

justice

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Child-friendly justice: Key terms





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1. Not all key terms apply to all countries

What are Rights?



Rights represent things that every child in the world, including you, should be able to do or to have.

For example, all children should be able to go to school, to visit a doctor, and live their lives free from violence.

What does best interest of the child mean?



When adults make decisions about you, they should think if this decision is best for you.

For example, when parents are divorcing, the decision where and who the child should live with, should be taken thinking about what is best for the child, not what is best for the mother or the father.

What does protection from discrimination mean?



All children should be treated in the same way, no matter who they are, where they live, what their lives are like. However, there are children who might need some special support, for example children who are poor might need some help getting money to buy school books; children who have a wheelchair will need help when going into buildings staircases, or children who cannot hear or talk, will need someone speaking to them in sign language

What is respect?

Respect is recognising that a person or something is important and behaving accordingly. It could be respect for other people or respect for the environment.

For example, respect means treating yourself and others in a nice way and not hurting others on purpose or making them feel bad about themselves.

What is dignity?



Dignity is about feeling proud of yourself for the way you are. It is something that nobody can take away from you even when they treat you badly.

What is protection?

Protection is something that helps you to feel unafraid of being harmed by someone or something. Children should be protected from harm. For this reason, they should ask for the help of people who know what to do to protect them such as teachers, a mother or father or a person they trust.

What is safety?



Safety is being and feeling free from harm and danger where nobody can harm or scare you.

What is a court?



The court is the place where people go to be heard by a judge (or a hearing panel) who can then decide on the best solution for problems. In order to protect children, the child may be asked to answer questions in another location, outside the court.

What is a proceeding?

Before a court can take a decision this needs to be well prepared. Those who will be affected by the court's decision should be allowed to explain how they see the relevant facts and to give their views. Witnesses and experts give their opinions, evidence is collected and whatever in the end helps the judge to reach a decision. This happens in a certain order, following precise rules, and can take a long time. All these many steps together are called a 'proceeding'.

What is a civil proceeding?



A civil proceeding takes place when adults discuss matters and arrangements particularly about practical issues, such as who should pay money or in whose house a child should live most of the time.

For example, when parents decide that they do not want to live together anymore, the decision on where the child will live will be made during a civil proceeding.

What is a criminal proceeding?



A criminal proceeding takes place when different adults working at the court examine and decide if a serious wrong doing or a crime has been done or not, and what will be the consequences.

What is a hearing?

A hearing is a meeting during which different people talk and look at what happened. These people usually are:

- the judge;
- the lawyers;
- the person who has been accused of doing something against the law (accused);
- the person who has been harmed (victim);
- the person who has seen/heard that something against the law was done (witness);
- and sometimes the people who are having a dispute such as a couple who is divorcing.

Evidence/statements by children



This is when someone (usually a Police Officer, or sometimes a Social Worker) asks you about what happened. What you say is recorded sometimes on a video and other times in writing.

Who is a victim?



A victim is the person who has been harmed by somebody or something.

Who is an accused?



The accused is the person who is said to have done something against the law.

Who is a witness?



The witness is someone who saw/heard what happened or knows something that can help explain the truth about what happened.

What is the right to information?



Adults should explain to you all that you need or want to know such as where you can find help, when you will have to go to the court and how long you will stay there, who will be there, what will happen, what sorts of questions you might be asked and how the law can protect you. They should also explain how your situation has been sorted and what this means for you.

What is the right to be heard?



This right is about people such as judges, lawyers and the police listening to you. For example, in court you may want to be heard by the judge. You may also choose not to talk if you feel uncomfortable.

What does confidentiality mean?



If you are told something confidentially, then it is like a secret: you have to keep it to yourself and must not tell others. Similarly, certain professions such as psychologists, lawyers... keep as a secret what they are told by their clients who ask for their help or advice.

What is the right to privacy?

Privacy is the right to be free from someone watching you for no reason and to decide whether, when, how, and to whom, your personal information is to be revealed.

What do police officers do?



