

Investigations

Day 8 – Participant Manual



Understanding Courtroom Expectations

Preparing for Testimony and Legal Questioning

Defending Investigative Decisions

Courtroom Simulation

Day 8:

Investigations Training Agenda

Wednesday	
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome
9:30 – 10:30	Understanding Courtroom Expectations
10:30 -10:45	Break
10:45 – 12:00	Preparing for Testimony and Legal Questioning
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:15	Defending Investigative Decisions
2:15 - 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:30	Courtroom Simulation
3:30 – 4:00	Wrap Up and Review

Investigations *Specialty Training*



UA
LITTLE
ROCK

Midsouth
College of Business, Health,
and Human Services
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Day 8

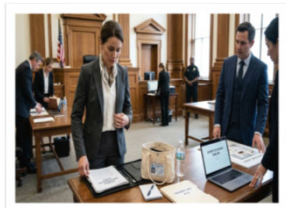
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Understanding Courtroom Expectations

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Preparing for Professional Courtroom Participation



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Target Outcomes



- Understand how courtroom structure and hearing expectations influence professional participation during dependency-neglect proceedings.
- Apply professional communication practices and courtroom preparation strategies to legal involvement.
- Assess how courtroom behavior, preparation, and communication affect professional credibility during hearings.

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Dependency-Neglect Hearing Structure

Disposition: Court determines what actions DCFS will take in the case.

Review: Court assesses case progress, safety, services, placement, and permanency.

Permanency Planning: Court determines or reassess the child's permanency goal.

Probable Cause: Court determines whether probable cause exists to support continued protective custody.

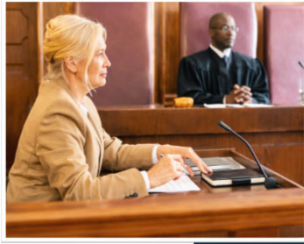
Adjudication: Court determines whether allegations are substantiated by a **preponderance-of-the-evidence**.

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What Specialists Should Expect During Court Proceedings

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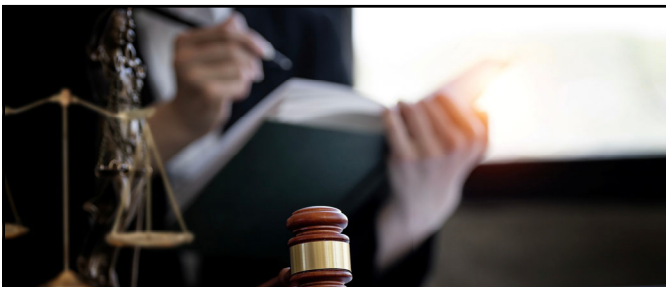
Presentation During Legal Proceedings



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Building Confidence Before Hearings

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Preparing for Testimony & Legal Questioning

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Communicating Effectively During Testimony



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Target Outcomes



- Understand how testimony preparation and communication habits influence courtroom effectiveness during legal questioning.
- Apply professional communication strategies and testimony preparation practices to courtroom participation.
- Assess how organization, listening skills, and response style affect testimony quality and courtroom communication.

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How Attorneys Guide Testimony During Hearings



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Communicating Clearly & Effectively During Testimony

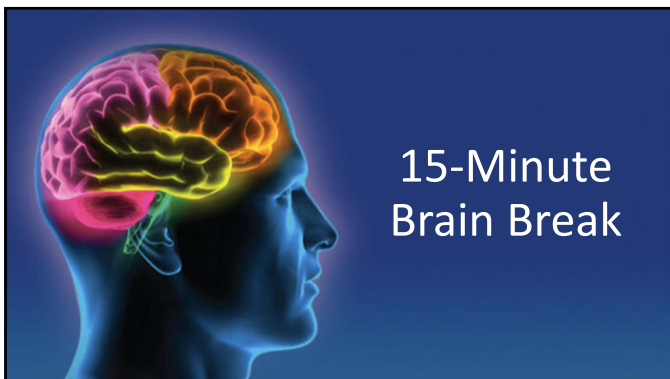


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Managing Difficult Questions

