

The Youth Services Officer (YSO) and Probation Officer (PO) are officials of the court and are essential to the functioning of the judicial process, as well as to the welfare of the children within the juvenile justice system. Their duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Juvenile Court Intake
- Pre-hearing Investigations
- Referral
- Supervision
- Detention Screenings
- Counseling
- Record Keeping

The Juvenile Court Clerk is the record keeping and records management backbone of the juvenile court. The clerk maintains separate minutes, dockets, and legal records of all matters pertaining to juvenile court proceedings as required by law. Historically, Juvenile Court Clerks have been responsible for the collection and handling of child support payments. This is in the process of moving to a centralized child support payment system. Juvenile court clerks also collect all fees, fines, and court costs assessed by the juvenile court.

Juvenile Court Process

In Tennessee, the basic juvenile court process is comprised of three central phases: (1) Intake, (2) Adjudication, and (3) Disposition.

Juvenile court intake is a process through which the court reviews information in order to determine whether it has the authority to intervene in a child's life and in what manner it will administer its authority. The components of the intake process are referral to intake, detention screening, and assessment of how to handle the complaint. Referral to intake involves the filing of a complaint by law enforcement, parents, or other individuals or agencies requesting the court to exercise its authority. If detention is requested by the complainant, the intake officer performs a detention screening to determine if there is probable cause (legal sufficiency) that the child committed the alleged offense and is subject to detention in accordance with statute. Lastly, an assessment is made to determine if the complaint should be excluded, if informal adjustment (a voluntary agreement between the intake officer, the child and the parents) should be pursued, or if a petition should be filed.

In most instances, if a petition is filed, the case goes into the adjudicatory phase. In this phase the case is heard by the juvenile court judge to determine if the allegations of the petition are true. In making its decision, the court considers only the child's juvenile court record and the evidence that has been formally admitted. If the allegations are not substantiated or cannot be proven, the petition will be dismissed. In those situations where the allegations are substantiated, the judge will proceed immediately or will set a later hearing to determine the appropriate outcome or disposition for the case.

The purpose of the dispositional phase is to determine an appropriate course of action regarding the child and his/her circumstances. Disposition, insofar as possible, typically attempts to meet the treatment, social, and rehabilitation needs of the child.