



WHEN KIDS TESTIFY IN COURT

Helping Children Understand the Criminal Justice System

Authored by: Robyn B. Light

Illustrated by: Ron Krebs

WHEN KIDS TESTIFY IN COURT

**Helping Children Understand the
Criminal Justice System**

The information and illustrations in this book are designed to assist in helping adults explain the criminal justice system to children.

Copy 1992 Revised August 1996
Second printing June 1998
Second Revision March 2008
Third Revision January 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this booklet may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

Robyn B. Light
Child Abuse Investigations Consultant

There is no greater challenge facing professionals who help children through the criminal justice process than helping them contend with the experience of participating in courtroom testimony.

The potential of a courtroom experience must be presented to a child in a positive, non-threatening manner which will give the child a sense that they can participate with confidence in such a process. "When Kids Testify In Court" describes the child in their role as a helper, a person who has a job that is important and fits in with the other helpers in the courtroom. This gives the child a sense of belonging and that they can participate with confidence in such a system.

This book can be used to prepare a child for court, during the court process and as a referral resource for counselors, parents or therapists in the aftermath of the experience. It should be provided to every child who ever anticipates having to walk into a courtroom.

**Jeffrey C. Sullivan, Retired
United States Attorney
United States Department of Justice
Western District of Washington**

**In Loving Memory
of My Parents**

Robert J. and Doris A. Benjamin

Through your care and devotion I learned that
it is in giving one truly receives.

Special Appreciation to:

Ronald D. Krebs, Illustrator

His Illustrations brought life to my words.

Special Acknowledgment to:

Jeffrey C. Sullivan, United States Attorney, Retired
US Department of Justice/ Western District of Washington

Without his support and encouragement the opportunity to
work with children would not have been possible.

With Grateful Appreciation to:

The Washington State Office of the Administrator for the Courts and
Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys for their generous financial contributions
which made the original printing of this book possible.

For all the terrific kids that I have had the pleasure of working with through the years

For everyone of you whose strength, honesty

and courage helped me learn how to better serve other children

For all of the challenges you faced with dignity, sincerity and candor

To every special young friend I've have met along the way

This book is dedicated to you.

Your friendships are a gift to me,

Robyn

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

GIVEN IN FRIENDSHIP BY:

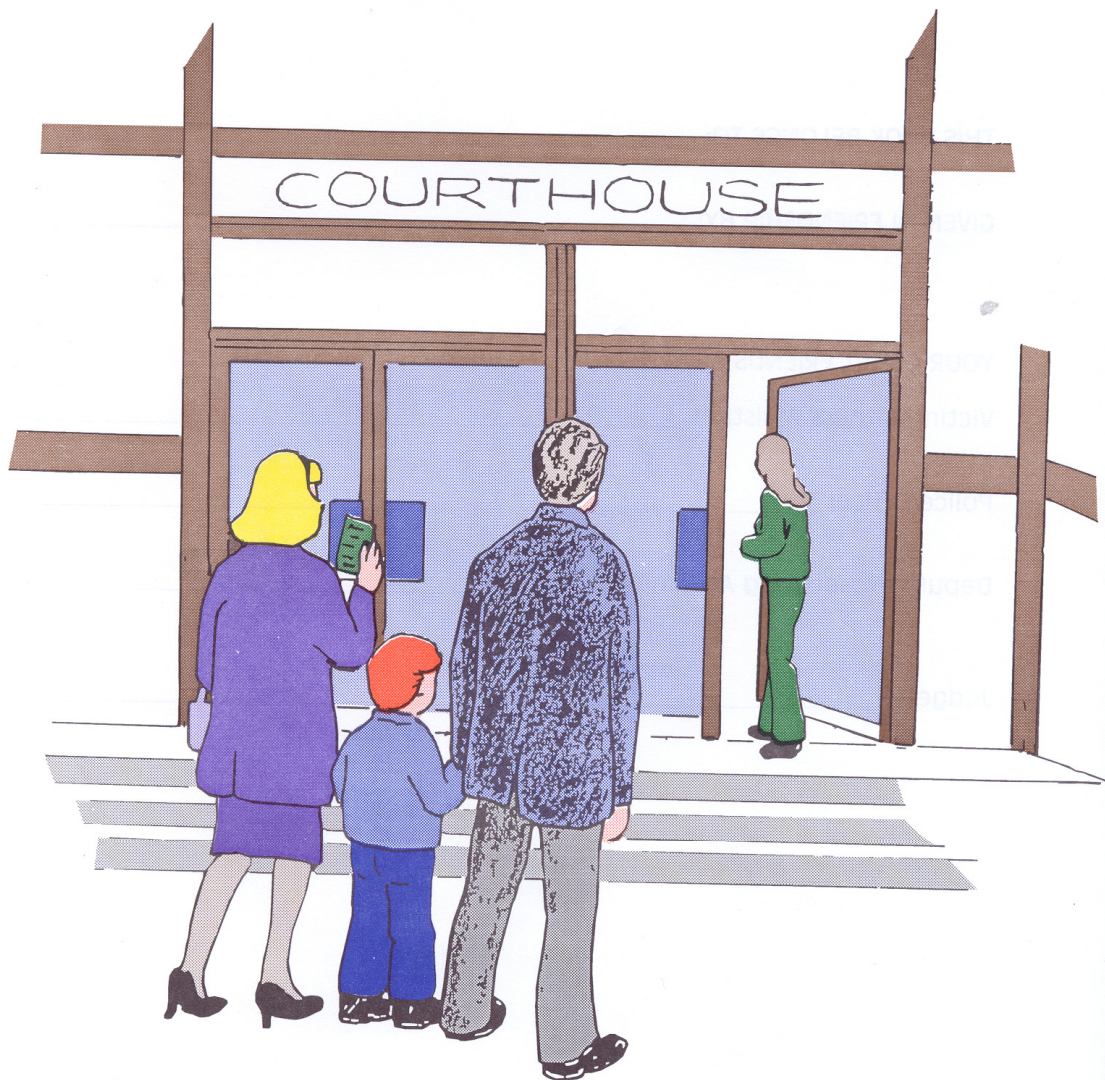
YOUR COURT FRIENDS ARE:

