

## **06 - Issues Affecting Juveniles**

### ***At what age is a child considered a juvenile?***

The Family Division of the 46<sup>th</sup> Circuit Trial Court, handles all cases involving children under 17.

### ***What kinds of problems does this include?***

- ! Status offenses - cases involving minors who repeatedly disobey parents, fail to attend school, or run away from home.
- ! Juvenile delinquency - cases involving acts committed by juveniles, which if committed by adults, would be considered crimes. This includes certain traffic violations.
- ! Child protective proceedings - cases which involve children under 18 who are abused or neglected by adults. The Family Division acts on behalf of the child. Often the child is placed in foster care until the court determines how the family can be helped.

### ***How does a child get into the Family Division system?***

A petition must be filed in court to begin any action against a juvenile. A petition is a written complaint stating that:

1. A parent has failed to properly care for a child

OR

2. A juvenile has committed an offense.

In some cases, the family Division will appoint an attorney to represent the child.

### ***What if the child is delinquent?***

In Delinquency Proceedings, a series of hearings will be held to determine whether a petition should be authorized; whether the juvenile should be held prior to the trial; whether the juvenile is guilty; and what action the court will take after the trial.

The Court will also monitor the progress of a juvenile committed to a facility; review compliance with probation orders; and determine if juveniles 15 or older should be ordered to jail.

### ***What about cases of child abuse and neglect?***

In Protective Proceedings, hearings are held to decide if the child should be placed in care outside the home; and whether the child should be placed in permanent custody of the court for adoption planning.

The Court also reviews the child's foster care placement, and determines whether to return a child home or continue foster care.

### ***What if I have questions about adoption?***

The Family Division of the Court processes all agency, step-parent, relative and adult adoption petitions in this County. The fee for an adoption petition is \$100.

***What about marriages between minors?***

All marriages for minors under 16 must be approved by the Family Division. The minor female must be pregnant or have delivered a child to request permission for a marriage certificate. Parental consent must be included. One applicant must be a County resident.

***What about minors involved in traffic violations?***

All misdemeanor traffic violations issued to juveniles are handled by the Family Division of the Court. Uncontested violations are handled by the Traffic Referee. Contested matters are heard by a judge or referee.

All civil infraction violations issued to juveniles are handled by the District Division of the Court.