

COMMON LEGAL TERMS

**The Connecticut Judicial Branch
Volunteer/ Intern Program
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Common Legal Terms

A through Z

DISCLAIMER

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A

AKA: “Also known as”. Used to list aliases or another name, or another spelling of a name used by a person.

Accelerated Rehabilitation: Also called AR. A program that gives persons charged with a crime or motor vehicle violation for the first time a second chance. The person is placed on probation for up to two years. If probation is completed satisfactorily, the charges are dismissed.

Acknowledgement: The signature of a clerk or attorney certifying that the person filing the document has sworn that the contents are true, and/or that the document is signed by his or her free act and deed.

Action: Also called a case or lawsuit. A civil judicial proceeding where one party sues another for a wrong done, or to protect a right or to prevent a wrong.

Adjournment: Postponement of a court session until another time or place.

Adjudication: A decision or sentence imposed by a judge.

Adjudicatory Hearing: Juvenile court proceeding to determine whether the allegations made in a petition are true and whether the child/youth should be subject to orders of the court.

Adult Court Transfer: The transfer of juveniles who are at least fourteen years old to regular criminal dockets in Geographical Area or Judicial District courts. Also involves the transfer from a Juvenile Detention Center to the State Department of Correction.

Adult Probation: A legal status, applied to people 16 years of age and older, who have been convicted of a crime and placed under the supervision of a probation officer for a period of time set by the court.

Affirmation: Declaring something to be true under the penalty of perjury by a person who will not take an oath for religious or other reasons.

Affidavit: A written statement made under oath.

Alcohol Education Program: A pre-trial program for first time offenders charged with driving a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

Alford Doctrine: A plea in a criminal case in which the defendant does not admit guilt, but agrees that the state has enough evidence against him or her to get a conviction. Allows the defendant to enter into a plea bargain with the state. If the judge accepts the Alford Plea, a guilty finding is made on the record.

Alimony: Money a court requires one spouse to pay the other spouse for support before and/or after the divorce is granted. If you do not ask for alimony at the final hearing, you can never get it in the future.

Allegation: Saying that something is true. The assertion, declaration or statement of a party in a case, made in a pleading.

Alternate Juror: A juror selected as a substitute in case another juror must leave the jury panel.

Alternative Detention Program: Programs operated by service providers under the Office of Alternative Sanctions used to detain juveniles instead of in a Juvenile Detention Center.

Alternative Dispute Resolution: Also called ADR. Any method used to resolve disputes other than traditional trial proceedings. For example, mediation. ADR programs speed up the disposition of civil cases.

Alternative Incarceration Center: Also called AIC. A community based program that provides monitoring, supervision and services to people who would otherwise be incarcerated.

Alternative Sanctions: Criminal punishment that is less restrictive than incarceration.

Annulment: A court order declaring that a marriage is invalid.

Answer: A court document, or pleading, in a civil case, by which the defendant responds to the plaintiff's complaint.

Appeal: Asking a higher court to review the decision or sentence of a trial court because the lower court made an error.

Appeal Bond: Money paid to the court while taking an appeal to cover costs and damages to the other party, if the appeal is not successful.

Appearance: The official court form filed with the court clerk which tells the court that you are representing yourself in a lawsuit or criminal case or that an attorney is representing you. All court notices and calendars will be mailed to the address listed on the form. When a defendant in a civil case files an appearance, the person is submitting to the court's jurisdiction.

Appellant: The party appealing a decision or judgment to a higher court.

Appellee: The party against whom an appeal is taken.

Arbitration: Submitting a case or dispute to designated parties for a decision, instead of using a judge.

Arraignment: The first court appearance of a person accused of a crime. The person is advised of his or her rights by a judge and may respond to the criminal charges by entering a plea. Usually happens the morning after a person is arrested.

Arrest: When a person is taken into custody by a police officer and charged with a crime.

Arrearages: Money for alimony and/or child support, which is overdue and unpaid.

Assignment List: A printed list of cases to be presented to the court for hearing.

Assistant Attorney General: An attorney who represents a state agency in civil cases.

