

Investigations

Day 8 - Facilitator Guide



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

Before You Train

Facilitator Resources – Day 8

Materials and Handouts

- Name Tents
- Markers, Pens, Highlighters
- Sticky Notes
- Giant Sticky Note Pad
- Printed Participant Manuals
- Blank paper

DCFS Entry Level Competencies

- | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| • 100-1 | • 101-5 | • 102-6 |
| • 100-2 | • 102-1 | • 104-4 |
| • 101-4 | • 102-4 | |

DCFS Forms and Publications

- n/a

DCFS Policy And Internal Procedures

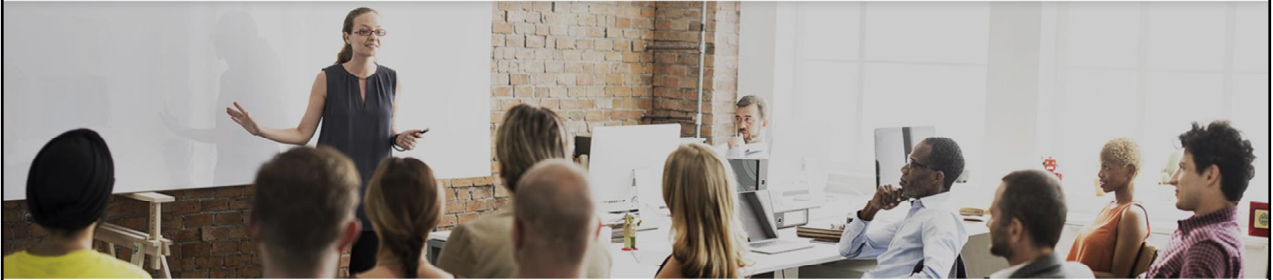
- n/a

Day 8 Sources

- n/a

Investigations

Specialty Training



MidSOUTH
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, HEALTH,
AND HUMAN SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

Day 8

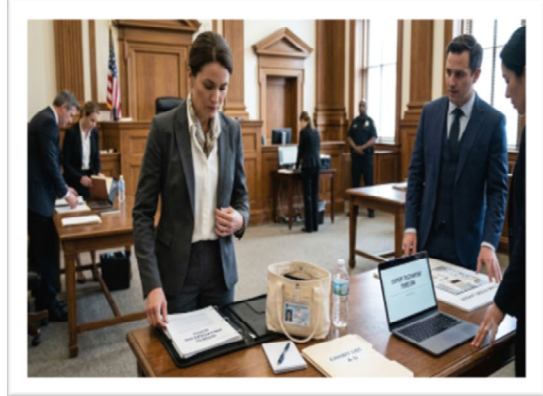
WEEK 8, DAY 8 – INVESTIGATIONS SPECIALTY TRAINING



Understanding Courtroom Expectations

UNDERSTANDING COURTROOM EXPECTATIONS

Preparing for Professional Courtroom Participation



PREPARING FOR PROFESSIONAL COURTROOM PARTICIPATION

Time: 3 Minutes

Purpose: To prepare Specialists to understand courtroom expectations, communicate effectively in formal legal proceedings, clearly explain investigative decisions, and maintain professionalism when responding to legal questions and participating in dependency-neglect hearings

Say:

Throughout Day 7, you focused heavily on preparing legal documentation and understanding how investigative information is communicated within affidavits. Today, you will shift your focus to what happens after legal documentation enters the courtroom environment. Court involvement introduces a very different professional setting than field investigations. You will be expected to communicate in structured legal proceedings involving Judges, Attorneys, OCC representatives, Court personnel, Caregivers, family members, and multiple Division partners.

Paraphrase:

Unlike field conversations or staffing discussions, courtroom communication occurs within highly formal environments where time may be limited, questions may be directed and highly specific, and communication must remain professional and controlled.

- Specialists may be asked to explain complex investigative decisions clearly and concisely. Understanding courtroom expectations helps Specialists prepare for

participation in hearings, professional communication under pressure, explaining investigative actions, responding appropriately to legal questioning, and maintaining professionalism during emotionally charged proceedings.

- Throughout Day 8, participants will examine how dependency-neglect hearings function, what judges and attorneys expect from Specialists, how to prepare for courtroom participation, how investigative information is communicated verbally in legal settings, and how professionalism and preparation contribute to courtroom credibility.

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.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To introduce Specialists to the progression of dependency-neglect proceedings, including probable cause, adjudication, disposition, review, and permanency planning hearings, and to help Specialists understand how hearing purpose, timing, and evidentiary expectations affect their courtroom participation

Say:

This day is designed to help you begin thinking about how investigative work is presented and discussed once cases move into formal legal proceedings. Before discussing testimony preparation, let's first examine how dependency-neglect hearings are structured and what Specialists should expect once cases enter the courtroom process.

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will:

- 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.

Dependency-Neglect Hearing Structure

Disposition: Court determines what actions DCFS will take in the case.	Probable Cause: Court determines whether probable cause exists to support continued protective custody.
Review: Court assesses case progress, safety, services, placement, and permanency.	Adjudication: Court determines whether allegations are substantiated by a preponderance-of-the-evidence.
Permanency Planning: Court determines or reassess the child's permanency goal.	

DEPENDENCY-NEGLECT HEARING STRUCTURE

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To prepare Specialists for their roles in the dependency- neglect court process by helping them understand the purpose of each hearing, recognize key hearing time frames, and identify how their role and the information they provide may change at each stage of the case

Say:

Before we focus on courtroom professionalism and testimony, it is important to understand where those skills fit within the dependency-neglect court process. Dependency-neglect cases may involve several different types of hearings as the case progresses. Each hearing serves a different purpose, and the information the court needs from a Specialist may change depending on the stage of the case.

Paraphrase:

A probable cause hearing occurs early in the court process and addresses whether probable cause exists to support the court's actions regarding the child's safety and custody. The case may then proceed to adjudication.

At adjudication, the court determines whether the allegations in the petition are substantiated by a preponderance-of-the-evidence. Generally, the adjudication hearing is held within 30 days after the probable cause hearing. Following adjudication, the court may

address disposition, which determines what actions DCFS will take in the case.

As the case continues, review hearings allow the court to assess the child's safety and well-being, case plan and service progress, placement, and movement toward permanency. The first six-month review must occur no later than six months from the child's original out-of-home placement.

The case may also proceed to a permanency planning hearing, where the court determines or reassesses the child's permanency goal. A permanency planning hearing must occur no later than 12 months after the child is considered to have entered foster care.

Say:

The important point is that there is not one generic "dependency-neglect hearing." The purpose of the hearing matters. As Specialists, you need to know what hearing you are attending, what the court is addressing at that stage, and what information you may be expected to provide. That understanding helps you prepare your documentation, anticipate questions, and provide testimony that is relevant to the matter before the court. Now that we have established the basic structure of the dependency-neglect court process, let's look at what Specialists should expect when they participate in those proceedings and how professional courtroom behavior can affect their credibility.

Key Points: (ensure these are covered)

These are the key time frames.

- Adjudication: generally within 30 days of probable cause
- Review: first review no later than 6 months after original out-of-home placement
- Permanency Planning: no later than 12 months after the child enters foster care
- The policy specifically identifies adjudication following probable cause and establishes the preponderance standard; it also describes disposition, six-month reviews, and permanency-planning timeframes.

What Specialists Should Expect During Court Proceedings

WHAT SPECIALISTS SHOULD EXPECT DURING COURT PROCEEDINGS

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how dependency-neglect hearings typically progress, how courtroom participants interact throughout proceedings, and where Specialists may become involved during hearings

Participant Manual: Courtroom Expectations & Hearing Structure

Facilitator Note:

This is a group discussion. Ensure participants refer to the Courtroom Expectations & Hearing Structure page in their participant manuals throughout the discussion.

Activity Instructions:

Dependency-neglect hearing progression includes:

Probable cause, adjudication, disposition, review, and permanency planning hearings. We will now discuss the primary purpose of each stage and how your preparation and participation may differ depending on the type of hearing.

As a group, review and discuss the following:

- Typical dependency-neglect hearing progression.
- Who participates during hearings?
- When Specialists may be called to participate or testify.

- How courtroom proceedings are structured.
- What courtroom interactions may look like during a hearing.

As you review, identify:

- The roles of courtroom participants.
- How information moves through the hearing process.
- Where Specialists may contribute during proceedings.

Say:

When you discuss dependency-neglect hearings, remember that these proceedings follow a structured legal process that may differ significantly from the field interactions and internal staffing discussions you are accustomed to. As you participate in court proceedings, you will be in a formal, controlled environment where you are expected to follow established legal procedures, courtroom protocol, and the judge's direction.

Paraphrase:

During a hearing, you may observe attorneys presenting arguments, witnesses being questioned, judges directing the proceedings, the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) presenting Division recommendations, and parents or caregivers responding to questions or court concerns. Multiple professionals may participate in the same hearing, each serving a specific role within the legal process.

Unlike case staffings or multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings, courtroom communication typically occurs one speaker at a time and follows a structured process directed by the judge. As a Specialist, you should not expect to speak freely throughout the hearing. Instead, you may be asked to answer questions, respond to the court, provide testimony, or clarify investigative information when requested.

Court hearings also tend to move quickly. Judges and attorneys are often balancing multiple cases, legal deadlines, hearing schedules, evidentiary issues, and procedural requirements. As a result, courtroom communication is generally more formal, direct, and structured than many other professional interactions.

Your level of involvement will vary depending on the type and purpose of the hearing. At different stages of a dependency-neglect case, the court may be focused on probable cause, adjudication, disposition, case progress and review, or permanency planning. The information you are asked to provide should relate to the issue before the court at that stage of the case.

For example, your participation may involve explaining investigative actions and findings, responding to questions about case documentation and chronology, providing information about current safety concerns, discussing case progress and services, or explaining Division recommendations.