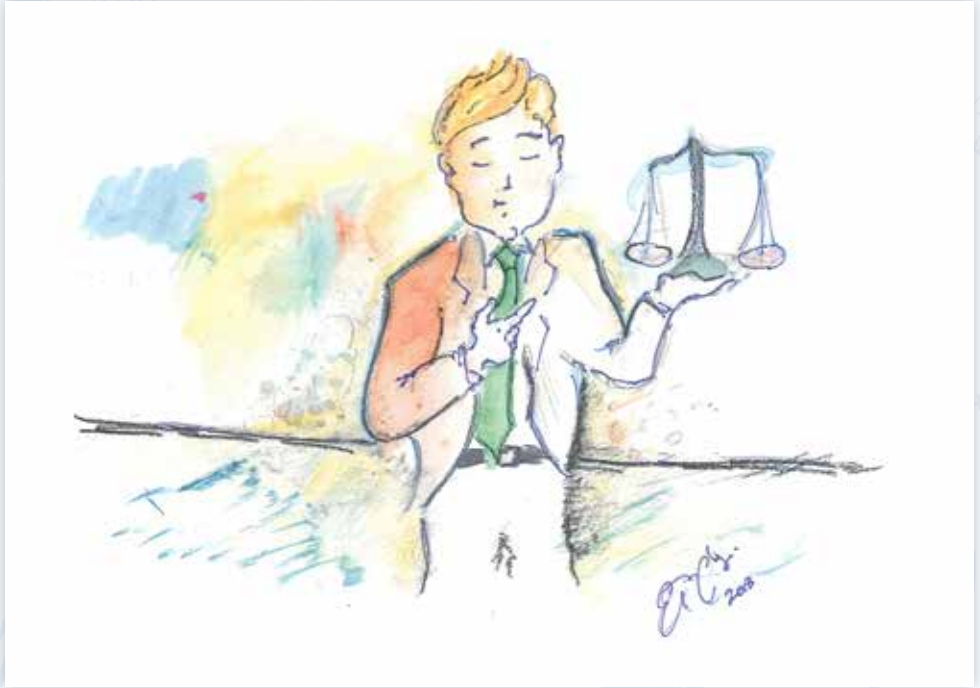
Police officers find out if something against the law was done, they find out what has happened, and they try to stop people who are doing something wrong.

Who is a lawyer?



A lawyer is a person who makes sure that your rights are respected and knows about the laws. A lawyer should provide you advice and help you to bring your case to the Court. The accused person will also have a different lawyer who will help him/her.

Who is a prosecutor?



A prosecutor is the person who has to show and prove that something against the law was done and that the accused person is responsible. This person also defends the rights of the victims and witnesses. A prosecutor works for the government to protect the safety of everyone including you.

Who is a judge?



A judge is the person who makes sure that the law is respected and that everyone follows the rules in court. Judges decide if something against the law was done or not and try to find a solution to a problem between different people. In some countries they make decisions with the help of a jury.

Who is a social worker?



A social worker is a person who can help you in different ways. Social workers can decide how you should be protected and kept safe if you are in danger; they can ask questions to help you.

Who is a psychologist?



A psychologist is someone with whom you might talk to about how you feel and they will try to help you feel better.

Who is a legal guardian?



A guardian is an adult who is responsible for the care of a child when the child does not have parents or the parents cannot take care of the child.

What are parents' responsibilities?



Parents are responsible for your care most of the times. In some families, it might be only a mother, or only a father, or both. However, sometimes parents may have problems among themselves or may have personal problems and for this reason they can hurt each other. In a court case they may be asked what they think about your situation.

Other people who provide support



When your case is being discussed at court, other people, apart from those already explained, might help you. An interpreter may translate what is being said into your language if you don't speak the same language of the country or other people may help you in other ways if you have other different needs.

When is justice child-friendly?



Justice is child-friendly when it makes sure that you are able to participate fully, you are well informed and can be heard effectively. It is also child-friendly when you feel comfortable with how people treat you during the proceeding, no matter why you are there.

What are child-friendly rooms?



When you go to courts or police stations, or meet people who ask you questions, there may be a nice room where you can stay and feel comfortable. This room may have some toys, drawing pencils, books, a game boy, maybe some food and drinks... and should make you feel good and safe.

What is child-friendly information?



Information and advice should be explained to you in a way that you can understand and people should talk to you in a friendly and clear way. You should be able to ask as much as possible until you have understood everything.

What does avoid undue delay mean?



When the child's situation is discussed in court everyone working on the case should act quickly and the judge should make a decision as quickly as possible. This means that decisions and the process should not be delayed.