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15-Minute Brain Break

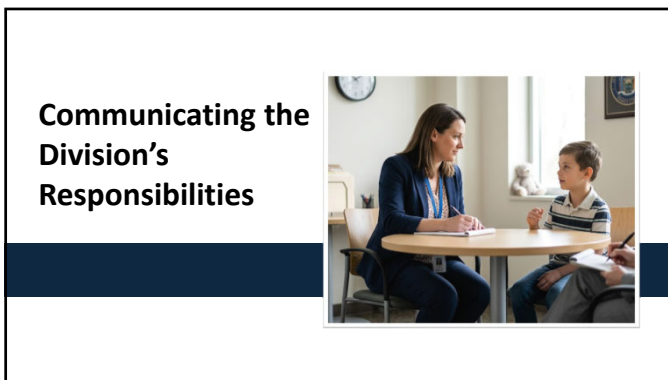


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Defending Investigative Decisions

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Communicating the Division's Responsibilities

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Target Outcomes



- Understand how investigative decisions and agency actions may be examined and challenged during courtroom proceedings.
- Apply professional communication and decision-defense strategies during adversarial legal questioning.
- Assess how courtroom explanation of investigative reasoning affects credibility and legal understanding.

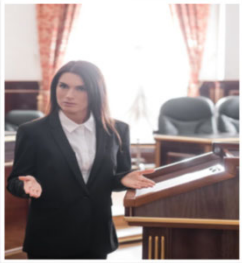
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Explaining Safety & Removal Decisions In Court



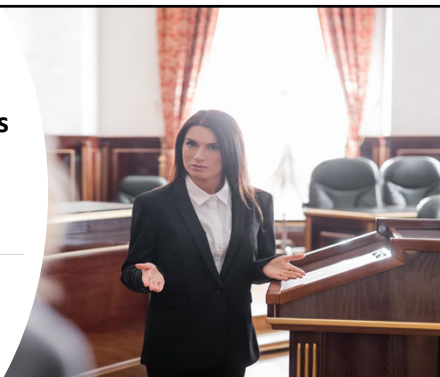
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Defending Investigative Reasoning Under Scrutiny



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Managing Cross Examination & Challenging Questions



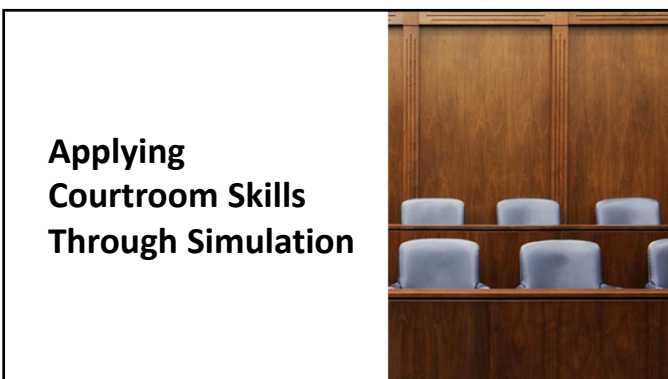
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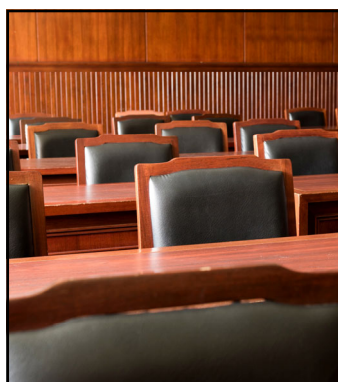
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Target Outcomes



- Apply courtroom communication skills during realistic legal questioning and testimony.
- Practice professional testimony and response strategies in the simulation exercise.
- Evaluate how demeanor, habits, and organization impact testimony effectiveness and professional credibility.