Attachment: A lien on property or assets to hold it to pay or satisfy any final judgment.

Attorney of Record: Attorney whose name appears in the permanent records or files of a case.

Automatic Orders: Court orders that take effect when a divorce or custody case is started.

B

Bail: Also called Bond. Money or property given to the court for the temporary release of a defendant, to ensure that the defendant will return to court.

Bail Bondsperson: A person who lends money to a defendant to pay for bail.

Bail Commissioner: A state-appointed person who may set the amount of bond for persons detained at a police station prior to arraignment in court, and who recommends to the court the amount of bond that should be set for the defendant on each criminal case.

Bar: Refers to attorneys as a group.

Best Interest of the Child: The standard a judge uses to decide custody and visitation issues.

Bench Warrant: Court papers issued by the judge, “from the bench,” for the arrest of a person.

Bond: Also called bail. Money or property given to the court for the temporary release of a defendant, to ensure that the defendant will return to court. There are two kinds of bonds:

Non-financial bonds: a) Non-surety bond where the defendant’s signature alone guarantees the amount of bond and the defendant is not required to post any property or retain the services of a professional bail bondsperson as collateral. b) Promise to appear.

Surety bond: The court requires cash, real estate or a professional bail bondpersons signature as collateral before releasing the defendant back into the community. (The court may allow the defendant to post ten percent of the bond in cash to secure his or her release.)

Bond Forfeiture (calling the Bond): If the defendant fails to appear in court as scheduled, the judge may order the bond forfeited (paid to the state) and the defendant rearrested.

Bond Review: A hearing for a judge to decide if the defendant's bond amount needs to be changed.

Bondsman: A surety; one who has put up cash or property as collateral before a defendant may be released.

Brief: A written document prepared by a lawyer or party on each side of a dispute and filed with the court in support of their arguments.

Broken Down Irretrievably: The most common reason for granting a divorce. It means there is no hope of the husband and wife getting back together again. Also known as a "no-fault" divorce.

C

Calendar: A list of court cases scheduled for a specific date and time; the civil and family court docket.

Calendar Call: The calling of cases scheduled for the day, usually done at the beginning of each court day.

Capias Mittimus: A civil arrest warrant used to get a person physically into court to respond to a specific case or claim.

Capital Felony: A criminal offense in which the death penalty may be imposed (C.G.S. '53a-54b).

Case: A lawsuit or action in a court.

Case Conference: A meeting scheduled by the court to review the case.

Case File: The court file containing papers submitted in a case.

Case Flow Coordinator: A person who keeps track of your case and supervises the scheduling of hearings and trials.

Central Transportation Unit: Persons in the Division of Juvenile Detention Services who provide safe and secure transportation services for juveniles detained at

Juvenile Detention Centers, Alternative Detention Program and Girls' Detention Program.

Certify: To testify in writing; to make known or establish as a fact.

CGS: Abbreviation for Connecticut General Statutes.

Challenge: Rejecting a potential juror.

Charge: Formal accusation of a crime.

Charge to Jury: In trial practice, an address delivered by the court to the jury at the close of the case instructing the jury as to what principles of law they are to apply in reaching a decision.

Chattels: All property except real property; personal property. For example: jewelry, clothing, furniture, and appliances.

Child: Any person under the age of sixteen (16) years of age.

Child Support: Money paid by a parent to help meet the financial needs of a child.

“Chip Smith Charge”: The “Chip Smith charge” is an instruction to deadlocked jurors, urging those jurors whose disagree with the majority vote to reexamine the majority views in an effort to reach a unanimous verdict.

CIP: Children in Placement- a voluntary program in Juvenile Court, which monitors neglect, cases.

Civil Action: A lawsuit other than a criminal case usually filed in a Judicial District courthouse. Includes family actions (divorces, child support, etc) and small claims cases, although these are both separately designated.

Claim: In civil cases, the statement of relief desired.

Classification and Program Officer: Also called CPO. A person who provides classification, program, counseling and recreational services to detained juveniles. May attend certain court hearings in Juvenile Matters and provide reports.

