

## Items to Include in a Trial Notebook

### 1. Petition, Orders, Motions, and other legal documents

Keep these documents organized in chronological order. It is crucial to know what the judge ordered your client to do at the previous hearing. Keep these documents close at hand.

### 2. Emails

Correspond with social workers and service providers via email as much as possible. It creates a paper trail and people cannot deny your attempts to access services for your client if you are able to produce documentation that you made numerous requests. If you sent many emails over a span of time requesting an appointment for a psychological evaluation with no response, how can DSS possibly argue to the judge that they have made reasonable efforts towards reunification and that reunification efforts with a parent are futile?

### 3. DSS, GAL & parent court reports

Keep these reports in chronological order. It is helpful to have them at hand when DSS or the GAL come up with a new recommendation they have never previously recommended.

### 4. Evaluations

Keep copies of your client's psychological evaluation, substance abuse assessment, and therapist updates. Many times DSS will make recommendations pursuant to the psychological evaluation and substance abuse assessment. Be sure to compare the social worker's recommendations with those in the actual evaluation.

### 5. Social worker dictation

This can be accessed through discovery requests. Positive information can be gathered through the social worker's dictation. Their dictation includes every phone call, email, fax and face to face meeting the social worker has with anyone connected to the case. Invaluable information is contained in social worker's dictation.

### 6. Relevant statutes

The law is worthless to you if you do not know what it is. You can print out Subchapter I of statute 7B in less than 30 pages if you adjust your font and margins. It is good to have the definitions in § 7B-101 handy at all times. Sometimes everyone forgets that a safe home is "a home in which the juvenile is not at *substantial* risk of physical or emotional abuse or neglect" and that reasonable efforts require "diligent" use of preventive or reunification services by a department of social services. If court is on the fence about what to do in your case, reference and quote the law as it will assist in your case.