Understanding the purpose of the specific hearing helps you determine what information you need to review and what you may be asked to explain or provide during the proceeding.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- How does courtroom communication differ from field or staffing conversations?
- Why are courtroom proceedings more structured than other professional settings?
- What types of professionals may participate during dependency-neglect hearings?
- Why might hearing expectations vary depending on the stage of the case?
- How can understanding courtroom flow help Specialists prepare professionally?
- How might a Specialist's preparation differ depending on the type of hearing?

Facilitator Answers:

- Formal communication structure.
- Judicial control of proceedings.
- Limited opportunities to speak freely.
- Participation by multiple legal professionals.
- Different hearing purposes depending on case progression.
- Courtrooms operate under formal legal procedures.
- Specialist participation varies depending on the hearing type.
- Understanding hearing structure improves courtroom readiness.
- Preparation should be guided by the purpose of the hearing, the information the court is addressing, and the Specialist's role in providing relevant case information or testimony.

Facilitator Notes:

- Reinforce that the courtroom operates differently from investigative and field environments.
- Emphasize that a Specialist's level of participation may vary depending on the type and purpose of the hearing. Use this discussion to transition into courtroom professionalism and testimony preparation.
- Throughout the discussion, keep participants focused on hearing progression, courtroom structure, legal procedures, professional participation, and courtroom expectations.

Say:

Now that we've examined how dependency-neglect hearings typically operate, let's shift into discussing the professional behaviors and courtroom practices that help Specialists present themselves effectively during legal proceedings.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Dependency-neglect hearings follow structured legal procedures.
- Courtroom communication is formal and judge-directed.
- Specialist participation varies depending on the purpose of the hearing and case stage.

- Understanding courtroom flow improves preparation and professionalism.

Presentation During Legal Proceedings



PRESENTATION DURING LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how courtroom demeanor, communication habits, preparation, and professional conduct influence judicial perception and witness credibility during dependency-neglect proceedings

Participant Manual: Courtroom Expectations & Hearing Structure

Activity Instructions:

As a group, review and discuss the following:

- Professional expectations for courtroom behavior.
- Expectations for communicating as a witness.
- Behaviors that strengthen or weaken credibility in the courtroom.
- How courtroom demeanor influences perception.
- Why professionalism is important during testimony.
- How communication habits can affect credibility.

As you discuss, consider:

- Appropriate responses during questioning.
- The impact of professional body language, tone, and demeanor.
- Behaviors that may unintentionally create a negative impression in the courtroom.

Say:

As you participate in a dependency-neglect hearing, remember that courtroom professionalism involves much more than answering questions correctly. Judges, attorneys, and other legal professionals will observe how you conduct yourself throughout the hearing. Pay attention to your demeanor, preparedness, communication style, ability to remain professional under pressure, attentiveness, and interactions with others in the courtroom.

Remember that small behaviors can influence your professional credibility during legal proceedings. Speak clearly and at a pace that allows the court reporter to accurately capture your testimony. Avoid interrupting the judge or an attorney, and remain professional if you disagree or feel challenged. Provide accurate information without exaggeration, and answer only what is asked unless additional information is necessary. Avoid volunteering unnecessary information that could create confusion or complications during the hearing.

Paraphrase:

As you participate in a courtroom hearing, demonstrate professionalism by listening carefully before responding, answering questions clearly and directly, remaining calm during difficult questioning, maintaining respectful communication, and demonstrating confidence without becoming defensive. Use professional body language and an appropriate tone throughout the hearing.

Remember that courtroom communication may differ from everyday conversation. Periods of silence may feel longer, questions may be more direct or intense, and attorneys may intentionally repeat questions. You can take a brief pause before answering. Keep your responses concise and direct, rather than providing unnecessary, lengthy explanations.

When you are in the courtroom, remember that you are representing yourself professionally, the Department, the integrity of your investigation, and the reliability of the Division's documentation and recommendations.

By demonstrating professionalism throughout the hearing, you show that you are organized, thoughtful, reliable, composed, and prepared to participate effectively in legal proceedings. These behaviors strengthen your credibility and help the court receive your testimony and investigative information with confidence.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- What courtroom behaviors may unintentionally weaken credibility?
- Why is composure important during testimony?
- How does courtroom communication differ from everyday conversation?
- Why might concise answers be more effective during hearings?
- How can professional demeanor influence judicial perception?

Facilitator Answers:

- Interrupting others
- Speaking too quickly
- Becoming defensive
- Volunteering unnecessary information
- Poor body language
- Emotional reactions during questioning
- Courtroom demeanor affects professional credibility
- Communication habits influence perception
- Professional conduct supports effective testimony

Facilitator Note:

- Reinforce that courtroom professionalism encompasses both behavior and communication.
- Emphasize that professional conduct begins as soon as a Specialist enters the courtroom—not just when testimony begins.
- Use this discussion to transition into preparing for testimony and responding to legal questioning.
- Throughout the discussion, keep participants focused on credibility, professional conduct, witness behavior, courtroom demeanor, and effective communication habits.

Say:

Now let's move on to discussing how Specialists prepare themselves before testimony and what steps help strengthen organization, confidence, and courtroom readiness before legal questioning.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Courtroom professionalism influences credibility and perception.
- Communication habits affect how testimony is received.
- Professional demeanor requires composure and attentiveness.
- Effective courtroom participation includes clear, respectful, and controlled communication.



Building Confidence Before Hearings

BUILDING CONFIDENCE BEFORE HEARINGS

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how effective courtroom preparation strengthens organization, confidence, communication, and overall readiness prior to testimony and hearing participation

Participant Manual: Courtroom Expectations & Hearing Structure

Facilitator Note:

If needed, have participants review prior Flowers' affidavit materials.

Activity Instructions:

Participants will need to review prior Flowers' affidavit materials if needed. As a group, discuss:

- What Specialists should review before appearing in court.
- How preparation contributes to courtroom confidence.
- Why organization is important before providing testimony.

As you discuss, consider:

- Reviewing the investigative chronology.
- Becoming familiar with case documentation.
- Preparing with the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC).

- Anticipating potential areas of questioning.
- Identifying challenging case facts before the hearing.

Conclude by reflecting on:

- What preparation habits can help reduce stress during testimony.
- How thorough preparation supports clear, professional communication in the courtroom.

Say:

Remember that your courtroom participation begins long before you enter the courtroom. Strong preparation helps you communicate clearly, remain organized during questioning, and participate more confidently throughout legal proceedings.

Before reviewing the case, first identify the specific type of hearing you are preparing for and what the court is addressing at that stage of the case. This will help you focus your preparation on the information most relevant to the proceeding.

As you prepare for court, review key case information, including the investigative chronology, major case developments, Division recommendations, documentation supporting your investigative decisions, significant statements or observations, and safety concerns identified throughout the investigation.

Preparation is especially important because you may be asked about events that occurred weeks earlier, across multiple contacts, during rapidly changing investigations, or during periods of high stress and crisis response. Take time to review the case beforehand so you can accurately recall important details and explain the investigation effectively.

Without adequate preparation, you may have difficulty recalling timelines, explaining the progression of the investigation, organizing your responses during questioning, or clearly communicating your recommendations to the court.

Paraphrase:

Strong preparation habits include reviewing documentation in advance, organizing notes chronologically, discussing major concerns with the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) before the hearing, identifying potential areas of questioning, and reviewing the investigative reasoning that supports Division actions.

Preparation also helps Specialists avoid common courtroom challenges, such as becoming flustered during questioning, confusing the sequence of events, overlooking important context, providing incomplete explanations, or appearing uncertain about investigative decisions.

Court preparation is not about memorizing scripted responses. Instead, preparation helps Specialists develop familiarity with the investigation, organize their thoughts, and build

confidence in the information they may be asked to discuss during legal proceedings.

Say:

Using the Flowers case as an example, review how the investigative concerns developed over time, why the Division's response changed as new information became available, what events influenced removal decisions, how documentation supported court action, and how the Division's recommendations aligned with the investigative findings.

Take time to thoroughly prepare so you can participate in legal proceedings with greater confidence, professionalism, and effectiveness.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- Why is courtroom preparation important before testimony?
- What information should Specialists review before hearings?
- How can preparation reduce courtroom stress?
- Why is chronology review important before testimony?
- How does preparation improve communication during questioning?

Facilitator Answers:

- Reviewing timelines
- Organizing documentation
- Preparing with OCC
- Identifying difficult questions
- Improving confidence before hearings
- Strengthening communication during testimony
- Preparation improves courtroom readiness
- Organization supports clearer testimony
- Familiarity with documentation strengthens confidence

Facilitator Note:

- Reinforce that thorough preparation strengthens your courtroom participation by helping you remain organized, confident, and prepared to respond effectively.
- Clarify that preparation is not about memorizing responses. Instead, focus on becoming familiar with your case information and organizing your thoughts before providing testimony.
- Use this discussion to transition into testimony preparation and legal questioning in Section 2. Throughout the discussion, keep the focus on your readiness, organization, confidence, preparation habits, and professional courtroom communication.

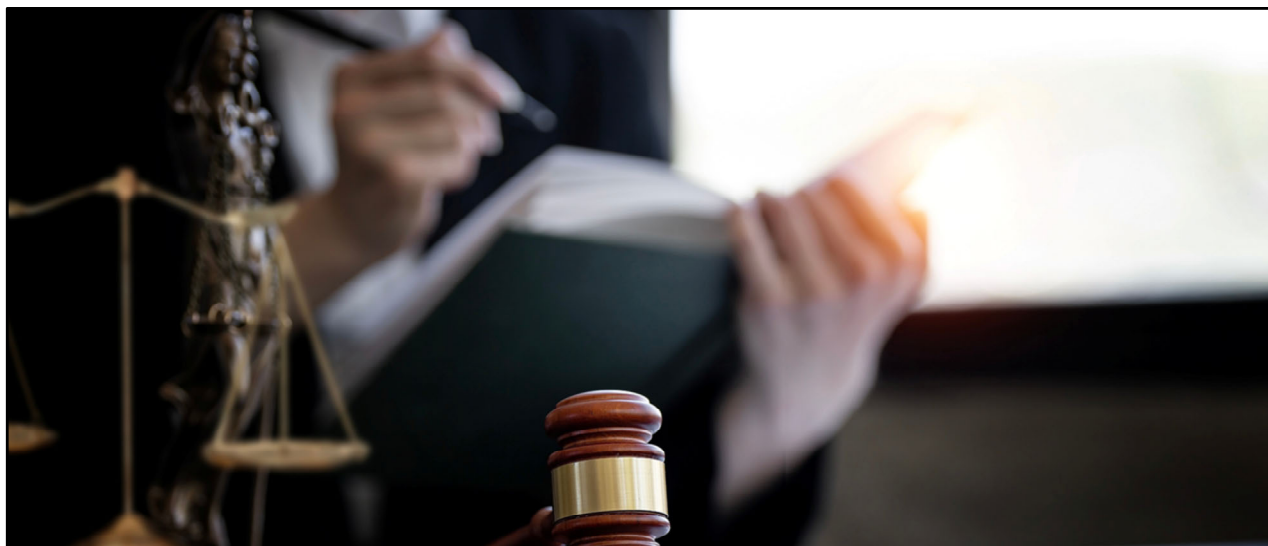
Say:

We are now transitioning to Section 2, where we will focus more directly on testimony preparation, legal questioning, and how Specialists communicate investigative information during courtroom examination.

