

HOW TO START AN AT-RISK YOUTH CASE

An At-Risk Youth (ARY) Petition is intended to preserve, strengthen, and reconcile families who are experiencing struggles with their children by providing families with services through the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). These options are available to parents/guardians who are seeking assistance from Juvenile Court to assist them in providing appropriate care, treatment, and supervision of their youth. If an ARY petition is granted, all parties are required to comply with court orders. Failure to comply with any court order can result in consequences set forth by the Judge.

To file an At-Risk Youth petition with the court, follow these steps:

Prepare your Petition:

Call the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) at 1-855-420-5888 and ask about Family Voluntary Services (FVS). These services are likely to be recommended prior to filing an At-Risk youth (ARY) petition. DCYF offers families services based on their needs, including FVS. FVS is a program intended to keep children safe, meet their needs while strengthening, and keeping the family together. They do this by implementing services based on specific needs of the family. If FVS services are unsuccessful, DCYF will then refer you to Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) and assist you in filing an ARY petition and complete a family assessment. The information collected in the Family Assessment will inform the court and other parties what you are seeking to accomplish with the ARY petition. The Social Worker will provide instructions for filing the petition with Juvenile Court and instructions on how to distribute copies to the parties.

At the Court Hearing:

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are required to be prepared and explain to the judge why you are asking for the court's help. You may bring any witnesses that can help you with your case.

Your child will be represented by a lawyer, at public expense. You are entitled to have a lawyer on your behalf, at your own expense; If you want to hire one you will need to make your own advance arrangements. Almost all parents represent themselves in these hearings.

If the judge finds that your child does qualify as an At-Risk Youth, then the Judge will ask the Social Worker for a recommended service plan which could help resolve the family struggles and will ask each party whether they agree.

A review hearing will be set 3 months out, to see how things are going. The review date will be on the second page of the ARY court order you receive in court.

***Please note: If a party does not obey the court ordered service plan, you may file a contempt hearing at any time. A How to file a Contempt packet will be given to you at the first court hearing. Be sure to follow all instructions carefully.**