

A Day in the Life of a Child Welfare Supervisor: Children Services Pretrial or Docket Days

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As a children services supervisor one of the responsibilities is to support your caseworker during court hearings. These hearings can include contested temporary custody hearings, permanent custody hearings, legal custody to a relative or interested third party (kinship placement) or juvenile delinquency cases. It is very important to staff the case with your prosecutor prior to the court hearing to discuss testimony and how to build your case to ensure child safety. Remember, defense attorneys are working against you and your position. Their desired outcome is the opposite of yours. It is important that your worker feels supported during this process as being on the stand in court can be very stressful and overwhelming. A defense attorney has a job to do and often it can be at the caseworker's expense. Although not personal, it can absolutely feel that way when they are drilling you with questions and trying to get you caught up or confused in your testimony. Providing support and encouragement to your worker during the court process is critical to their success on the stand and the court ruling in your favor. It is an important role of a caseworker supervisor. It consumes a lot of time because not only are you providing support to your worker, you are negotiating with attorneys, talking with all family members, as well as GAL's. The reason these conversations occur is because often an agreement can be reached prior to the court hearing. In a contested hearing as well as permanent custody there is a lot of testimony that can be very hurtful for families to hear, unfortunately this is necessary to explain your position to the court as to why what you are seeking is in the best interest of the child.

5:00 AM – My alarm goes off. I have just enough time to get ready, walk the dogs, and get daughter off to pre-Kindergarten.

By 8:00 AM – I'm at the office and its breakfast time! While eating my yogurt and protein bar I'm skimming emails. I delete the ones that can be deleted and flag those which have dates that need to be recorded for future meetings, case updates, etc.

By 9:00 AM – I'm off to court for a status hearing on an open case. I accompany the assigned caseworker, and while we walk to the courthouse we process testimony and discuss the desired outcome.

9:10 AM – The caseworker and I arrive at court and wait. While waiting we discuss other cases they have and I may check emails and text messages on my phone.

When the court hearing finally goes forward it is usually quick. After the court hearing the caseworker and I will meet with all of the family members to process next steps. Then, the caseworker and I walk back to office.

Once at my desk I'll begin to work on most burning issues. As I do this there are many interruptions. My staff will be in and out of office asking questions on cases, requesting signatures, approvals, etc.

12:00 PM – Lunchtime! If I'm lucky I'll walk over to a local hang and have lunch with my support group to process any difficult cases or never ending bureaucracy.

1:00 PM – I'm back in my office ready for supervision with a worker to discuss their caseload, which typically is 10-15 cases.

2:00 PM – I head into the field, to a family's home to attend a Family Team Meeting. The caseworker, Family Team Meeting facilitator, family, and I discuss case plan progress. Unfortunately, my phone continues to buzz as e-mails, texts and calls continue to come in.

3:00 PM – I make it back just in time to walk to court again for another hearing with a different worker. On the way there we discuss testimony and the desired outcomes.

4:00 PM – Back in the office, I can start wrapping up my day. I try to answer all of my emails, return any calls, and follow up with any major issues regarding child safety with workers.

4:30 PM – As I head to my car at the end of the day I check to make sure my phone is still "ON" just in case I receive a call from a worker that are likely to still be in the field with a family.

The one guarantee with this job is that every single day is different! As a supervisor, I'm flexible and understand that what is on my calendar on any particular day will likely change the minute I walk through the agency door.