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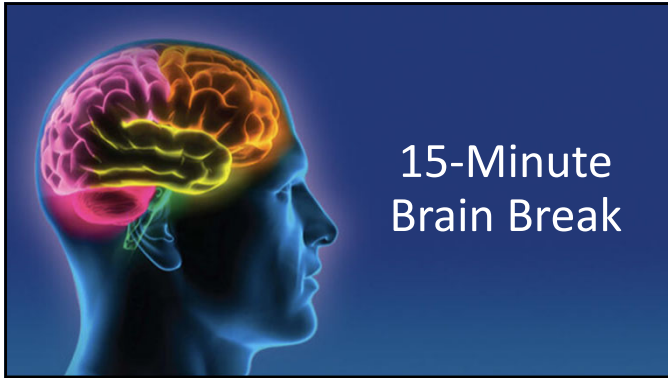
Courtroom Simulation Setup

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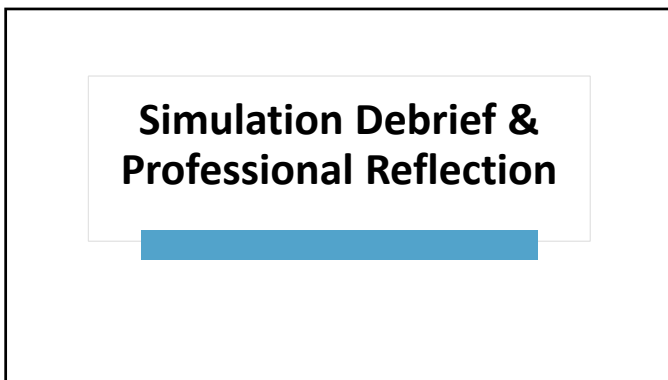
Courtroom Simulation



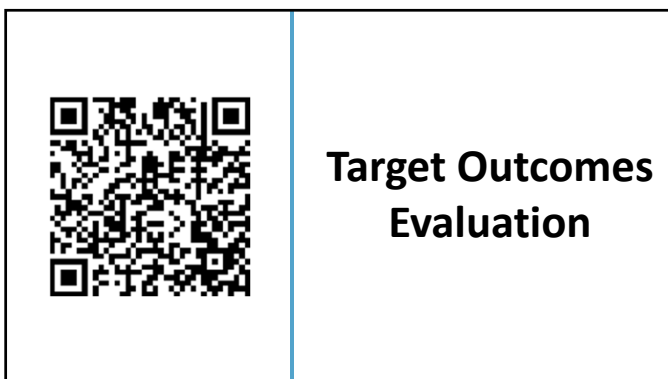
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DAY 8 NOTES PAGE

COURTROOM EXPECTATIONS & HEARING STRUCTURE

PURPOSE

This notes page is designed to help specialists understand:

- courtroom structure and hearing progression.
 - courtroom expectations and etiquette.
 - professional behavior during legal proceedings.
 - courtroom communication practices.
 - witness credibility expectations.
 - The specialist's role during dependency-neglect hearings.
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DEPENDENCY-NEGLECT COURT OVERVIEW

Dependency-neglect hearings occur after legal action has been initiated involving concerns related to child safety, maltreatment, supervision, abuse, neglect, or protective custody.

Specialists may participate in hearings involving:

- Disposition
- Probable Cause
- Adjudication
- Review Hearings
- Permanency Planning
- Termination Proceedings
- Placement or custody-related matters

Court proceedings involve multiple professionals and agencies, including:

- Judges
- OCC attorneys
- Parents' attorneys
- CASA representatives
- Law enforcement
- CAC staff
- Resource Staff

- DCFS specialists and supervisors

SPECIALIST RESPONSIBILITIES DURING COURT INVOLVEMENT

Specialists may be expected to:

- Review investigative documentation before court.
 - Communicate with OCC regarding the case.
 - explain investigative actions and decisions.
 - testify regarding observations and investigative findings.
 - discuss safety concerns and agency recommendations.
 - Answer questions regarding documentation and chronology.
 - Maintain professionalism during all court proceedings.
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COURTROOM EXPECTATIONS

When entering the courtroom:

- Dress professionally.
- Arrive early and prepared.
- Bring organized documentation.
- Silence cell phones and electronic devices.
- Maintain professional behavior before proceedings begin.