Common Law: Laws that develop through case decisions by judges. Not enacted by legislative bodies.

Community Service: Work that convicted defendants are required to perform in order to repay the community for the harm caused to the community by the crime.

Community Services Coordinator: The person who refers a defendant to community service work and supervises the defendant's completion of that work.

Community Service Labor Program: Also called CSLP. A community service program for persons charged with drug offenses. Upon successful completion of the community service sentence, the criminal case is dismissed.

Complaint: A legal document that tells the court what you want, and is served with a summons on the defendant to begin the case.

Complex Litigation: A specialized docket designed for complex civil cases, where one judge hears the case from beginning to end. Criteria includes: multiple parties, large amounts of money, lengthy trial or complex legal issues.

Conditional Discharge: A disposition, in criminal cases, where the defendant must satisfy certain court-ordered conditions instead of a prison term.

Contempt of Court: A finding that someone disobeyed a court order. Can also mean disrupting court, for example, by being loud or disrespectful in court.

Continuance: The adjournment or postponement of a court case to another day.

Continuance Date: Date on which the case will next be heard in court.

Contract: A legally enforceable agreement between two or more persons or parties.

Conviction: To be found guilty of committing a crime.

Costs: Expenses in prosecuting or defending a case in court; usually does not include attorney's fees.

Count: The different parts of a complaint, which could each be a basis or grounds for the lawsuit.

Counter Claim: A claim by the defendant in a civil action that the defendant is entitled to damages or other relief from the plaintiff.

Court-Appointed Attorney: An attorney who is asked by the court (judge) to either represent a party to the case, or to serve in some other capacity that the case requires.

Court Clerk: The person who maintains the official court record of your case. The court clerks' office receives all court papers and assigns hearing dates.

Court Interpreter: The person who translates court hearings from English to another language. Provided at state expense in all criminal cases and in cases enforcing child support orders, if requested. No interpreter is available for divorce or any other civil case.

Court Monitor: The person who prepares a written record of the court hearing for a fee, if requested, from audiotapes made during the hearing.

Court Reporter: The person who records everything said during the court hearing on a stenograph machine and prepares a written record for a fee, if requested.

Court Services Officer: A person who assists the judge and oversees cases as they go through the court.

Court Trial: Trial by a judge, rather than by a jury.

Crime Victim Compensation Program: Awards money to crime victims and their families for medical, mental health, dental, funeral expenses, lost wages and loss of support.

Cross-Examination: Questioning by a party or the attorney of an adverse party or a witness.

Custody: A court order deciding where a child will live and how decisions about the child will be made. Parents may ask for any custody arrangement that they believe is in the best interest of their child.

Custody Affidavit: A sworn statement containing facts about a child involved in a case, including full name of the child, date of birth, current and past residences and other information as may be required by law.

D

Damages: Money a party receives as compensation for a legal wrong.

Day Incarceration Center: Also called DIC.

A community based program that provides monitoring, supervision and services to people who would otherwise be incarcerated. Day Incarceration Center clients are supervised during the daytime hours, seven days per week.

Declaration: An unsworn statement of facts made by a party to the transaction, or by one who has an interest in the facts recounted.

Default: To fail to respond or answer to the plaintiff's claims by filing the required court document; usually an Appearance or an Answer.

Defendant: In civil cases, the person who is given court papers, also called a respondent. In criminal cases, the person who is arrested and charged with a crime.

Delinquent: In civil or family cases, failing to pay an amount of money when due: In juvenile cases, a child who violated a law, local ordinance, or an order of the Superior Court.

Deposition: Testimony of a witness taken, under oath, in response to another party's questions. Testimony given outside the courtroom, usually in a lawyer's office. A word for word account (transcript) is made of the testimony.

Detention Hearing or Detention Release Hearing:

A hearing on the first business day after a juvenile is admitted to juvenile detention concerning the legality and appropriateness of continued detention of the juvenile. The detention decision must be reviewed at least every fifteen days.

Discovery: A formal request by one party in a lawsuit to disclose information or facts known by other parties or witnesses.

