

What to expect from your experience dealing with Wood County Juvenile Probation

Your child has been charged with a crime. You can expect courteous and helpful information from the staff at Wood County Juvenile Probation. We will not tolerate violations to the conditions of release, nor the conditions of probation and will hold your child accountable for their actions. We will do this in a clear and consistent manner; however, we will have to work as a team, in order for your child to be the most successful. Please understand that the community's safety and the well-being of your child is our priority. We will be doing home evaluations on your home and anywhere that the child frequents. If you share custody with anyone, we will also make it a point to get to the other parent/ guardian's home, to ensure that the child is safe, there is food, water, and that the child's needs are being met.

The list of things below describes the processes of our department:

Arrest- The arrest of your child is undoubtedly, very hard to deal with. We do not expect you to fully understand the process and that is the reason for this informational letter. At the time of arrest, we have a few options: we can detain your child in juvenile detention or we can release your child back with you. If your child has been previously referred to this office or has been charged with a crime against person, drug related offense, or a threat of harm; we automatically detain.

Detention- Detention serves as a short term placement for your child. It allows the probation department to investigate their past behavior, home environment, and the situation that surrounded the arrest/ incident. While your child is in detention, the probation department may ask for the child to be screened by a mental health professional, drug and alcohol counselor for dependency concerns, or provide your child a cooling off period; especially in cases of domestic/ family violence. The child cannot be detained more than 10 BUSINESS days, but can be released within hours of the detention. The probation office knows that the least restrictive environment is best for the child, but in certain situations, where the safety of the child or community is at stake, the child will be in detention until a plan of action is reached between the department and the parent.

Conditions of Release- Whether or not your child goes to detention or home, you will ultimately have to be responsible for the child and assure that he/ she follows the COURT ORDERED conditions of release. These will be a list of rules that the child will have to follow and you will be the person to ensure that they meet all of the requirements that the juvenile judge put into place for them. If you do not contact the juvenile probation department with violations, you could be in jeopardy of being brought to court due to contempt of court charges. You are instructed to report any and all violations to the attention of the supervising officer. Should you be having issues with your child, please contact the office, immediately. Sometimes as parents, we wait until we are at our wits ends to do anything, please do not wait that long. Let's start off on a good foot and tell your child that you and your supervising officer are a team.

Court Appointed/ Retained Attorney- Every child that comes through the WCJPD will have to be represented by counsel, if it recommended that we place your child on probation. You will receive notice, after filling out a court appointed counsel request, if the judge denied or accepted your request. If it is denied, you will have to retain (pay an attorney their fee). If you are accepted, you will receive a court appointed attorney and will pay a fee of 375.00 over the duration of 10 months. The supervising officer will go over the court appointed counsel request, in detail. This document is the only thing that the judge sees when deciding whether or not you will qualify for counsel.

Summons- You and your child will be called to the office for “service”. This is a notice of hearing to provide to your child’s school or to your place of employment. This is a written notice for you to appear in court on the day that the summons states. This paperwork will also accompany a petition. The petition will tell you what your child is charged with. Your child’s supervising officer will explain any questions that you have and will go over the rules of the courtroom and how to behave in court. Here is a brief list of rules:

- No cell phones- turn them off or leave them in the car
- No inappropriate clothing- dress like you would be going to church
- Child- When speaking say yes ma’am/ sir or no ma’am/ sir and speak up. There will be a court reporter typing every word that is said in court. You have to speak, they cannot type that you nodded your head yes or no

Court- Court is a hectic day for your supervising officer. You will meet with your attorney at least 30 minutes before the beginning of court. Should your attorney request that you be here earlier, do so. They will go over the social history (a brief biography of your child’s life), admonishments (points to ensure that your child understands the court process), and will swear your child in at the District Clerk’s office (they swear to tell the truth and not lie). After the hearing, your child will be called to the bailiff’s desk to thumb print the disposition. This is standard and required on every child that goes on probation. This is the first day of actual probation, before now, you have been on conditions of release, which is pre-court monitoring. After thumb printing, your supervising officer will ask you to go back to our office, or they will accompany you down to the office. At this time, there will be more paperwork: case plan (designed for your child to give them the best possibility of success while on probation), you will be given a copy of it and the conditions of probation. At this time, you will be told when and how to report, when community service begins and other rules and regulations of the department. If you have any questions, your supervising officer will try to explain them, quickly. Depending on the size of the court docket that day, we may require for you to come back for all of the necessities we need after court. We will try to schedule this appointment at your convenience, but we will try, to make the time to get everything done to ensure you don’t have to make a special trip back to the office before your child’s required reporting date. (Should you be given a deferred arrangement, you will not be required to go to court. It is a “gentlemen’s agreement to do what you are told for an allotted amount of time. This is not going to be offered to every child; it will be on special grounds that a child will get a deferred opportunity. Should the child not complete deferred, we will file a petition and take the child to court on the original charge and the deferred arrangement will be off the table)

Probation Monitoring- The rule still applies to parents, that if you know that your child is violating the conditions of probation, you must report to the probation officer.

Dismissal- If your child is successful on probation, we will call you into the office, with your child, about 30 days before they are set to go off of their court ordered probation. We will sign an EXIT plan and talk to you about what to do after probation is not in your lives, should problems occur. Your child's probation will expire at midnight on the date that is states on the conditions of probation that you were given at the time that you went to court with your child. If you have any questions, you may still call the probation officer at any time, even after the child is off of probation.

Court Ordered Placement- should the department and judge feel that the child is a risk to himself/ herself, a threat to those in the household, on drugs to the extent that they cannot function or thrive, or continues to violate probation; the judge can order your child to a placement facility. The facilities that we contract with deal with issues and solutions to those issues on a daily basis. The child is removed from the home, placed in detention, and then sent to placement for a duration that can be 6 months to one year. This could be for sex offender treatment, drug rehabilitation, boot camp, psychiatric care, or can be a mix of some issues stated above. You will be required to support your child, while they are in placement. If you receive social security on your child, it will have to be turned over to Wood County Juvenile Probation, as will any child support that you receive. The money goes to the child's care, considering that it costs in excess of 197.00 a day to place your child, outside of the home. The judge may also order you to pay monthly support to the department and you will be asked to pay for psychiatric appointments and medical bills.

TJJD ID- for those children who fail at placement and are on felony probation, they can be sent to prison or otherwise called TJJD ID (it was called TYC in the past). TJJD ID is a state ran operation and they are solely responsible for the child. After the child is sent to Brownwood to the intake facility. The child is no longer under the supervision of Wood County Juvenile Probation. Any and all contact that you will make will be to the facility that your child is residing in at TJJD ID. The state runs several facilities all over the state and while your child is at Ron Jackson in Brownwood, they will begin assessments to determine what facility would best suit your child. They will be at the intake facility for approximately 60 to 90 days and then will move to another facility to begin their skill training and education. Some children will stay at Ron Jackson in Brownwood, however. Please note that Wood County Juvenile Probation is not privy to any information on your child after they are transported to Brownwood. You will be contacted by the staff there and will be given the name of a caseworker who will handle any and all issues with your child, thereafter.

Contact Information: Phone 903-763-5772 Fax: 903-763-5104

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