When the judge enters:

- Everyone should stand unless instructed otherwise.
- Remain respectful and attentive.
- Follow local courtroom customs and procedures.

While court is in session:

- Do not interrupt the judge.
- Remain attentive even when not testifying.
- Avoid side conversations.
- Speak respectfully to all courtroom participants.
- Maintain professional body language and demeanor.

PROFESSIONAL TESTIMONY EXPECTATIONS

During testimony:

- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Use verbal responses rather than nodding.
- Answer only the question asked.
- Pause briefly before responding if needed.
- Ask for clarification if a question is unclear.
- Remain calm and professional throughout questioning.

Effective testimony practices:

- Use factual language.
- Stay within the scope of your knowledge.
- Explain investigative actions clearly.
- Reference policy accurately when applicable.
- Avoid exaggeration or speculation.
- Maintain a professional tone.

CREDIBILITY IN COURT

Professional credibility may be influenced by:

- Preparedness.
- Organization.
- Professionalism.
- Communication style.
- Consistency between testimony and documentation.
- Ability to remain calm under pressure.

Credibility reminders:

- Do not look to others for answers while testifying.
- Avoid arguing with attorneys or the judge.
- Remain objective and professional.

- Separate facts from assumptions
- Avoid phrases such as:
 - “I think”
 - “I guess”
 - “Probably”
 - “Maybe”

Instead, use professional factual language such as:

- “I observed...”
- “The investigation identified...”
- “The Agency’s recommendation is...”
- “Based on the information available at that time...”

WORKING WITH OCC

Before court, specialists should:

- review the case with OCC.
- discuss major concerns and recommendations.
- review difficult or unfavorable facts.
- clarify documentation questions.
- ensure familiarity with chronology and investigative actions.

OCC relies on specialists to:

- communicate clearly.
- remain professional.
- explain investigative reasoning accurately.
- support agency recommendations factually.

RESPONDING TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONING

When responding to difficult questioning:

- remain calm.
- avoid becoming defensive.
- answer professionally and directly.
- do not volunteer additional information unnecessarily.
- clarify misunderstandings respectfully.

- stay focused on facts and observations.

If you do not know or do not remember:

- say so honestly.
- do not guess or speculate.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Courtroom professionalism begins before testimony starts.
- Strong preparation improves confidence and communication.
- Documentation and testimony should remain consistent.
- Professional demeanor affects courtroom credibility.
- Specialists represent both themselves and the agency during hearings.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Courtrooms are highly structured professional environments.
- Specialists must communicate clearly and professionally.
- Preparation and organization strengthen courtroom confidence.
- Credibility is influenced by professionalism and consistency.
- Effective testimony supports child safety and legal decision-making.

DAY 8 NOTES PAGE

TESTIMONY PREPARATION & LEGAL QUESTIONING

PURPOSE

This notes page is designed to help specialists understand:

- testimony preparation practices.
 - courtroom communication expectations.
 - legal questioning structure.
 - professional response strategies.
 - credibility during testimony.
 - effective communication under courtroom pressure.
-

UNDERSTANDING TESTIMONY

Testimony is the process of verbally communicating investigative information during legal proceedings.

Specialists may testify regarding:

- investigative actions
 - observations
 - chronology
 - safety concerns
 - interviews and contacts
 - agency recommendations
 - removal rationale
 - documentation and investigative findings
-

TYPES OF COURTROOM QUESTIONING

Direct Examination:

Direct examination occurs when the attorney calling the witness asks questions intended to:

- introduce information.
- explain investigative actions.
- establish chronology.
- clarify recommendations.
- organize case information for the court.

