TIP 35

Child Welfare – Part 2 (Hearings)

In Maryland's courts, these cases are known as Child in Need of Assistance cases. Mostly, they are referred to as CINA (pronounced Si-Na) cases. CINA cases have several hearings in the first year. This video is an introduction to those hearings.

Watch the Video

Emergency Shelter Care Hearing or Shelter Hearing

- This hearing is usually held on the first business day after the Department of Social Services (DSS) removes your child from your care. This is not the trial.
- A judge or magistrate will decide if it is safe for your child to stay in your home and will address your child's immediate needs.
- Out-of-home care includes foster care and having your child stay with relatives. If the court decides foster care is appropriate, DSS may continue to look at family members who may care for your child.

Pre-trial or Mediation Hearing

- Some Maryland courts schedule mediation sessions before the trial. In mediation, all parties meet with a neutral third party and try to come to an agreement. If mediation is successful, the court will place agreement terms on the record.
- The judge or magistrate may expand on social services that may benefit you or your child.

Adjudication Hearing or Trial and Related Hearings

- The trial is a hearing on what happened in your case.
- At the end of a trial, there may be a Disposition Hearing, where the court will decide what will happen to you and your child. The court will also decide what services you and your family need and what actions need to be taken.
- After the court's decision, the court will schedule a Review Hearing. Often, the court schedules a review every six months to check whether your family is engaging in court-ordered services. The court also wants to see the progress your family is making.

Permanency Planning Hearing

- If a year has passed and your child is still in out-of-home placement, the court will look at your family's progress and decide if it should continue to work toward re-unification.
- The court may consider other plans for your child, including granting custody to a relative or non-relative or adoption.