



### RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS IN YOUR ADOPTION OR GUARDIANSHIP CASE

- Contact the client by phone to set up an initial meeting (in lieu of or in addition to sending a letter or email). (Keep in mind that you may need to call more than once. Sometimes clients' phones are unable to accept messages or are temporarily disconnected.) If you are unable to reach the client within two weeks, please let CLC know. We may be able to assist you.
- During your first client meeting, in addition to learning your client's objectives, goals, and the case history, we suggest that you ask the client about any recent developments in the case (e.g., recent court filings, correspondence from other parties or the Court, changes in the child's, parents' or client's status). Ask your client to bring any documents related to the case or the child's care and well-being.
- Introduce yourself to the parties in the underlying neglect case. (Reminder that these parties are listed in the Contacts sheet provided in the case placement e-mail.)
- Enter your appearance in the underlying neglect case. (A sample is attached to your case placement e-mail and also available on [CLC's model pleadings page](#).)
- Consider filing a motion for party status if your client is not already a party. ([CLC's model pleadings page](#) has a sample motion for party status.)
  - Once your client is a party to the neglect case, obtain a copy of the neglect and social case files. You or a legal assistant may go to the Family Court Clerk's office, room JM-300, to request a copy of the case file and a printout of the case "docket." (A legal assistant may need a permission letter to gain access to the file.)
- Prepare and attend the next scheduled neglect hearing and all subsequent hearings in the neglect case.
- Think strategically about the timing of filing your adoption petition or motion for guardianship. [CLC's mentors](#) are happy to discuss case strategy with you at any time.

- When appropriate, file your motion for guardianship or petition for adoption. ([CLC's model pleadings page](#) has sample guardianship motions and the related summons, and a sample petition for adoption with the related adoption information sheet and DC vital records form.)
- As the case proceeds, [CLC's training resources](#) for pro bono attorneys and [mentors](#) can provide you any assistance you need.
- When it comes time for case closure, be sure to provide your client with a copy of the final order issued. (For adoption cases, we advise that you give all four original decrees to your client in addition to the court's findings of fact and conclusions of law and order waiving the parents' rights.)
- Please let a [CLC mentor](#) know if a notice of appeal is filed by any party (including you). CLC may be available to assist with appellate strategy.
- Please notify CLC when your case closes by completing our short case closure form, available on CLC's pro bono page.

**REMINDER:** eFiling is now mandatory in most DC Family Court cases, including abuse and neglect cases (including guardianship). However, eFiling is not available in adoption cases. There is an [Administrative Order](#) outlining the eFiling requirements and procedures for Family Court. If you have an active case, in order to receive orders and participate in eFiling you must [REGISTER](#) with the CaseFileXpress system. A few additional reminders: (1) although this is rare in neglect cases, if a party is not required to and not participating in eFiling (e.g. pro se litigants) you must serve that party traditionally by paper; (2) while filing fees are generally waived in neglect matters, you will have to incur the eFiling fee unless fees are otherwise waived (e.g., a party with in forma pauperis (IFP) will use "dccourtapprovedifp" code); and (3) pro bono attorneys who are not DC-barred and are practicing under Rule 49 should use "999999" in place of the required bar number. If you are new to eFiling, we strongly suggest that you access the [CaseFileXpress training materials](#). The eFiling Support Team is available to assist you by phone at 877-433-4533, by email at [info@casefilexpress.com](mailto:info@casefilexpress.com), or by live [chat](#) online.