You now have a basic understanding of how dependency-neglect proceedings progress and how the purpose of the hearing can affect the information you may be asked to provide. We will build on that foundation by focusing on how to communicate that information clearly, accurately, and professionally during testimony.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Court preparation begins before entering the courtroom.
- Reviewing chronology and documentation supports effective testimony.
- Preparation improves confidence and organization.
- Strong courtroom readiness supports professional communication during hearings.



Preparing for Testimony & Legal Questioning

PREPARING FOR TESTIMONY & LEGAL QUESTIONING

Communicating Effectively During Testimony



COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY DURING TESTIMONY

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To prepare Specialists to communicate effectively during courtroom testimony by responding to questions clearly and accurately, explaining investigative findings in an organized manner, and maintaining professionalism throughout legal proceedings

Say:

In Section 1, we focused on courtroom structure, hearing expectations, professional conduct, and the preparation Specialists complete before entering legal proceedings. Section 2 builds on that foundation by shifting the focus to the communication process that occurs when Specialists begin responding to questions during courtroom examination.

Testimony requires you to communicate investigative information verbally in a way that is organized, understandable, professional, and factually accurate. Unlike written documentation, testimony requires you to think and respond in real time while remaining focused on the question being asked, courtroom procedures, the accuracy of the information provided, and the expectations for professional communication.

Throughout this section, you will examine how to communicate effectively during testimony, including how to prepare before entering the courtroom, how attorneys structure questioning, how to clearly explain investigative information, and how to avoid

common communication challenges during legal proceedings.

It is important to view testimony as a professional communication skill, not simply as answering questions. Effective testimony requires you to listen carefully, organize your thoughts, provide clear and direct responses, maintain professionalism, and remain focused throughout questioning.

This section is designed to help you develop courtroom communication habits that support effective participation in dependency-neglect proceedings.

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.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To introduce participants to testimony preparation practices, legal questioning expectations, and communication strategies that support effective courtroom participation during dependency-neglect proceedings

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

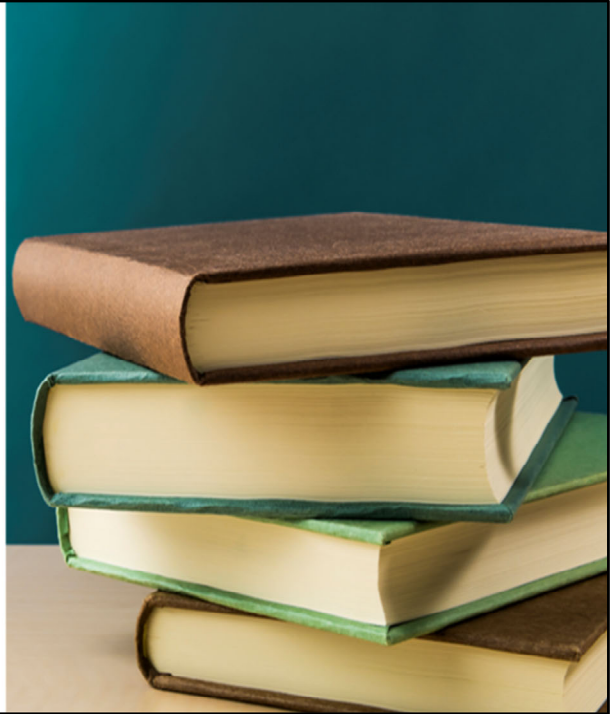
- Understand how testimony preparation and communication habits influence courtroom effectiveness during legal questioning.
- Apply professional communication strategies and testimony preparation practices to courtroom participation.
- Assess how organization, listening skills, and response style affect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

Say:

For this next assignment, you will need to utilize your Flowers' affidavit materials during the courtroom connection activities.

Before discussing difficult questioning and courtroom pressure, let's first examine how testimony is typically structured and how attorneys often guide questioning during hearings.

How Attorneys Guide Testimony During Hearings



HOW ATTORNEYS GUIDE TESTIMONY DURING HEARINGS

Time: 18 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand how attorneys structure courtroom questioning, how testimony is guided during hearings, and how Specialists can respond effectively during direct examination

Participant Manual: Testimony Preparation & Legal Questioning

Activity Instructions:

Review and discuss the following:

- How direct examination is structured
- How attorneys organize questioning strategically
- How Specialists are guided through the testimony process

Discuss the following:

- The differences between open-ended and focused questions
- Why attorneys may organize testimony in a chronological sequence
- How courtroom questioning differs from investigative interviewing

Consider:

- How Specialists can remain attentive and engaged throughout questioning.
- The importance of listening carefully before responding.
- How communication style impacts clarity and effectiveness during testimony.

Say:

During courtroom testimony, you will often be guided through information using carefully structured questions. Direct examination is designed to help the court understand what occurred during your investigation, how information developed over time, what actions you took, what observations supported Division concerns, and how you reached investigative decisions.

Remember that courtroom questioning differs from everyday conversation. The questions are intentional, organized, and focused on presenting information in a way that supports the court's understanding of the case. Attorneys may structure your testimony to establish a clear timeline, explain the progression of your investigation, introduce supporting documentation, clarify Division recommendations, and organize information for judicial review.

Paraphrase:

During direct examination, attorneys often use open-ended questions that allow Specialists to provide detailed explanations. These questions may begin with phrases such as:

- "Can you explain..."
- "What occurred after..."
- "What actions did you take..."
- "What concerns were identified..."
- "Describe the Department's response..."

These types of questions are intended to help Specialists provide organized responses rather than brief yes-or-no answers.

Attorneys may guide testimony through different areas of the investigation, including the investigative timeline, safety concerns, interviews and contacts, Division decisions, removal actions, and recommendations made to the court.

Because courtroom questioning is structured intentionally, Specialists should listen carefully to each question before responding. Take time to understand what is being asked and provide a response that directly addresses the question.

Courtroom questioning also differs from investigative interviewing. During an investigation, Specialists often lead conversations by asking questions and gathering information. During testimony, Specialists are responding to questions within a legal process. Responses should remain focused on the question asked, provide accurate information, and support the official court record.

Understanding how attorneys structure questioning helps Specialists better prepare for testimony and communicate investigative information clearly and professionally.

Say:

Effective testimony often depends on the Specialist's ability to:

- ***Remain attentive***
- ***Answer clearly***
- ***Organize thoughts before speaking***
- ***Communicate professionally***
- ***Avoid becoming distracted by courtroom pressure or pace***

Understanding how questioning is structured helps Specialists participate more confidently and communicate investigative information more effectively during hearings.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- Why do attorneys structure questioning carefully during direct examination?
- How does courtroom questioning differ from investigative interviewing?
- Why is listening carefully important before responding?
- What types of questions are commonly used during direct examination?
- How can Specialists communicate more effectively during testimony?

Facilitator Answers:

- Chronological questioning.
- Open-ended questioning.
- Structured testimony progression.
- Focused legal communication.
- Organized presentation of investigative information.
- Attorneys guide testimony strategically.
- Courtroom questioning differs from field conversations.
- Listening carefully improves testimony effectiveness.

Facilitator Notes

- Reinforce that attorneys guide testimony strategically during hearings through structured questioning.
- Clarify that Specialists should focus on listening carefully and responding directly to the question asked rather than anticipating future questions.
- Use this discussion to connect testimony communication strategies with navigating difficult questioning.
- Throughout the discussion, maintain focus on direct examination, questioning structure, courtroom communication, listening skills, and organized testimony.

Say:

Now let's focus more specifically on communication strategies that help Specialists answer questions clearly, remain organized during testimony, and avoid common courtroom communication difficulties.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Direct examination is structured intentionally by attorneys.
- Open-ended questioning allows fuller explanation during testimony.
- Courtroom communication requires focused listening and organized responses.
- Understanding the structure of questioning improves courtroom participation and communication.



Communicating Clearly & Effectively During Testimony

COMMUNICATING CLEARLY & EFFECTIVELY DURING TESTIMONY

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants strengthen courtroom communication by practicing clear verbal responses, organized explanations, and communication habits that support effective testimony during legal proceedings

Participant Manual: Testimony Preparation & Legal Questioning

Activity Instructions:

Participants should reference their Testimony Preparation & Legal Questioning notes page throughout the activity. The facilitator will provide examples of courtroom communication to support discussion and application.

Participants will review:

- Communication habits that support effective testimony.
- Common courtroom communication challenges.
- Strategies for improving verbal clarity during questioning.

The group will discuss:

- How organizing responses impacts understanding.
- Why concise communication can improve the effectiveness of testimony.
- How pacing, tone, and delivery influence courtroom communication.

Participants will also consider:

- Strategies for avoiding rambling or disorganized responses.
- Ways to maintain focus during extended questioning.
- How to communicate investigative information in clear, understandable language.

Say:

Strong testimony depends not only on what you know, but also on how clearly you communicate that information during questioning. In the courtroom, you are often required to organize your thoughts quickly while responding in a professional, understandable manner.