Dismissal: A judge's decision to end the case.

Dismissal Without Prejudice: A judge's decision to end the case which permits the complainant or prosecutor to renew the case later. In contrast, dismissal "with prejudice" prevents the complainant or prosecutor to bring or maintain the same claim or action again.

Dispose: Ending a legal case or a judicial proceeding.

Dissolution: The legal end of a marriage, also called a divorce.

Disposition: The manner in which a case is settled or resolved.

Diversiónary Programs: Community based programs that are used to keep eligible, convicted criminal offenders out of prison.

Docket: A list of cases scheduled to be heard in court on a specific day or week.

Docket Number: A unique number the court clerk assigns to a case. It must be used on all future papers filed in the court case. Each docket number starts with two letters that tell the type of case. CI = criminal infraction; CR = criminal case; CV = civil case; FA = family case; MI = motor vehicle infraction; MV = motor vehicle case; SC = small claims.

Domicile: The permanent home of a person. A person may have several residences, but only one domicile.

Drug Court: A Special Session of the Superior Court that is responsible for hearing cases involving charges of drug offenses.

E

Education Program: A program for family violence offenders that, if granted and successfully completed, results in dismissal of criminal charges (C.G.S. §46b-38c).

Ejectment: A legal case filed against someone who is a holdover tenant (someone who remains after the expiration of a lease).

Electronic Monitoring: An electronic system that provides the Probation Officer or Bail Commissioner a report about whether the offender has left home during the time when the offender was required to remain at his or her home.

Emancipated Minor: A person under the legal majority age of 18 who is granted most rights and legal privileges of an adult (C.G.S. §46b-150, et seq.).

Emancipation: The release of a youth from the legal authority and control of her/her parents and the corresponding release of the youth's parents from their obligations to the youth.

Eminent Domain: The legal process by which private property is taken for public use without the consent of the owner.

Eviction: Legally forcing a tenant out of rented property.

Evidence: Testimony, documents or objects presented at a trial to prove a fact.

Ex Parte: Done for, or at the request of, one side in a case only, without prior notice to the other side.

Execution Suspended: A prison sentence that is suspended in whole or in part provided certain conditions of probation or conditional discharge are met by the defendant.

F

Failure to Appear: In a civil case, failing to file an Appearance form. In a criminal case, failing to come to court for a scheduled hearing.

Family Relations Counselor: A person who mediates disagreements and negotiates agreements in custody, visitation and divorce cases. At the request of the judge, a family relations counselor may evaluate a family situation by interviewing each parent and the children in the family. The family relations counselor then writes a report for the judge, making recommendations about custody and visitation. Works in the Family Services Office.

Family Support Magistrate: A person who decides cases involving child support and paternity. Can also enforce court orders involving paternity, child support and alimony.

Family Violence Education Program: A program for family violence offenders that if successfully completed, results in the dismissal of criminal charges.

Family Violence Victim Advocate: A person who works with domestic violence victims to determine their needs and inform them of their rights and resources available to them.

Family With Service Needs: Also called FWSN. A family that includes a child, who (a) runs away without just cause, (b) is beyond the control of his/her parents/guardian, (c) has engaged in indecent or immoral conduct, and/or (d) is a truant or continuously defiant of school rules and regulations.

Felony: Any criminal offense for which a person may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than of one year.

Felony Murder: A murder committed while the person is also committing a felony.

Filing: Giving the court clerk legal papers which become part of the case file.

Financial Affidavit: A sworn statement of income, expenses, property (called assets) and debts (called liabilities).

Finding: The court's or jury's decision on issues of fact.

Foreclosure: A court order ending the legal ownership of property.

Foreman: An elected member of a jury who delivers the verdict to the court.

G

Garnishment: A court order to collect money or property. For example, a garnishment may be issued to an employer to pay part of an employee's wages to someone else to pay a debt or judgment.

GA - Geographical Area: Geographical Area. The court location where motor vehicle and most criminal cases are heard. There are 22 GA courts in Connecticut.

Grievance: A complaint filed against an attorney or judge, claiming an injury or injustice.

