

Chester County Juvenile Probation

What Happens after an Initial Interview?

What is a “Initial (or Intake) Interview”?

When a Juvenile Probation Officer meets with the juvenile and their family to obtain a statement in regards to the offense and gather family history/background.

After Completing the Initial Interview Process, what happens next?

At this point, your Probation Officer (PO) will review the alleged charges, any statements you give regarding the charges, your past juvenile report, and your behavioral history.

This review will determine whether or not your case needs to go to court. If you chose not to give a statement regarding the charges or you decide to fight the charges, your case will automatically be scheduled for court.

Imposed Rules (Pre-adjudication Conditions):

You were asked at the initial interview to follow some rules called Pre-Adjudication Conditions and it is very important that you do so. Your Probation Officer will be monitoring you to see if you follow these rules. This will help them decide what to recommend to the Court. Your actions will help the PO decide if you will go to court, or if you could be eligible for informal adjustment. Negative behavior will reflect poorly on you, and there will be consequences.

Failure to follow imposed rules:

If you choose not to follow the Pre-Adjudication Conditions or break the law, the Court will give you consequences. You could be placed on Electronic Home Monitoring (EHM) or house arrest, or have to attend the Evening Reporting Center (ERC), or you could be detained at the Chester County Youth Center (juvenile detention). Your Probation Officer will make a recommendation about whether these things should happen, but the final decision is up to the Court and no one else. Some things that can lead to Electronic Home Monitoring, ERC or detention are: positive drug screens, new criminal charges, and behavior problems at home, school or in the community. These are just some examples, but other negative things may cause consequences too.

What happens if your case DOES NOT go to Court?

You will be asked to come into the Juvenile Probation Office to sign a document called a “supervision plan”. The plan will list some things that you need to do to help you take responsibility for your actions and make good decisions in the future. Some things that you might be required to do are attend counseling and/or participate in community service. There might be others things you are asked to do as well.

What happens if your case DOES go to Court?

If your case is going to court, you need an attorney. You can either hire an attorney to represent you, or you will be automatically represented by the Public Defender’s office. Your attorney will work with you to decide how to handle your case and the charges and will let you know your rights. If you are represented by the Public Defender you will meet him/her the day of your court hearing to discuss your case. If you would like to speak with a Public Defender before your court hearing, you should call 610-344-6940.

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How do I Prepare for Court Hearings?

You will receive a court notice in the mail telling you the time, date, and location of your court hearing. You should arrive at the Juvenile Probation Office early to ensure that you have enough time to meet with your PO and attorney.

It is imperative that you dress appropriately, wear button up shirts, sweaters, dress pants, skirts or slacks. Do **NOT** wear: shorts; tank tops; tight or revealing clothing; pants that hang down and expose your underwear; clothing with drug, gun, or gang references; or ripped or torn clothing.

The Court process can take a long time, and you should expect to spend a few hours preparing for court, being in the hearing and in meetings afterwards.

Who can Attend my Hearing?

You need to be at the court hearing, and your parents/guardians should be there with you. Your PO, the Assistant District Attorney, and your attorney will also be present. If there are victims involved, they have a legal right to attend as well.

If You Cannot Make it to Court:

If you cannot make it to court on the day you have been scheduled, you must contact your PO and attorney. They will ask you why you cannot attend the hearing, and they might request that the hearing be postponed (a "continuance"). The Judge is the only one who can approve a continuance.

Acceptable reasons for requesting a continuance may include documented illness, parents/guardian unable to attend, or true emergency situations.

Unacceptable reasons may include you forgot, can't find a ride, you have to work, it's a school day, vacation.

If you fail to appear for court without being granted a continuance by the Court a Bench Warrant will be issued. A Bench Warrant gives the police the power to take you into custody and transport you to the Chester County Youth Center.

What Happens After Court?

Much of this depends on how you and your attorney decide to handle the charges against you and your behavior up to this point. Whether you admit to the charges or fight the charges you will be expected to follow court ordered conditions similar to the pre-adjudication conditions.

If you go to Court and you are placed on probation, you will have to follow rules of probation. These rules are established to ensure that you are not a danger to the community, to help you develop some skills, and to help you take responsibility for your actions.