One challenge you may experience during testimony is providing responses that become overly lengthy, difficult to follow, disorganized, or unclear regarding the main point you are trying to communicate. When responses are too broad or unfocused, important information can be harder for the court to understand and may create confusion about the issue at hand.

Effective testimony communication requires you to listen fully before responding, identify the specific question being asked, briefly organize your thoughts, present information in manageable pieces, and remain focused on the topic under discussion.

Paraphrase:

You should also be mindful of communication habits that may unintentionally reduce clarity during testimony, such as speaking too quickly, using excessive investigative jargon, combining multiple unrelated topics in a single response, providing unnecessary background information, or straying from the original question.

Clear communication is especially important in the courtroom because hearings may move quickly, multiple individuals are listening at the same time, court reporters must accurately capture your responses, attorneys may build additional questions from previous answers, and judges are often processing a large amount of information within a limited timeframe.

During testimony, your goal is to help the court understand:

- What occurred.
- Why actions were taken.
- What information guided decisions.
- How investigative concerns developed.
- What observations or findings supported the Division's response.

Remember, effective testimony does not require complicated language. In many situations, your testimony is stronger when you communicate in straightforward language, with organized explanations, calm, measured responses, and professional pacing.

Clear communication helps ensure your testimony remains focused, understandable, and easier for the court to follow throughout questioning.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- What communication habits may make testimony harder to follow?
- Why is organization important when answering courtroom questions?
- How can pacing affect courtroom communication?
- Why should Specialists avoid combining multiple topics within one response?
- How does clear communication support judicial understanding?

Facilitator Answers:

- Rambling responses
- Speaking too quickly
- Unclear explanations
- Excessive jargon
- Overloading responses with unnecessary detail
- Poor organization during questioning
- Organized communication improves testimony clarity
- Clear responses help the court follow information more effectively
- Controlled pacing supports professionalism and understanding

Facilitator Note:

- Reinforce that the effectiveness of testimony is strongly influenced by the quality of communication.
- Clarify that clear, simple, and well-organized responses are often more effective than overly technical language or lengthy explanations.
- Use this discussion to connect communication strategies with managing difficult questioning and maintaining composure during courtroom pressure.
- Throughout the discussion, maintain focus on response organization, clarity, pacing, communication habits, and effective testimony.

Say:

Now let's examine how Specialists can manage difficult questioning situations while maintaining professionalism, composure, and effective communication during courtroom examination.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Effective testimony requires clear, organized communication.
- Response clarity supports courtroom understanding.
- Controlled pacing and focused explanations improve the effectiveness of testimony.
- Communication habits influence how information is received during hearings.

Managing Difficult Questions

MANAGING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants develop professional response strategies for difficult courtroom questioning while maintaining composure, credibility, and effective communication during testimony

Participant Manual: Testimony Preparation & Legal Questioning

Activity Instructions:

Participants will review:

- Common types of difficult courtroom questions
- Communication strategies for responding during high-pressure questioning
- Behaviors that help maintain professionalism during challenging courtroom exchanges

The group will discuss:

- Why attorneys may repeat or rephrase questions
- How emotional reactions can affect testimony
- Why Specialists should remain focused on facts and observations when responding

Participants will also consider:

- How to respond when asked to speculate
- Strategies for handling confusing or compound questions
- Ways to maintain professionalism during confrontational interactions

Say:

Difficult courtroom questioning is often intended to evaluate your consistency, credibility, organization, and professional composure during testimony. Challenging questions do not necessarily mean you have done something wrong. In many cases, attorneys are trying to clarify details, explore inconsistencies, challenge conclusions, test the reliability of the information presented, or evaluate how well you understand the case.

During testimony, you may encounter repeated questions, rapid questioning, emotionally charged questions, questions that focus on small inconsistencies, or attempts to encourage oversimplified answers. These situations can feel uncomfortable, especially when you are discussing difficult investigations or emotionally sensitive circumstances.

One of the most important courtroom skills you can develop is the ability to remain calm and professional, even when questioning feels stressful or confrontational. Effective response strategies include allowing the attorney to finish the question before responding, taking a brief pause to organize your thoughts, answering calmly and directly, staying focused on facts and observations, avoiding defensive or argumentative responses, and asking for clarification if a question is confusing or unclear.

It is equally important to be honest when you do not know the answer or cannot recall specific information. Saying, "I don't recall," or "I don't know," when appropriate, demonstrates honesty, supports your credibility, and reflects ethical courtroom testimony. Avoid feeling pressured to speculate or guess simply because an answer is expected.

Remember that not every question requires a lengthy explanation. Often, the most effective response is concise, factual, controlled, and limited to the information requested.

Paraphrase:

When you begin arguing, speculating, exaggerating, reacting emotionally, or volunteering unnecessary information, your testimony can become less effective and more difficult for the court to follow.

By remaining calm, listening carefully, and responding with clear, fact-based answers, you strengthen your credibility and help the court better understand your testimony. Within courtroom environments, professionalism is often demonstrated through:

- Composure under pressure.
- Thoughtful communication.
- Emotional regulation.
- Attentiveness during questioning.
- Willingness to answer difficult questions professionally.

Specialists should remember that maintaining professionalism during difficult questioning often strengthens credibility more effectively than attempting to “win” the interaction or

argue with opposing counsel.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- Why might attorneys intentionally repeat or rephrase questions?
- How can emotional reactions affect testimony?
- Why is speculation risky during courtroom questioning?
- How can Specialists respond professionally during confrontational exchanges?
- Why may concise responses sometimes be more effective during difficult questioning?

Facilitator Answers:

- Pressure to overexplain.
- Emotional reactions.
- Defensive responses.
- Confusing questions.
- Attempts to challenge credibility.
- Difficulty remaining calm under stress.
- Difficult questioning is part of legal proceedings.
- Professional composure strengthens credibility.
- Focused factual responses improve courtroom communication.

Facilitator Note:

- Emphasize that difficult questioning is a normal part of courtroom proceedings and should not be viewed as personal.
- Clarify that Specialists should remain focused on the facts, rather than becoming argumentative or defensive.
- Use this discussion to transition into the courtroom simulation activities later in Day 8.
- Throughout the discussion, maintain focus on professional composure, response strategies, credibility, emotional regulation, and effective courtroom communication.

Say:

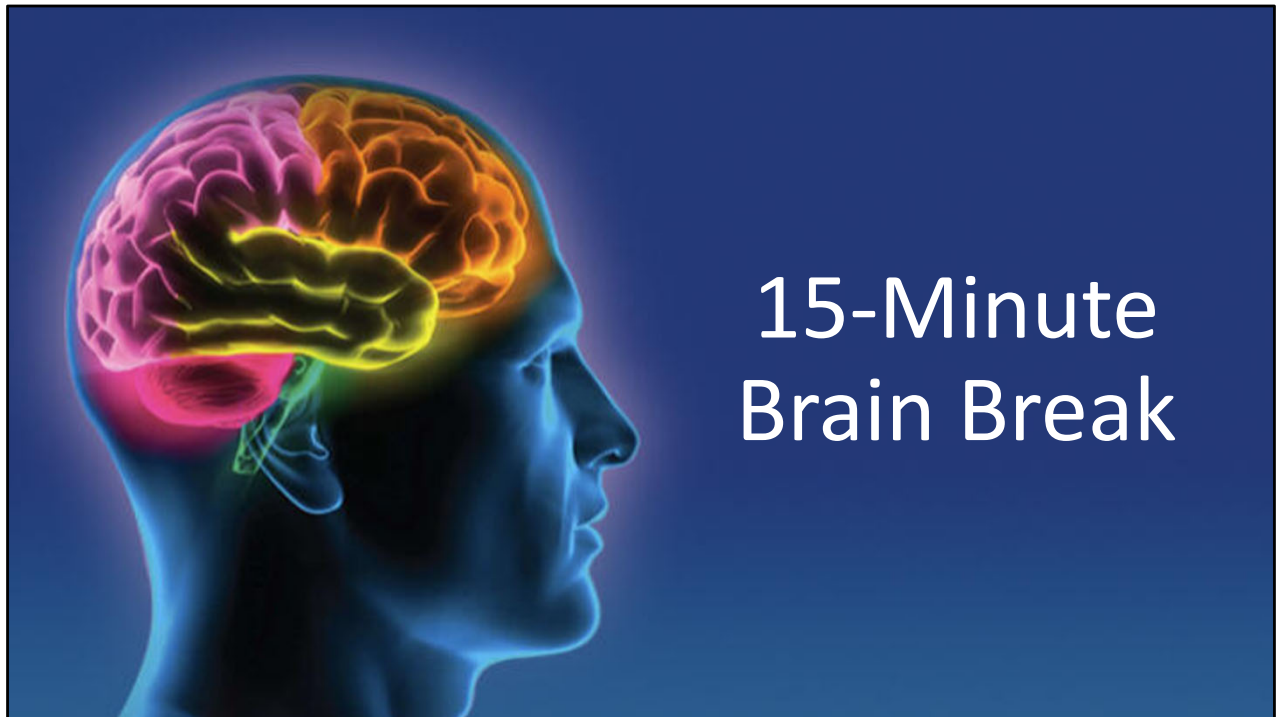
Now, focus on how you explain your investigative reasoning, support Division actions, and respond to more challenging courtroom examinations related to safety decisions, removal actions, and professional judgment.

This next portion of the day will move beyond general testimony preparation and focus more specifically on:

- ***articulating investigative rationale.***
- ***responding under pressure.***
- ***defending professional decisions.***
- ***maintaining credibility during cross-examination.***
- ***communicating investigative judgment within adversarial courtroom situations.***

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Difficult questioning is common during courtroom proceedings.
- Professional composure supports credibility and communication effectiveness.
- Focused factual responses help maintain clarity during testimony.
- Emotional regulation strengthens courtroom professionalism.