Guardian: A person who has the power and duty to take care of another person and/or to manage the property and rights of another person, who is considered incapable of taking care of his or her personal affairs.

Guardian Ad Litem: A person, usually a parent, appointed by the court to represent a child or unborn person in a court case. If a family member is not available, a judge may appoint an attorney.

H

Habeas Corpus: A court order used to bring a person physically before a court in order to test the legality of the person's detention. Usually, it is directed to the official or person detaining another, commanding him

to bring the person to court for the judge to determine if that person has been denied liberty without due process of law.

Hearsay: Testimony given by a witness who tells second or third hand information.

Honor Court: A program of outpatient group therapy for alcohol abusers.

Housing Specialist: A person who provides pretrial mediation of landlord/tenant cases to reach settlement. Also provides information about community resources to litigants.

Hung Jury: A jury whose members cannot reconcile their differences of opinion and thus cannot reach a verdict.



Incarceration: Confinement to a state correctional institute or prison.

Income Withholding Order: A court order to deduct child support or alimony payments from someone's wages. All child support court orders must include an income withholding order unless both parents ask the judge not to.

Indigent: Someone without enough money to either support his or her family. Someone who cannot afford to pay certain fees required by the court.

Information (the): In a criminal case, the formal court document in the clerk's file, which contains the charges, dates of offenses, bond status, continuance dates and disposition.

Infraction: A case where the fine may be paid by mail and usually the person does not have to appear or come to court. For example, a speeding ticket.

Injunction: A court order to stop doing or to start doing a specific act.

Interpreter: The person who translates court hearings from English to another language. Provided at state expense in all criminal cases and in cases enforcing child support orders, if requested. No interpreter is available for divorce or any other civil case.

Interrogatory: Formal, written questions used to get information from another party in a lawsuit.

Investigatory Grand Jury: A judge, constitutional state referee or any three judges of the Superior Court, appointed by the Chief Court Administrator to conduct an investigation into the commission of a crime or crimes.

J

Judge: A person who hears and decides cases for the courts. Appointed by the governor for a term of eight years and confirmed by the General Assembly.

Judgment: A court decision. Also called a decree or an order.

Judgment File: A permanent court record of the court's final disposition of the case.

JD - Judicial District: The court where most civil and family matters are heard in a certain area of the state. There are thirteen judicial districts in Connecticut.

Juris Number: An identification number assigned to each attorney in Connecticut.

Jurisdiction: Power and authority of a court to hear and make a judgment in a case.

Juror: Member of a jury.

Jury Charge: The judge's formal instructions on the law to the jury before it begins deliberations.

Jury Instructions: Directions given by the judge to the jury concerning the law of the case.

Juvenile Court: Also called Superior Court for Juvenile Matters. A special division of the Superior

Court designated to hear all cases concerning uncared for, dependent children and youth and delinquents. All juvenile court proceedings and case records are confidential and are not public information.

Juvenile Delinquent: A person under the age of 16 who commits a criminal act.

Juvenile Detention: State facility to provide for the temporary care of a child who alleged to be delinquent and who requires a physically restricted, secure environment.

Juvenile Detention Center: A secure facility for juveniles operated by the Division of Juvenile Detention Services of the Connecticut Judicial Branch; open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Juvenile Detention Officer: Also called JDO. A person who works within a Juvenile Detention Center.

Juvenile Matters: All cases concerning uncared for, neglected or dependent children and youth, termination of parental rights of children committed to a state agency, matters concerning families with service needs, contested matters involving termination of parental rights or removal of guardian transferred from the Probate Court and the emancipation of minors. It does not include guardianship or adoption cases, or matters affecting property rights of any child or youth over which the Probate Court has jurisdiction. The Probate Court hears appeals concerning adoption, termination of parental rights and removal of a parent as guardian are included. Juvenile matters in the criminal session include all cases concerning delinquent children in the state.

Juvenile Probation: Placement of an adjudicated delinquent under the supervision of a juvenile probation officer.