During direct examination:

- questions are often open-ended.
- specialists may provide more detailed explanations.
- attorneys may guide testimony chronologically.
- the focus is often on clarity and organization.

Cross-Examination:

Cross-examination occurs when the opposing attorney asks questions intended to:

- challenge information.
- identify inconsistencies.
- test credibility.
- clarify details.
- question conclusions or recommendations.

During cross-examination:

- questions may feel more direct or confrontational.
- attorneys may repeat questions.
- questioning may focus on details or perceived inconsistencies.
- concise responses are often important.

PREPARING FOR TESTIMONY

Before hearings, specialists should:

- review investigative chronology.
- review documentation thoroughly.
- organize important case information.
- review agency recommendations.
- identify difficult facts or challenges within the case.
- prepare with OCC when possible.
- review prior statements and documentation.

HELPFUL PREPARATION PRACTICES

Before court:

- Arrive early.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring organized documentation.
- Review notes and timelines.
- Clarify hearing expectations beforehand.

- Identify major investigative developments.

Before testimony:

- Listen carefully to each question.
- Pause briefly before answering if needed.
- Ask for clarification when necessary.
- Remain focused on the specific question asked.
- Keep responses professional and fact-based.

EFFECTIVE TESTIMONY PRACTICES

Strong testimony often includes:

- clear communication.
- calm responses.
- organized explanations.
- factual language.
- professional tone.
- thoughtful pacing.

Helpful communication habits:

- speak slowly and clearly.
- use verbal responses instead of nodding.
- avoid interrupting.
- remain respectful throughout questioning.
- stay focused during testimony.

IMPORTANT TESTIMONY REMINDERS

During testimony:

- Answer only the question asked.
- Avoid volunteering unnecessary information.
- Do not guess or speculate.
- Stay within the scope of your knowledge.
- Separate observations from assumptions.
- Maintain professionalism during difficult questioning.

If you do not know or remember something:

- state that honestly.
 - avoid estimating or assuming.
-

COMMUNICATION UNDER PRESSURE

Courtroom questioning may involve:

- repeated questions.
- rapid questioning.
- attempts to challenge credibility.
- emotionally difficult topics.
- pressure regarding decisions or recommendations.

During difficult questioning:

- remain calm.
- avoid defensiveness.
- maintain professional tone.
- focus on facts and observations.
- allow attorneys to finish speaking before responding.

MAINTAINING CREDIBILITY DURING TESTIMONY

Professional credibility is strengthened through:

- preparation
- organization
- consistency
- professionalism
- accurate communication
- composure during questioning

Credibility may be weakened by:

- exaggeration
- speculation
- argumentative behavior
- inconsistent statements
- emotional overreaction
- disorganized communication

WORKING WITH OCC BEFORE TESTIMONY

Specialists should communicate with OCC regarding:

- major case concerns.
- agency recommendations.
- difficult facts within the case.
- chronology clarification.

- documentation questions.
- anticipated testimony areas.

Preparation with OCC helps:

- improve organization.
- strengthen courtroom readiness.
- clarify legal issues before hearings.
- improve confidence during testimony.

COMMON COURTROOM COMMUNICATION MISTAKES

Avoid:

- talking too quickly.
- interrupting attorneys.
- arguing during questioning.
- giving lengthy unrelated explanations.
- volunteering extra details unnecessarily.
- answering questions you do not fully understand.

Instead:

- listen carefully.
- answer thoughtfully.
- remain concise when appropriate.
- ask for clarification if needed.
- stay professional throughout proceedings.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Testimony requires preparation and organization.
- Courtroom communication differs from normal conversation.
- Listening carefully is critical during questioning.
- Professional demeanor affects credibility.
- Preparation supports confidence and courtroom effectiveness.
- Specialists should communicate factually, clearly, and professionally.