15-Minute Brain Break

BRAIN BREAK



Defending Investigative Decisions

DEFENDING INVESTIGATIVE DECISIONS

Communicating the Division's Responsibilities



COMMUNICATING THE Division's RESPONSIBILITIES

Time: 3 Minutes

Purpose: To prepare Specialists to clearly communicate and support their investigative decisions during courtroom proceedings by explaining the basis for their professional judgment, connecting decisions to available evidence and policy, and responding appropriately to adversarial legal questioning

Say:

In this section, you will examine how to clearly communicate your professional judgment in ways that are organized, factually supported, professionally reasoned, and appropriate for a courtroom setting.

You will need to have your Flowers' affidavit and testimony materials handy. This afternoon, you will focus on one of the more challenging aspects of courtroom participation: explaining and supporting investigative decisions during adversarial legal questioning.

Throughout an investigation, you make professional judgments about child safety, risk assessment, removal decisions, protective actions, investigative direction, and recommendations to the court. These decisions are based on the information available to you at the time and are guided by policy, evidence, and professional judgment.

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.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To introduce participants to professional decision-defense strategies, courtroom explanation of investigative judgment, and communication approaches used when Division actions are challenged during legal proceedings

Paraphrase:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

- 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.

Say:

Once your case enters legal proceedings, your decisions may be closely examined by judges, attorneys, legal representatives, opposing parties, and other professionals involved in the case. You may be asked to explain why you took certain actions, why decisions were made when they were, whether you considered other options, how you evaluated the information available, and whether the Division's response was reasonable and appropriate.

You will also explore strategies for maintaining professionalism when your decisions are challenged, your investigative actions are questioned, your recommendations are criticized, or attorneys focus on perceived weaknesses or inconsistencies in your case.

Explaining Safety & Removal Decisions In Court



EXPLAINING SAFETY & REMOVAL DECISIONS IN COURT

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants practice explaining safety concerns, removal rationale, and Division response in ways that are professionally reasoned, factually grounded, and understandable during courtroom examination.

Participant Manual: Defending Investigative Decisions & Cross-Examination

Activity Instructions:

Participants will review as a group:

- How Specialists explain safety concerns during testimony.
- How removal decisions are explained in the courtroom.
- How Division actions are connected to investigative findings.

The group will discuss:

- Why organized reasoning is essential when explaining investigative decisions.
- How to communicate evolving safety concerns throughout an investigation.
- How to explain why the Division intervention escalated over time.

Participants will also consider:

- Strategies for explaining the progression of an investigation professionally.
- How to connect decisions to observable facts and documented information.
- How to avoid emotional or defensive responses during courtroom questioning.

When you participate in courtroom proceedings, you may be asked to explain the reasoning behind your decisions to intervene or remove a child. Judges and attorneys are evaluating not only the actions you took, but also how you interpreted the information available throughout the investigation.

As you explain safety and removal decisions, you should be prepared to describe:

- *The safety concerns that existed.*
- *How those concerns developed or changed over time.*
- *Why the Division's level of concern increased.*
- *What information influenced your decision-making.*
- *Why specific interventions become necessary.*

Remember that many investigative decisions are not based on a single event. Instead, they are the result of an evolving situation. You may need to explain how multiple concerns accumulated, how caregiver behavior changed over time, how protective capacities diminished, how supervision concerns escalated, and how the Division's assessment evolved as new information emerged.

Using the Flowers case as an example, you could be asked questions such as:

- *Why did removal become necessary when it did?*
- *What developments increased the urgency of the situation?*
- *Why did the Division determine that the child could no longer remain safely in the home?*
- *How did the investigative information support the decision to take protective custody?*
- *Why was continued court involvement necessary?*

Paraphrase:

As you respond, focus on helping the court understand the progression of the investigation, the observable information you gathered, your professional assessment process, the factual basis for the Division's response, and how your decisions were connected to child safety concerns.

Avoid explaining your decisions in ways that sound emotionally reactive, punitive, speculative, overly absolute, or argumentative. Instead, keep your testimony measured, factual, professionally reasoned, and organized around the investigative information.

Connect your explanations to the observed conditions, documented information, investigative findings, and the Division's assessment. Explain not only **what decision was made**, but also **how the investigation led to that decision over time**.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following and validate answers)

Why is investigative progression important when explaining removal decisions?

- How can Specialists explain changing safety concerns professionally?

- Why should courtroom explanations remain factually grounded?
- How can Specialists avoid sounding defensive or punitive during testimony?
- Why is it important to explain how the Division's assessment evolved over time?
- How can Specialists connect Division actions to the investigative information available at the time?

Facilitator Answers:

Listen for responses that identify:

- Escalating safety concerns.
- Changes in protective capacity.
- Evolving Division assessment.
- New or additional investigative information.
- Chronological explanation of intervention.
- Connection between facts, assessment, and action.
- Importance of factual and organized courtroom communication.

Facilitator Notes:

- Clarify that the court evaluates the professional reasoning behind Division decisions, not just the decisions themselves.
- Reinforce that Specialists should explain the progression of the investigation rather than simply state the outcome.
- Encourage participants to connect their explanations to observable facts, documented information, investigative findings, policy, and professional judgment.
- Help participants connect testimony preparation concepts to explaining investigative decisions during courtroom questioning.
- Maintain focus on safety explanation, removal rationale, investigative progression, professional judgment, and courtroom communication.

Say:

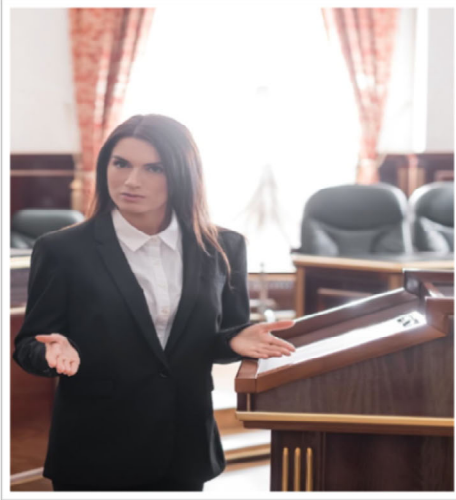
Now let's examine how Specialists explain investigative judgment more directly when attorneys begin to challenge decision-making, question professional conclusions, or focus on perceived weaknesses in the investigation.

As questioning becomes more challenging, remain focused on the facts and the reasoning behind your decisions. Rather than becoming defensive or argumentative, explain what you observed, what information you considered, how you assessed the circumstances, and why the Division responded as it did.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Courtroom explanations should connect decisions to investigative information.
- Removal rationale requires an organized and factual explanation.
- Investigative progression helps explain why Division intervention escalated.
- Specialists should explain how safety concerns and assessments evolved over time.
- Decision-defense requires factual support and organized communication.

- Professional courtroom communication should remain measured and non-defensive.



Defending Investigative Reasoning Under Scrutiny

DEFENDING INVESTIGATIVE REASONING UNDER SCRUTINY

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants strengthen their ability to explain investigative reasoning, articulate professional judgment, and respond effectively when attorneys challenge Division conclusions or investigative decisions during courtroom examination

Participant Manual: Defending Investigative Decisions & Cross-Examination

Activity Instructions:

This is a whole-group facilitated discussion. Participants should reference the Defending Investigative Decisions & Cross-Examination notes page throughout the activity. The facilitator will provide examples of courtroom challenges to support discussion and application.

Participants will review:

- How attorneys may challenge investigative reasoning.
- How Specialists explain professional judgment during adversarial questioning.
- Strategies for maintaining organized and effective courtroom responses.

The group will discuss:

- Why attorneys may focus on perceived weaknesses within an investigation.
- How Specialists explain decisions made during changing or evolving circumstances.

- Why courtroom explanations require thoughtful communication rather than defensive responses.

Participants will also consider:

- How to respond when investigative decisions are challenged aggressively
- How to explain why specific investigative steps or decisions were pursued
- How to communicate uncertainty appropriately while maintaining credibility

Say:

During adversarial courtroom examination, you may be asked to explain how you interpreted investigative information and reached professional conclusions throughout the case. These questions are often intended to explore whether Division decisions were reasonable, supported, and professionally justified based on the information available at the time.

Attorneys may challenge:

- *Why certain conclusions were reached.*
- *Why alternative interpretations were not accepted.*
- *Why specific investigative actions were taken.*
- *Whether the available information supported the Division's response.*
- *How conflicting information was evaluated during the investigation.*

Unlike basic factual testimony, these questions often focus on your professional judgment and how you interpreted the information available during the investigation.

One challenge you may experience is feeling pressure to defend every investigative action perfectly. However, explaining your decisions in court is not about presenting the investigation as flawless. Instead, your focus should be on explaining:

- *How decisions were made.*
- *What information guided your assessment.*
- *How investigative concerns were evaluated.*
- *Why the Division's response was appropriate based on the information available at the time.*

Paraphrase:

Using the Flowers case as an example, adversarial questioning could involve explaining why threats could not be safely managed in the home, how patterns of concern were identified, why certain caregiver explanations were considered insufficient, how ongoing conditions affected the Division's assessment, and why concerns remained elevated despite partial cooperation.

Attorneys may also attempt to simplify complex investigations by reducing them to narrow yes-or-no questions that do not fully capture the broader context. During these moments, it is important that you remain focused on the question being asked while also recognizing

when additional clarification is needed to provide an accurate response.

When responding to challenging questions, focus on:

- Answering accurately without overstating conclusions.
- Maintaining professional composure.
- Explaining your reasoning clearly.
- Acknowledging the complexity of investigative decisions.

Avoid communication habits that may weaken your credibility, such as becoming argumentative, overstating certainty, responding emotionally, personalizing courtroom challenges, or shifting into defensive communication.

Instead, effective courtroom explanations are supported by thoughtful responses, professional restraint, factual reasoning, acknowledgment of investigative complexity, and consistent explanations of Division assessment.

Your credibility is strengthened when you communicate your investigative judgment in a way that is balanced, measured, professional, factually supported, and grounded in observable information from the investigation.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- Why might attorneys challenge investigative conclusions during testimony?
- How can Specialists explain professional judgment without becoming defensive?
- Why is it important to acknowledge investigative complexity during courtroom examination?
- How can attorneys oversimplify complicated investigations during questioning?
- What communication habits strengthen credibility when professional judgment is challenged?