Victim-Witness Assistant:

Police Officer:

Attorney:

Judge:



You have been asked to come to court to tell about something that happened to you, or to tell something that you saw happen to someone else. When something is new or unfamiliar, it can make us feel a little scared. Going to court can be a new experience but it doesn't have to be scary.

When you are asked to come to court to answer questions, you are called a **Witness**. A witness is a helping person. As a witness, you will be called to the **Courtroom** to sit in the witness stand. The courtroom is where you will talk to the **Judge**, and a group of twelve people, called the **Jury**, who will listen to what you have to say.

You will be asked to give your **Testimony**. To give your testimony means you answer questions about what you know. The judge will ask you to take an **Oath**. An oath is when you promise to tell the truth. Everyone who is a witness in court takes an oath to tell the truth. Telling the truth is a very important job.



There will be lots of people at court who are there to help you.

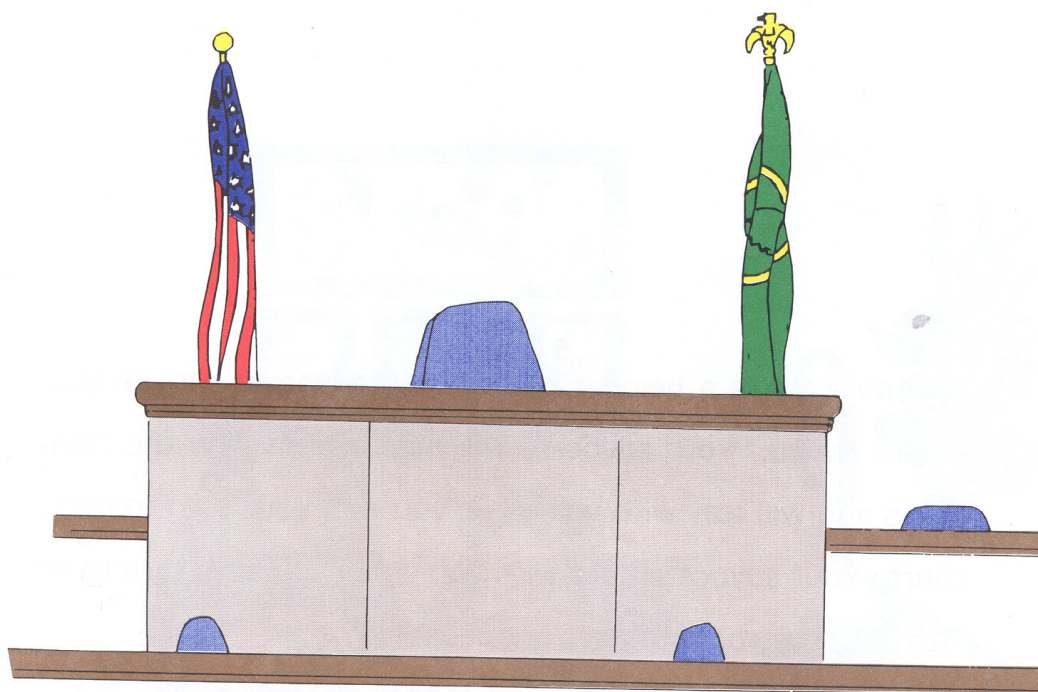
You will already know some of these helping people. You will also get to meet some new people who will be in court to help you too. Knowing who will be in court with you can make you feel more comfortable. Let's learn more about the courtroom and your courtroom helpers.



