



# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

**All youth in the custody of Child Protective Services have the right to have their voices heard in court hearings about their case.**

Recent changes to youth court laws guarantee foster youth the following rights in court:

- Written summons to appear in all court hearings related to your case
- Legal standing in your court case - acknowledgement that this impacts your life
- Representation by an attorney with undivided loyalty to you
- Opportunity to share your wishes with the court

As an equal party to all matters concerning your case, you are responsible for the following:

- Communicate with your attorney all needs, concerns, and wishes that need to be addressed in court
- Request changes to your representation if you feel the attorney is not representing your interests in the case
- Behave in a respectful manner in all court proceedings
- Following all instructions from the court

## Legal Terms to Understand

- Guardian Ad Litem: attorney appointed by the judge to represent the "best interest" of the child in the case
- Best Interest: action that maximizes what is best for the child
- Party: a person or entity that takes part in a legal act
- Standing: a legal interest or stake in a court case; right to be involved in a court case
- Termination of Parental Rights: legally ending the plan to return a child to their parents
- Undivided Loyalty: only represents the wishes of the youth
- Permanency: long-term plan for youth that involves belonging in family and community
- Summons: request to attend a court hearing



Mississippi Youth Voice is a program of First Place for Youth. Our mission is to break down barriers and build better outcomes for Mississippi foster youth.