Facilitator Answers:

- Pressure to defend decisions emotionally.
- Oversimplification of investigations.
- Challenges regarding the interpretation of information.
- Questions about Division reasoning.
- Difficulty explaining evolving assessments.
- Courtroom scrutiny often focuses on professional judgment.
- Specialists should explain reasoning calmly and factually.
- Balanced communication strengthens courtroom credibility.

Facilitator Notes:

- Emphasize that courtroom challenges are a normal part of the legal examination process and are intended to evaluate investigative decisions and professional judgment.
- Clarify that Specialists are not expected to present investigations as perfect, but

rather explain how decisions were made based on the information available at the time.

- Use this discussion to transition into cross-examination response strategies.
- Throughout the discussion, maintain focus on investigative judgment, professional explanation, courtroom reasoning, adversarial questioning, and credibility.

Say:

Now let's move more directly into cross-examination strategies and discuss how Specialists can maintain professionalism, accuracy, and composure when courtroom questioning becomes more confrontational or pressure-focused.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Adversarial questioning often focuses on investigative reasoning and judgment.
- Specialists should explain decisions using factual investigative support.
- Professional restraint strengthens courtroom communication.
- Credibility is supported by a measured, well-organized explanation.



Managing Cross Examination & Challenging Questions

MANAGING CROSS-EXAMINATION & CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants develop practical courtroom response strategies for cross-examination while maintaining control, accuracy, professionalism, and credibility during pressure-based legal questioning

Participant Manual: Defending Investigative Decisions & Cross-Examination

Activity Instructions:

This is a whole-group facilitated discussion. Participants should reference the Defending Investigative Decisions & Cross-Examination notes page throughout the activity. The facilitator will guide a discussion on courtroom response strategies and provide examples of challenging questioning scenarios.

Participants will review:

- Common pressure tactics used during cross-examination.
- Professional response techniques for managing confrontational questioning.
- Strategies for maintaining control and composure during stressful exchanges.

The group will discuss:

- How attorneys may attempt to limit, redirect, or challenge responses.
- Why Specialists should avoid emotional reactions during testimony.

- How Specialists can maintain clarity when questioning becomes fast-paced or repetitive.

Participants will also practice identifying:

- Appropriate responses to misleading questions.
- Professional ways to address incomplete assumptions.
- Responses that demonstrate neutrality, professionalism, and credibility.

Say:

As you move into cross-examination, expect the dynamic to shift. Unlike direct examination, cross-examination often feels much faster, narrower, and far more strategically focused on testing you under pressure.

During this process, attorneys will often try to:

- ***Control the pace of the questioning***
- ***Interrupt your explanations or narrow your responses into simple yes-or-no answers***
- ***Emphasize inconsistencies and highlight any uncertainty***
- ***Challenge your recollection of specific details***
- ***Redirect attention toward your specific decisions or actions***

For many of you, the hardest part of cross-examination is remaining professionally grounded when you feel pressured to react quickly or defend yourself. When these moments happen, remember that effective courtroom communication isn't about giving a fast answer. Instead, your success depends on:

- ***Careful listening and deliberate pacing***
- ***Thoughtful wording***
- ***Emotional control and professional restraint***

Be prepared for attorneys to ask questions that contain unfair assumptions, oversimplify your investigation, combine multiple issues, or take details completely out of context. When this happens, don't let yourself be rushed into giving an incomplete or inaccurate answer.

Instead, use these professional response strategies:

- ***Pause and clarify: Ask for the question to be repeated or request clarification on unclear wording.***
- ***Break it down: Address one portion of a compound question at a time.***
- ***Correct the premise: Respectfully address inaccurate assumptions before answering.***
- ***Stay grounded: Focus strictly on what you can answer factually.***

Keep in mind that silence is your friend. Taking a brief, deliberate pause to organize your thoughts before speaking isn't a sign of weakness; it directly improves your accuracy, clarity, professionalism, and confidence on the stand.

Paraphrase:

Equal to knowing how to answer is knowing when to stop. Avoid overexplaining. When you offer more information than is asked for, you risk creating confusion, introducing unrelated topics, opening new lines of questioning, and weakening your overall impact.

Ultimately, high-pressure situations test your professional demeanor. Show the court your expertise by staying measured, communicating carefully, keeping your focus on the facts, and maintaining respectful interactions no matter how intense the questioning gets.

Cross-examination becomes far more manageable when you stop trying to "win" the exchange and focus entirely on delivering accurate, controlled, and professional answers.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- Why might attorneys attempt to control the pace of questioning?
- How can compound questions create communication difficulties during testimony?
- Why is it important not to rush responses during cross-examination?
- How can Specialists professionally address inaccurate assumptions within questions?
- What behaviors help Specialists maintain control during high-pressure examinations?

Facilitator Answers:

- Feeling pressured to answer quickly.
- Difficulty responding to compound questions.
- Overexplaining during stressful questioning.
- Emotional reactions under pressure.
- Challenges in maintaining focus during rapid questioning.
- Controlled pacing improves testimony quality.
- Clarification is appropriate when questions are unclear.
- Professional restraint strengthens courtroom credibility.

Facilitator Note:

Emphasize that Specialists are permitted to pause, gather their thoughts, and request clarification when needed during testimony. Clarify that effective testimony is not measured by the speed of a response, but by the accuracy, clarity, and professionalism of the information provided. Use this discussion as a transition into the courtroom simulation application. Throughout the discussion, maintain focus on cross-examination strategies, controlled communication, pressure management, professional restraint, and courtroom credibility.

Say:

We're going to dive right into a mock courtroom simulation where you'll put today's preparation concepts directly into practice. You'll have the chance to work through live testimony, line-by-line questioning, professional communication, and the cross-examination strategies we've been covering.

To wrap up Day 8, you'll focus on integrating everything you've learned so far:

- ***Your overall courtroom professionalism***
- ***Effective testimony preparation***
- ***Confident decision-defense communication***
- ***Strategic cross-examination responses***
- ***Building and maintaining your professional credibility on the stand***

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Cross-examination often involves strategic pressure-based questioning.
- Specialists should respond thoughtfully rather than reactively.
- Controlled communication supports accuracy and professionalism.
- Clarification and deliberate pacing improve the effectiveness of courtroom responses.



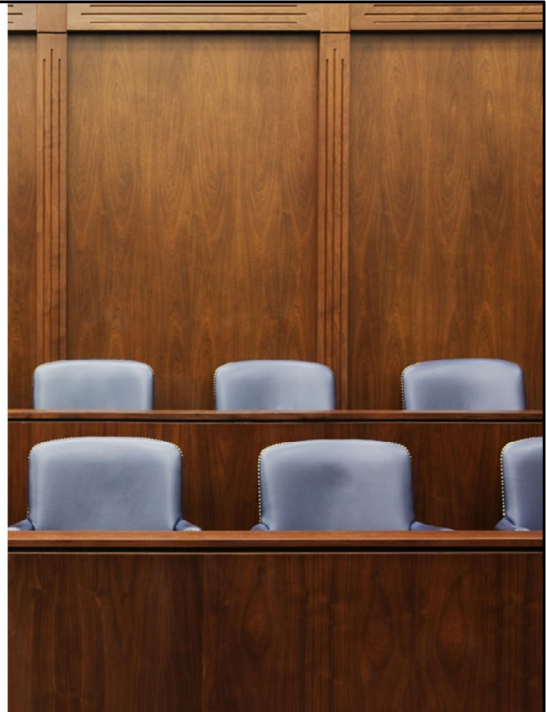
LUNCH BREAK



Courtroom Simulation: Testimony, Decision & Professional Response

**COURTROOM SIMULATION: TESTIMONY, DECISION DEFENSE, & PROFESSIONAL
RESPONSE**

Applying Courtroom Skills Through Simulation



APPLYING COURTROOM SKILLS THROUGH SIMULATION

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To prepare Specialists to apply courtroom preparation and communication skills through a realistic courtroom simulation, practice providing effective testimony, explaining investigative reasoning, responding to legal questioning, and maintaining professionalism under pressure

Say:

This final section is designed to help you apply the courtroom preparation concepts discussed throughout Day 8 through a realistic courtroom simulation.

Rather than only discussing courtroom communication strategies, you will have the opportunity to practice:

- *Providing verbal testimony.*
- *Applying effective courtroom communication.*
- *Using professional response strategies.*
- *Explaining investigative reasoning.*
- *Managing courtroom pressure.*
- *Interacting professionally during legal questioning.*

The purpose of this simulation is not to create a perfect courtroom performance. Instead, the goal is to help you experience how courtroom communication feels within a

structured legal setting while developing skills related to:

- *Organizing your thoughts during testimony.*
- *Maintaining a professional tone and demeanor.*
- *Using active listening skills.*
- *Practicing appropriate response pacing.*
- *Remaining composed during questioning.*
- *Communicating effectively under pressure.*

This simulation provides an opportunity to apply the knowledge and strategies discussed throughout Day 8 while building confidence in your ability to participate professionally in courtroom proceedings.

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.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To prepare participants for the courtroom simulation by establishing expectations for professional participation, testimony application, courtroom communication, and realistic legal interaction during the exercise

Say:

By the end of this section, Social Services Specialists will be able to:

- *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.*



Courtroom Simulation Setup

COURTROOM SIMULATION SETUP

Time: 18 minutes

Purpose: To prepare participants for active courtroom participation by establishing simulation structure, assigning courtroom roles, clarifying responsibilities, and organizing the flow of testimony and questioning during the exercise

Participant Manual: Flowers Affidavit Drafting Packet & Day 8 Notes Pages

Say:

During this exercise, you may notice common reactions that occur in courtroom testimony, including increased nervousness when responding, pressure to answer quickly, difficulty organizing your thoughts verbally, challenges in maintaining concise responses, or moments when questioning feels uncomfortable or adversarial.

These reactions are normal and can provide valuable learning opportunities as you practice courtroom preparation and communication skills.