The **Judge** is an important helping person. The Judge wears a black robe. It is the Judge's job to make sure that the law is followed. Laws are rules that everyone must follow. The Judge explains the law to the Jury and answers questions about the law for the attorneys. The Judge wants you to feel safe in the courtroom so you will feel comfortable answering questions. The Judge will ask you to answer the questions you are asked and to tell the truth about what you know.



An **Advocate** is a helping person. An advocate can be your special friend. Your advocate will help explain how the court works and will stay with you while you wait your turn to go into the courtroom. Your advocate goes with you when it is your turn to go into the courtroom to answer questions



The **Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or District Attorney** is a helping person. The Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or District Attorney must prove to the court that the **Defendant** broke the law. The Defendant is the person accused of breaking the law. The Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or District Attorney and the Defense Attorney, will sit at a table in front of the Judge.

The **Defense Attorney** is a helping person who helps the Defendant in court. The Defendant will sit next to the Defense Attorney at the table in front of the Judge. The Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or District Attorney and the Defense Attorney will take turns asking you questions. The Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or District Attorney asks you questions first, and then the Defense Attorney will ask you some questions.



The **Court Reporter** is a helping person. The Court Reporter has a special machine, kind of like a typewriter, that will write down everything that is said in the courtroom. It will be important to speak loudly so the Court Reporter can hear you. Sometimes a courtroom will have special sound equipment that will record what you say instead of a Court Reporter.

The **Court Clerk** is a helping person. The Court Clerk is there to help the Judge. The Court Clerk will keep track of all the court papers and other information that is called **Evidence**. The evidence is brought into court by the attorneys to help explain their side of the case.

The **Bailiff** is a helping person. The Bailiff helps the Judge and keeps order in the courtroom. Sometimes the Bailiff will call the witness to the **witness stand**. The witness stand is where you sit in the courtroom when it is your turn to talk to the Judge and the Jurors.



The **Jurors** are helping people. There are twelve (12) people on a jury. Jurors are people like us. They do not usually work at the courthouse. Instead, they are citizens who are asked by the Judge to come to court and listen to the court case. For example, a Juror could be a banker, a housewife, a store clerk, or a teacher. The Jurors must listen very carefully to everything that is said in court. They also look at all the evidence that is brought into court. It is the Jury's job to decide if a Defendant is **guilty** or **not guilty**.

If a Defendant is found guilty, it means that the Jury decided that the Defendant broke the law. If a Defendant is found not guilty, it means that the Jury decided that there was not enough information or evidence to prove that the Defendant had broken the law.



Now you have learned about going to court. You have learned that there are many helping people in the courtroom. You have learned that as a witness you are a helping person. Telling the truth about what happened to you, or telling about what you saw happen to someone else is a very important job.

All of your court helpers want to thank you for coming to court, and telling the truth about what you know.

We all think you are a really **TERRIFIC KID!!!**

LET'S REVIEW THE WORDS YOU HAVE LEARNED

1. **Witness:** The person who is called to the witness stand to answer questions and tell the truth about what they know.
2. **Courtroom:** The room where you will go to talk to the judge and where the jury will listen to what you have to say.
3. **Testimony:** A statement given under oath by a witness in court.
4. **Oath:** When you promise in court to tell the truth.
5. **Judge:** The person in charge of the court who makes sure that the law is followed.
6. **Law:** The law is made up of many rules that everyone must follow.
7. **Advocate:** An advocate is your special helping friend who will explain to you about how the court works and stay with you during the time you are in the courtroom.
8. **Deputy Prosecuting Attorney or District Attorney:** The lawyer who must prove in court how the defendant broke the law.
9. **Defense Attorney:** The lawyer that helps the defendant in court.
10. **Defendant:** The person accused of breaking the law.
11. **Court Reporter:** The person who uses the special machine to record everything that is said in court.
12. **Court Clerk:** The person who helps the judge with all the paperwork and all the evidence.
13. **Evidence:** Items that are brought into court to help the attorneys explain their side of the case.
14. **Witness Stand:** Where you will sit in the courtroom when it is your turn to talk to the judge or the jury.

15. **Bailiff:** The person who helps the judge keep order in the court and sometimes brings the witnesses to the witness stand.

16. **Jurors:** The twelve (12) citizens who decide, after reviewing all the facts and evidence if the defendant broke the law.



LET'S DRAW A PICTURE ABOUT GOING TO COURT

**LET'S SEE WHAT WE LEARNED
ABOUT GOING TO COURT**

HERE ARE THREE GOOD THINGS I LEARNED ABOUT GOING TO COURT

1.

2.

3.

I LIKE MY "GOING TO COURT" BOOK BECAUSE

1.

2.

3.

**WHEN I GO TO COURT AND TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT I KNOW I
AM A HELPING PERSON.**

WHENEVER WE INTERVENE IN A CHILD'S LIFE
WE TOUCH THE FUTURE

