

**November 14, 2017 -- A special thanks to Judge Dimitris and the 01 team: Nerlande, Nicole and Cynthia.**

**1. *What do you want to hear from the GAL?***

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** Good insight into what's really going on. More depth and different information than the case manager reports -- especially if your viewpoint or information differs from what the CM is reporting. Wants to hear the child's needs and wishes and parent's thoughts if they have shared them. He prefers to hear objective testimony first and then subjective opinions.
- b. **Nerlande:** How she can support you and what you need done. This is a teamwork effort. She wants to know if there are service lapses or what needs follow-up.
- c. **Nicole:** How you prefer to staff your cases (weekly or monthly). She wants to be sure things don't fall through the cracks.
- d. **Cynthia:** Everything!

**2. *When do you want our reports and what do you look for in them?***

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** I would like the most important information bolded. I review the reports in "real time" - just prior to the hearing.
- b. **Nerlande:** Before the court date (preferably 2 weeks before). I review them for legal sufficiency and leave comments. I look for services, visitation, referrals, and follow-up items.
- c. **Nicole:** I want the reports 2 weeks before the hearing, and I look to see what's missing.
- d. **Cynthia:** If you can't get the report in the proper form, call me and give me the information. I will put together the report for you to review.

**3. *What are your pet peeves?***

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** GALs that don't speak up!
- b. **Nerlande:** Contact logs not updated.
- c. **Nicole:** GALs who say, "I've been scared to contact you because I haven't done my visit". Call me -- we can get someone to cover your visit!
- d. **Cynthia:** GALs who don't visit or call. There is no such thing as a bad job for a volunteer.

**4. *When do you consider changing the goal of the case plan?***

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** I should not be active in determining how a case proceeds. The parties need to make recommendations and provide evidence. After hearing everything, I will apply the law and come to a conclusion.
- b. **Nerlande:** When appropriate! Depends on several factors: how long has the case been open, compliance/ non-compliance/ partial compliance with the case plan. At the one-year mark, should look at the likelihood that the goal will/will not be reached.
- c. **Cynthia:** Anytime.

**5. *How can we help move a case forward?***

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** Do your visits and write your reports. Don't hesitate to contact your attorney to put a case on calendar, if necessary, rather than waiting for the next scheduled hearing.
- b. **Nerlande:** Follow up with the case manager on the parent's services and referrals.
- c. **Nicole:** Go to court. Follow up with service providers: therapist, schools, etc.
- d. **Cynthia:** The phone is your best friend -- call your attorney.

**6. What is your view on children attending hearings?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** I want to see the children -- definitely at TOS and shelter hearings and as often as is reasonable. I like to see how parents respond to a child crying or a mischievous child. Please let me know when a child is present and also when there may be testimony forthcoming that would be upsetting to a child so I can ask that they be taken outside. If I ask the GAL to take the child outside and you need to be in the hearing -- just let me know!
- b. **Nerlande:** When they want to address the Court or their goals on the case plan are different from the stated goal.
- c. **Nicole:** They should attend some hearings but don't want their attending hearings to interfere with school.

**7. What is your procedure if a child wants to speak to you privately?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** I don't have a good one yet. I would want someone else present (like the GAL) and would want to be sure there were no objections. Tell your attorney.

**8. How many 2<sup>nd</sup> chance/last chance case plans are sufficient?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** There are implications if the parents haven't been given a chance for success. It also depends if the trajectory of the case is moving in the right direction.
- b. **Nerlande:** If you are nearing the end of the case plan and are changing the goal and then the parent starts services and begins to gain insight.
- c. **Nicole:** One.
- d. **Cynthia:** Depends if reasonable efforts for services have been made.

**9. Who do you want to hear from -- the GAL or the attorney? Who do you want to hear from first?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** The attorney first because they can frame the issue. Then I want to hear from the GAL.

**10. Do you want to hear from the foster parents/ caregivers?**

- a. Yes, and I would also like them to come to Court but not if it will create a stressful situation. Their experience and their work are valuable, and I would like to hear from them.

**11. Tips or recommendations for us?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** Don't leave the courtroom feeling like there was something you should have said.
- b. **Nerlande:** Contact the case managers and everyone involved in your case.
- c. **Nicole:** Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- d. **Cynthia:** Continue loving it.

**12. Are you comfortable with us appearing by phone?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** Yes, but nothing beats having you appear in person. It also delays the process if you don't appear.

**13. How can we get our cases called sooner?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** If everyone is here and ready, let the bailiff and court liaison know. I generally call those cases that have the most people first. If we are very backed up or you are delayed, you can request moving the case to the afternoon calendar, and I will have your case called first after lunch.

**14. How has your experience been so far?**

- a. **Judge Dimitris:** I love it -- great and impactful. Remember, I was once a volunteer GAL too!!