what people say in court during the hearing.

Juvenile: In Ohio, a person under 18 years of age.

Ohio Department of Youth (ODYS/DYS): Juvenile equivalent to the adult prison system.

### **Pre-trial Release**

Continued supervision by the Court following arraignment hearing or following the release from a detention facility prior to the Dispositional and/or Adjudication Hearing.

### **Probation**

Continued supervision by the court following a dispositional hearing completed by a Probation Officer who is an employee of the court that monitors a juvenile to ensure that they follow the conditions that the Judge ordered.

### **Sealed**

A sealed record is separate from the youth's main file and is made accessible only to the Juvenile Court. All other courts that may have a copy of the record must destroy it.

### **Serious Youthful Offender (SYO)**

A juvenile qualifying as a "serious youthful offender" may be tried in juvenile court and at disposition is sentenced to both a traditional juvenile disposition and an adult sentence, with the adult sentence stayed pending successful completion of the juvenile sentence. If the juvenile sentence is not successfully completed, that adult sentence will be imposed.



**FOR YOUTH AND  
THEIR FAMILIES**

**NAVIGATING  
THE JUVENILE COURT SYSTEM**

# COURT HEARINGS

## Detention Hearing

The hearing in which the Court decides whether or not to keep a youth in custody pending the next hearing. The hearing must take place within 72 hours of the youth being taken into custody.

## Arraignment Hearing

The hearing in which the youth is presented with the formal complaint and is allowed to make a plea.

## Pre-trial Hearing

The hearing before the adjudication hearing takes place. During this stage, the parties might decide to discuss the case, alternative methods of resolution, and file motions.

## Competency Hearing

Proceeding that explores the child's ability to understand the nature and objectives of a proceeding against them and defense.

## Adjudication Hearing or Trial

A legal process/trial in Juvenile Court. The State or Prosecutor must prove to the Judge or Magistrate beyond a reasonable doubt that the juvenile committed the act in question.

## Disposition

A hearing where the Judge decides what sentence to give the juvenile.

## Motion to Review

A motion is a legal document filed with the court for a case that is currently pending or a case that has been disposed of already. A motion can be filed in a civil case or a criminal case in the state of Ohio.

## Bindover Hearing

A hearing where the Court determines whether a juvenile's case should go forward in Juvenile Court or be transferred to adult court.

# WHO'S IN THE COURTROOM

## The Bench

A judge or magistrate is seated at the bench.

## Prosecutor Table

Seek to protect the innocent, while protecting juvenile rights to a speedy disposition of their case.

## Defender Table

The advocate for the child.

## Witness Box

A person who will provide testimony.

## Jury Box

A group of persons who will carefully consider evidence and arguments ending with a summing by the judge.

## Gallery

Members of support, family, public, defendants who are free, youth conference representatives, treatment providers, court observers and other parties spectating until their cases are called.



Juvenile Justice Courts and their related personnel vary widely in representation. This publication is designed for general use. The Courts assume no liability for any general or specific use of the information provided herein.

*\*Glossary of court terms were informed by definitions in the "Standards 3.1" (American Bar Association, 2021)*

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# COURTROOM WORKERS AND THEIR ROLES

- Judge- A public official vested with the authority to hear, determine, and preside over legal matters brought in court.
- Magistrate- An officer of the court who performs a function similar to that of a Judge. If you do not agree with the Magistrate's order; you can ask your child's attorney to file objections to the Magistrate's decision so a Judge can review the order of a Magistrate.
- Prosecutor- The government's lawyer who tries to prove a youth delinquent beyond a reasonable doubt.
- Defense Attorney- The attorney/lawyer representing the accused. A defense attorney can be a private attorney paid by the child or the child's parents or a public defender or private attorney paid for by the state.
- Public Defender- A defense lawyer who works in a public defender's office. The county and state pay the lawyer's salary so they can represent children who cannot afford an attorney.
- Guardian ad Litem and/or GAL (Attorney or Court Appointed Special Advocate/CASA)- A trained community volunteer appointed by the Court to represent the best interests of a child during a Court proceeding.
- Delinquent- A legal term for a juvenile who committed an act that if committed by an adult it would be a crime.
- Witness- A person who testifies in court.
- Support- Family, Caregivers, and Peer support.
- Court Interpreter- A court interpreter may be appointed if the youth or family request an interpreter to translate at every hearing.