Activity Instructions:

The facilitator should instruct participants to organize their Days 7-8 Flowers case materials to use throughout the simulation, and assign participants their courtroom roles, as well as ensure that the room resembles a court-like setting. Participants should also have access to their Flowers affidavit materials throughout the simulation

Suggested courtroom roles may include:

- Judge.
- OCC attorney.
- Parent attorney.
- Hannah Lewis (optional reporter witness).
- Court observers.

The facilitator will:

- Assign courtroom simulation roles to participants.
- Explain the structure and expectations of the courtroom exercise.
- Review how testimony and questioning will occur.
- Guide participant rotation and involvement throughout the simulation.

Participants will review:

- Professional and respectful courtroom communication expectations.
- Assigned role responsibilities.
- Courtroom interaction guidelines.
- The structure and timing of the simulation.

Participants should:

- Use Flowers case materials throughout testimony.
- Maintain realistic and professional courtroom communication.
- Focus on applying communication skills and courtroom strategies.
- Remain engaged and attentive throughout the exercise, including while observing.

Say:

This simulation creates a structured courtroom environment where you can practice how legal proceedings may unfold during dependency-neglect hearings. Each role in the exercise serves a specific purpose in helping you understand how courtroom interactions occur during legal examination.

If you are assigned the role of OCC attorney, focus on organizing testimony, guiding courtroom questioning, and helping present investigative information clearly.

If you are assigned the role of parent attorney, focus on asking challenging or clarifying questions related to Division decisions, investigative actions, and professional judgment.

If you are assigned the role of judge, focus on managing the courtroom environment, maintaining professionalism, guiding the flow of the hearing, and ensuring the exercise's structure is maintained.

If you are assigned the role of Hannah Lewis as a collateral or reporter witness, focus on providing information from your assigned perspective and responding to questions about how collateral information may be discussed during legal proceedings.

Observers also play an important role in this exercise. While observing, you should pay attention to how:

- ***Testimony is organized.***
- ***Questioning impacts communication.***
- ***Professionalism influences courtroom interactions.***
- ***Credibility is strengthened through response style.***
- ***Participants manage pressure and courtroom pacing.***

Throughout the simulation, focus less on memorizing information and more on developing effective courtroom skills, including:

- ***Professional communication.***
- ***Active listening.***
- ***Organization during testimony.***
- ***Maintaining composure.***
- ***Adapting to courtroom questioning in real time.***

The purpose of this exercise is to build familiarity with courtroom interactions and provide an opportunity to practice applying professional communication skills within a realistic legal setting.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- How do different courtroom roles shape the flow of legal proceedings?
- Why is organization important during courtroom testimony?
- How can observers still actively participate during the simulation?
- Why is realistic courtroom communication important during practice exercises?
- What courtroom skills are participants practicing throughout the simulation?

Facilitator Answers:

- Different responsibilities across courtroom roles.
- Importance of structured questioning.
- Observation of communication habits.
- Need for professionalism during testimony.
- Real-time courtroom response skills.
- Courtroom interaction involves multiple professional roles.
- Simulation helps strengthen courtroom familiarity.
- Observation and participation both support learning.

Facilitator Note:

- Emphasize that the simulation is designed to provide a structured, realistic courtroom experience.
- Clarify that participants are practicing courtroom communication and interaction skills, not performing or memorizing a script.
- Connect the simulation to the concepts covered throughout Day 8 by focusing on

- applying courtroom skills in an active setting.
- Throughout the activity, maintain focus on role clarity, courtroom structure, professional communication, participation expectations, and simulation readiness.

Say:

Now that you have established the courtroom roles and expectations, begin the courtroom simulation by participating in testimony, questioning, and courtroom interactions using the Flowers' investigation materials.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Courtroom roles shape the structure of the hearing and legal interactions.
- The simulation focuses on realistic courtroom communication practice.
- Participants should remain professionally engaged throughout the exercise.
- Observation supports courtroom learning and reflection.

ROLE CARDS FOR COURTROOM SIMULATION

ROLE CARD – JUDGE

Your Role:

You are responsible for maintaining courtroom structure and professionalism during the hearing.

Focus On:

- courtroom order
- professionalism
- hearing flow
- allowing questioning to proceed appropriately
- redirecting disrespectful behavior if needed

You May:

- ask clarifying questions
- redirect courtroom behavior
- pause side conversations
- maintain hearing structure

Remember:

- remain professional and neutral
- focus on courtroom management
- help maintain realistic courtroom flow

ROLE CARD – OCC ATTORNEY

Your Role:

You represent the Department and guide testimony that explains investigative actions and agency recommendations.

Focus On:

- organizing testimony clearly
- establishing chronology
- explaining agency concerns
- clarifying removal rationale
- helping the court understand investigative progression

Helpful Strategies:

- ask organized questions
- move chronologically when possible
- allow the specialist time to answer
- help clarify investigative reasoning

Remember:

- maintain professionalism
- avoid coaching answers
- focus on clear courtroom communication

ROLE CARD – PARENT ATTORNEY

Your Role:

You are questioning agency decisions, investigative reasoning, and conclusions during cross-examination.

Focus On:

- clarification
- inconsistencies
- alternative interpretations
- timeline questions
- investigative decision-making

Helpful Strategies:

- ask focused questions
- challenge professionally
- test clarity and organization
- maintain realistic courtroom tone

Remember:

- challenge professionally, not aggressively
- avoid personal criticism
- keep questioning instructional and realistic

ROLE CARD – SPECIALIST WITNESS

Your Role:

You are explaining investigative actions, agency concerns, and professional judgment during testimony.

Focus On:

- clear communication
- organized responses
- factual explanation
- professionalism
- composure during questioning

Helpful Strategies:

- listen fully before answering
- pause briefly if needed
- answer directly
- remain calm during challenge
- focus on observable information

Remember:

- you may ask for clarification
- you may pause before answering
- stay professional throughout questioning

ROLE CARD – HANNAH LEWIS (OPTIONAL REPORTER/COLLATERAL WITNESS)

Your Role:

You are providing information regarding observations and concerns connected to the Flowers investigation.

Focus On:

- observations made
- concerns reported
- interactions observed
- factual information only

Helpful Strategies:

- answer simply and clearly
- avoid speculation
- remain focused on what you personally observed

Remember:

- you are not the investigator
- answer from the perspective of the reporter/collateral contact

ROLE CARD – OBSERVERS

Your Role:

You are observing courtroom interaction and identifying effective courtroom communication practices.

Focus On:

- professionalism
- communication clarity
- pacing
- composure
- organization during testimony
- response strategies during challenge

Be Prepared To Discuss:

- what strengthened credibility
- what created confusion
- how pressure affected communication
- effective courtroom behaviors observed

FINAL FACILITATOR REMINDER

The simulation should feel:

- realistic
- structured
- supportive
- instructional

Participants should leave the exercise feeling:

- more confident
- more prepared
- more aware of courtroom expectations
- more comfortable practicing testimony skills before real courtroom involvement

A photograph showing a close-up of a hand in a dark suit sleeve holding a wooden gavel over a light-colored wooden desk. The background is blurred, showing a lamp and other courtroom elements.

Courtroom Simulation

COURTROOM SIMULATION

Time: 50 minutes

Purpose: To provide participants the opportunity to actively apply courtroom communication, testimony organization, investigative explanation, and professional response strategies during a structured courtroom simulation using the Flowers' investigation

Participant Manual: Flowers Affidavit Drafting Packet from Day 7 & Day 8 Notes Pages

Facilitator Resources: Courtroom Simulation Role-play cards, Courtroom Simulation Facilitator Guide

Activity Instructions:

Participants will move into their assigned courtroom roles, and the simulation area will be arranged to support the courtroom exercise. Participants should have access to their Flowers case materials and notes throughout the activity. The facilitator should be prepared to pause the simulation and provide coaching or clarification as needed.

The facilitator will begin the courtroom simulation using assigned roles.

Participants should:

- Engage in realistic courtroom interactions.
- Practice effective testimony communication.

- Apply courtroom professionalism.
- Use investigative information from the Flowers case when responding to questions.

During the simulation:

- The OCC attorney will conduct direct examination.
- The parent attorney will conduct cross-examination.
- The Specialist witness will respond to questioning.
- The judge will maintain courtroom structure and flow.
- Observers will document strengths in courtroom communication and identify areas for growth.

Throughout the exercise, the facilitator may:

- Pause the simulation.
- Provide coaching and feedback.
- Redirect questioning when needed.
- Assist participants with communication strategies.
- Clarify courtroom processes as needed.

Participants may:

- Request clarification.
- Ask for questions to be repeated.
- Pause briefly to organize their thoughts.
- Request facilitator guidance when needed.

Say:

This portion of Day 8 is designed to help you transition from discussing courtroom concepts to actively applying those skills during a realistic courtroom simulation. You will practice how courtroom communication occurs during live legal interactions involving:

- ***Testimony.***
- ***Questioning.***
- ***Courtroom structure.***
- ***Professional explanation.***
- ***Communication under pressure.***
- ***Explaining and defending investigative decisions.***

Throughout the simulation, focus on applying the courtroom communication skills developed earlier in the day while remaining grounded in the Flowers investigation materials.

If you are participating as a Specialist witness, focus on:

- ***Organizing your responses verbally.***
- ***Clearly communicating investigative reasoning.***
- ***Maintaining professionalism throughout questioning.***
- ***Responding thoughtfully rather than reacting to pressure.***
- ***Staying connected to investigative facts and chronology.***

If you are conducting questioning, focus on:

- *Maintaining appropriate courtroom pacing.*
- *Structuring questions effectively.*
- *Clarifying investigative information.*
- *Maintaining a professional courtroom tone.*
- *Guiding realistic legal interactions.*

If you are serving as the judge, focus on:

- *Maintaining courtroom flow.*
- *Supporting professionalism within the exercise.*
- *Ensuring orderly participation during questioning.*
- *Maintaining a realistic courtroom structure.*

If you are observing the simulation, focus on identifying:

- *Effective communication habits.*
- *Courtroom professionalism.*
- *Organization during testimony.*
- *Moments where communication becomes unclear.*
- *How participants respond to courtroom pressure.*
- *Behaviors that strengthen or weaken credibility.*

Remember, this exercise is designed for learning and skill development. You are expected to practice, make adjustments, and continue strengthening your courtroom communication skills throughout the simulation.

