

A BRIEF GUIDE TO COURTROOMS

Use the following glossary and mock diagram to familiarize yourself with common legal terms and what a courtroom may look like.

- **Advocate:** a community-based program or prosecutor's office employee; a non-lawyer who supports the survivor and acts on their behalf; can provide legal information but cannot give legal advice.
- **Appeal:** after a trial, the losing party may ask a higher court to review the case for legal errors.
- **Arraignment:** the initial appearance for a criminal defendant to enter a plea; the court may also set bail at this time; first opportunity to ask for a Temporary Protection Order.
- **Bailiff:** this person relays messages and provides security in the courtroom.
- **Bench Trial:** a case heard and decided by a judge; no jury is present.
- **Clerk of Court:** a public official whose duties including keeping court records, filing papers, issuing process.
- **Closing Argument:** a lawyer's final statement to the judge or jury before deliberation begins.
- **Cross examination:** questioning a witness at a hearing by the opposing party.
- **Defendant:** the person being sued or accused in a civil proceeding.
- **Defense Attorney:** a private lawyer hired to represent the defendant in a case. In a criminal case, a public defender may be assigned to represent a defendant at no cost.
- **Discovery:** the period of a civil or criminal trial during which parties must exchange all information that will be presented at trial (or is reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of relevant information).
- **Docket:** the court's official record of a case, including hearing dates, filings, and party information; some dockets are available online.
- **Direct examination:** the first questioning of a witness in a trial or other proceeding, conducted by the party who called the witness to testify.
- **Evidence:** something that tends to prove or disprove the existence of an alleged fact.
- **Ex parte Order:** an order made by the court upon the request of one party without notice to the other.
- **Hearsay:** testimony that is not what the witness knows personally, but what others have said.

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- **Judge:** an elected court official (usually a former lawyer) who hears evidence and determines liability in bench trials.
- **Magistrate:** a judicial or administrative official with jurisdiction over minor misdemeanors, protection orders, and other matters as specified by county.
- **Oath:** a solemn declaration that one's statement is true or that one will be bound to a promise.
- **Objection:** a formal statement opposing something that has occurred, or is about to occur, in court and seeking the Judge/Magistrate's immediate ruling on the issue.
 - **Sustained:** to uphold or rule in favor of an objection.
 - **Overruled:** to reject or rule against an objection.
- **Opening Statement:** at the outset of a trial, an attorney or pro se litigant's statement giving the decision maker a preview of the case and of the evidence to be presented.
- **Order:** a written direction or command delivered by a court or judge.
- **Petitioner:** a party who makes the complaint in a legal action or proceeding. A petitioner may also be called a complainant.
- **Plaintiff:** the party who initiates a civil lawsuit in court.
- **Plea:** an accused person's formal response of "guilty," "not guilty," or "no contest" to a criminal charge.
- **Pleading:** a formal document in which a party sets forth or responds to allegations/claims.
- **Privilege:** a shield that prevents certain professionals from having to testify to or otherwise divulge the contents of communications with survivors; communications between rape crisis center advocates and survivors in Ohio are not protected by privilege.
- **Pro se:** "for oneself"; one who represents oneself in a court proceeding without the assistance of a lawyer.
- **Record:** the official report of the proceedings in a case, including filed papers, transcripts, and tangible exhibits.
- **Respondent:** a party against whom a complaint seeking relief is brought; this term is often used in campus Title IX proceedings and administrative processes.
- **Service:** the formal delivery of a writ, summons, notice, pleading, or other legal process.
- **Subpoena:** a document that orders its recipient to appear as a witness in court, subject to a penalty for failing to comply.

Judge or Magistrate

Bailiff

Witness Stand

Jury Box

When there is an objection, pause. The judge or your attorney will let you know when/if you can continue testifying.

When answering a question, be sure to say "Yes" or "No" - nods or "mm-hmm" will not be recorded.

**Defendant/
Respondent's
Table**

**Plaintiff/
Petitioner's
Table**

Advocates/ support persons cannot speak during the hearing, unless specifically asked by the judge.

Your Advocate or other support persons will sit in the gallery. Witnesses will sit outside the courtroom until it is their time to testify.

GALLERY

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ENTRY/EXIT