

Information Gathering Checklist

Prior to making a report to the court, you must first gather relevant information so that your recommendation is thorough and fact-based. Gathering records, interviewing people with knowledge of the child and his/her situation, and personal observations of the child, his/her family, and his/her current placement are all necessary to have a factual, comprehensive view of the child's situation and will make your advocacy more effective. Below is a checklist to follow when gathering information:

- Met with and interviewed the child and observed the child with each parent, foster parent, guardian or physical custodian and conducted at least one interview with the child where none of these individuals is present;
- Visited the child at his or her residence if possible;
- Ascertained the wishes of the child;
- Met with and interviewed the parties, foster parents and other significant individuals who may have relevant knowledge regarding the issues of the case;
- Reviewed the court documents (Ex: petition for protective custody) and other relevant documents in the case in which you are appointed;
- Reviewed criminal, civil, and administrative records pertaining to the child and, if appropriate, to the child's family or to other parties in the case;
- Reviewed mental health records, educational records, health records, and Juvenile Office records;
- Interviewed school personnel, medical and mental health providers, social services workers and relevant court personnel;
- Recommended that the court order psychological evaluations, mental health and/or substance abuse assessments, or other evaluations or tests of the parties as the you deem necessary or helpful to the court; and
- Performed any other information gathering necessary to make an informed recommendation regarding the best interest of the child.