Facilitator Note:

The facilitator may pause the exercise at any time to:

- Provide guidance.
- Redirect communication.
- Assist participants.
- Clarify courtroom procedures.
- Help participants regroup when needed.

Say:

You may also request assistance or clarification during the exercise if you become unsure how to proceed. The goal of this simulation is not perfection. The goal is to build familiarity, confidence, organization, and professional courtroom communication through active participation.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- How did courtroom pressure affect communication during testimony?
- What response strategies appeared most effective during questioning?
- What communication habits improved courtroom clarity?
- How did participants manage organization during live questioning?

- What courtroom behaviors strengthened professionalism during the simulation?

Facilitator Answers:

- Difficulty organizing verbal responses quickly.
- Pressure during cross-examination.
- Improved communication through pacing.
- Importance of listening carefully.
- Challenges maintaining concise responses.
- Value of preparation and professionalism.
- Courtroom communication improves through practice.
- Organization affects testimony effectiveness.
- Professional composure strengthens credibility.
- Real-time courtroom interaction requires adaptability.

Facilitator Note:

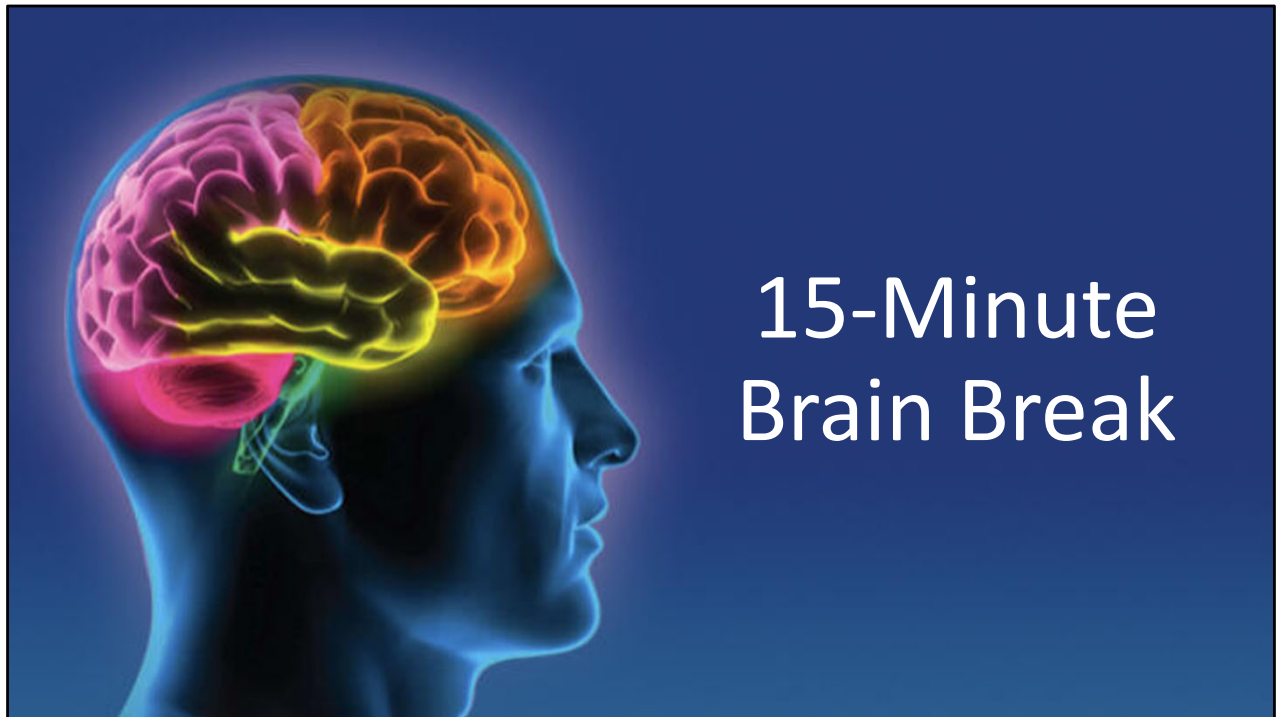
- Emphasize that the simulation is designed to support learning, skill development, and increased confidence in courtroom participation.
- Clarify that both facilitators and participants may pause the exercise at any time to request assistance, provide guidance, or address questions.
- Connect the simulation experience to the final Day 8 reflection and debrief by encouraging participants to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for continued growth.
- Throughout the activity, maintain focus on courtroom participation, communication application, professional interaction, adaptability, and skill development.

Say:

Now that you have completed the courtroom simulation exercise, shift your focus to debriefing the experience and identifying which courtroom communication strategies, professional habits, and response approaches were most effective during the activity.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- The simulation provides active courtroom communication practice.
- Participants are applying testimony and decision-defense skills in real time.
- Professional courtroom interaction requires adaptability and organization.
- Practice and reflection strengthen courtroom readiness.



BRAIN BREAK

Simulation Debrief & Professional Reflection

SIMULATION DEBRIEF & PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

Time: 35 minutes

Purpose: To help participants reflect on courtroom communication experiences, identify major professional takeaways from the simulation, strengthen awareness of courtroom expectations, and connect legal participation to future multidisciplinary collaboration

Activity Instructions:

This is a whole-group facilitated debrief discussion. Participants may remain seated within their simulation groups if preferred. Observer participants should be prepared to share their observations regarding courtroom communication and participation.

Participants will reflect on:

- What aspects of courtroom participation felt most challenging.
- What communication strategies improved testimony effectiveness.
- How courtroom pressure affected verbal communication and organization.

The group will discuss:

- What courtroom behaviors strengthened professionalism and credibility.
- How preparation influenced confidence during testimony.
- How different questioning styles affected courtroom communication.

Observer participants will share:

- Effective courtroom behaviors they observed.
- Examples of strong professionalism.
- Communication strengths demonstrated during the simulation.
- Areas where improved organization or clarity strengthened testimony.

The facilitator will guide the discussion by connecting the simulation experience to:

- Courtroom adaptability.
- Professional growth.
- Building confidence for future courtroom participation.
- The connection between legal participation and multidisciplinary coordination.

Say:

Courtroom participation often feels very different once you move from discussing concepts of testimony to actively communicating in a simulated legal environment. This exercise was designed to help you experience the practical realities of courtroom interaction while applying the communication strategies developed throughout Day 8.

During the simulation, you may have experienced challenges related to:

- ***Organizing verbal responses quickly.***
- ***Maintaining focus during questioning.***
- ***Adapting to changing courtroom dynamics.***
- ***Responding professionally under pressure.***
- ***Balancing detail with clarity.***
- ***Remaining composed during challenging exchanges.***

These experiences are normal and reflect many of the communication demands you may encounter during actual legal proceedings.

You may also have recognized how courtroom effectiveness is influenced by:

- ***Preparation before entering the courtroom.***
- ***Familiarity with the investigative chronology.***
- ***Organization of responses.***
- ***Active listening during questioning.***
- ***Emotional regulation.***
- ***Professional communication habits.***

As observers, you may have noticed that courtroom credibility was strengthened when participants:

- ***Slowed their pacing.***
- ***Answered thoughtfully.***
- ***Maintained professional composure.***
- ***Communicated in an organized manner.***
- ***Remained grounded in investigative information.***
- ***Adapted calmly when questioning became more challenging.***

Paraphrase:

One important takeaway from today is that courtroom communication skills develop over time through continued practice, reflection, preparation, courtroom exposure, and professional feedback.

Another important takeaway is that courtroom participation does not occur in isolation. Legal proceedings often involve ongoing collaboration between Specialists, the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC), law enforcement, CAC staff, supervisors, MDT partners, and other legal and professional stakeholders.

Tomorrow, you will shift your focus to multidisciplinary coordination and advanced interagency collaboration. Many of the communication skills practiced today—including professionalism, organization, adaptability, and information sharing—directly impact how you participate within coordinated investigations and MDT environments.

The goal of Day 8 was not to create a perfect courtroom performance. The goal was to strengthen your familiarity, confidence, and readiness to communicate professionally before participating in actual courtroom proceedings as part of your investigative practice.

Facilitator Questions: (ask the following questions and validate responses)

- What courtroom communication skills improved most throughout the simulation?
- How did preparation affect confidence during testimony?
- What courtroom behaviors appeared to strengthen credibility?
- How did participants adapt when questioning became more challenging?
- How might today's courtroom skills support future MDT collaboration and legal coordination?

Facilitator Answers:**Participants may identify:**

- Improved communication awareness.
- Greater appreciation for preparation.
- Increased confidence through practice.
- Better understanding of courtroom professionalism.
- Importance of organization during testimony.
- Connection between courtroom communication and MDT collaboration.

Participants should recognize:

- Courtroom communication improves through practice and reflection.
- Professional demeanor influences credibility.
- Legal participation and MDT collaboration are closely connected.
- Preparation strengthens courtroom effectiveness.

Facilitator Note:

- Acknowledge that courtroom communication skills develop over time through

experience, practice, and reflection.

- Clarify that the simulation was designed to support professional growth and build familiarity with courtroom participation rather than create a perfect performance.
- Connect the courtroom communication skills developed on Day 8 to the multidisciplinary team (MDT) collaboration concepts introduced on Day 9.
- Throughout the discussion, maintain focus on reflection, confidence-building, professional growth, courtroom readiness, and interagency collaboration.

Key Points: (ensure the following are covered)

- Courtroom participation requires adaptability, organization, and professionalism.
- Practice and reflection strengthen courtroom confidence and communication.
- Professional communication supports courtroom credibility and legal effectiveness.
- Day 9 will expand into MDT coordination and interagency collaboration.



Target Outcomes Evaluation

TARGET OUTCOMES EVALUATION

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To assess the learning outcomes for this training section

Facilitator Note: Before ending the day, direct participants to the QR code on the slide. Participants will need to use their phones to scan the code to complete the section target outcomes evaluation in Qualtrics.