



# How to testify in court

This document serves as a practical guide for professionals testifying in court, emphasizing preparation, professionalism, and courtroom etiquette. It provides essential strategies to confidently and effectively present clinical insights while adhering to legal standards.

## Preparation and Timing:

- Arrive either in person or on Zoom no less than 15 minutes earlier than when proceedings are supposed to begin. Ideally, closer to 30 if court is in-person.

## Appearance:

- In-person: Dress professionally (e.g., collared shirt for men, nice blouse for women).
- Virtual: Be camera-ready and in a quiet, distraction-free space; no t-shirts allowed.

## Confidence:

- Testify with confidence, knowing you have done your homework and possess the necessary clinical knowledge. Relax and trust your expertise and stick to your clinical findings. Stay confident and clear, knowing that your recommendations are based on solid evidence and assessment.
- Prepare for potential questions from the judge or legal representatives by reviewing common concerns in AOT cases.
- If faced with challenging questions, take a moment to gather your thoughts before responding; it's okay to ask for clarification if needed.

## Case Review:

- Review the case thoroughly before court, especially if the individual is not on your caseload.
- Access and understand the electronic medical records and any relevant documentation to present current clinical information.



## Court Etiquette:

- Be mindful of court etiquette: allow the judge to speak and do not overtalk. ALWAYS refer to the judge as “Your Honor.”
- Answer questions in a professional manner.
- Pay attention to the questions being asked; this will help you respond appropriately and directly.

## Testifying:

- Only testify to information you have clinical access to and knowledge of.
- Remember that you are on the record and there is no eating or drinking allowed in court.
- Be prepared to discuss how the individual meets the criteria for AOT, including their history of treatment and any recent behaviors indicating the need for AOT.
- Use clear and concise language when explaining clinical information; avoid jargon that may not be understood by all parties.
- Highlight any collaboration with other providers, family members, or community resources that support your recommendations.
- While you may have a personal connection to the case, ensure that your testimony remains objective and focuses on clinical facts rather than personal opinions.