Juvenile Transportation Officer: Also called JTO. A person who provides safe transportation services for juveniles in custody.

L

Law Librarian: Court staff who maintain legal reference and research materials for public use.

Legal Aid or Legal Services: Free legal representatives in civil cases for income eligible persons. Call 1-800-453-3320 to apply.

Legal Custody: Relationship with a child created by court order which gives a person legal responsibility for the physical possession of a minor and the duty to protect, care for and discipline the child.

Legal Separation: A court order describing the conditions under which two married people will live separately.

Lien: A charge, hold, or claim upon property of another as security for a debt.

Lis Pendens: A pending lawsuit. Jurisdiction or control that courts have over property in a case waiting for final disposition. A notice of lis pendens is filed on the land records.

Litigant: A party to a case.

Lockout: Illegally forcing a tenant out of rented property, usually by changing the locks on the doors.

M

Magistrate: A person who is not a judge but who is authorized to hear and decide certain types of cases. For example, family support magistrates hear cases involving child support.

Mandamus: An order directed to a private corporation, or any of its officers, or to an executive, administrative or judicial officer, or to a lower court, commanding the performance of a particular act.

Marshal: The persons responsible for courthouse security including the metal detectors at the entrance of each courthouse and maintaining order in each courtroom. A marshal can also serve (give copies of) legal papers to the other people named in a lawsuit.

Mediation: A dispute resolution process in which an impartial third party assists the parties to voluntarily reach a mutually acceptable settlement.

Minor: A person under age 18, the age of legal majority.

Misdemeanor: A crime that carries a maximum penalty of one year and/or a \$2,000 fine.

Mitigating Circumstances: Circumstances that may be considered to reduce the guilt of a defendant. Usually based on fairness or mercy.

Mittimus Judgment: Also called a Mitt. The formal document prepared by the court clerk to present a convicted defendant in a criminal case to the Department of Correction for incarceration.

Modification: Request to change a prior order. Usually requires showing a change in circumstances since the date of the prior order.

Motion: Usually written request to the court in a case. Filed with the clerk's office.

Movant: The person who filed the motion, or request, to the court.

Moving Party: The person making the request to the court in a case.

N

Ne Exeat: A legal paper requesting that a person be required to remain within the jurisdiction of the court (either through incarceration or posting of a bond).

Neglected Minor: A child or youth who has (a) been abandoned, (b) is being denied proper attention, (c) is being permitted to live under conditions injurious to his/her well being, or (d) has been abused.

No Contact Order: A court order that prohibits contact by a defendant with a victim; can be ordered by a judge, a bail commissioner, a probation officer or a parole officer.

No Fault Divorce: The most common kind of divorce, where no one needs to prove that the husband or the wife is at fault, or caused the marriage to end. Described as “broken down irretrievably”.

Nolle: Short for *nolle prosequi*, which means “no prosecution”. A disposition of a criminal or motor vehicle case where the prosecutor agrees to drop the case against the defendant but keeps the right to reopen the case and prosecute at any time during the next thirteen months. The nolle is entered on the court record and the defendant is released from custody. If the defendant stays out of trouble during the thirteen months, the case is removed from the official court records.

Nolo Contendre: It means “no contest”. A plea in a criminal case that allows the defendant to be convicted without admitting guilt for the crime charged. Although a finding of guilty is entered on the criminal court record; the defendant can deny the charges in a civil action based on the same acts.

No Contest: A plea in a criminal case that allows the defendant to be convicted without admitting guilt for the crime charged. Also called nolo contendere. Although a finding of guilty is entered on the criminal court record, the defendant can deny the charges in a civil action based on the same acts.

Non-Suit: Vacating a case by the court, usually for failure to prosecute.

Notarize: To formally complete a document by acknowledgement or oath.

O

Oath: To swear/affirm to the truth of a statement/document.

Office of Adult Probation: A division within the Judicial Branch. The primary responsibilities of the Office of Adult Probation are to supervise persons placed on probation, to conduct investigations for the court to provide background information on convicted offenders and to conduct eligibility investigations for special programs.

Order: A written direction of a court or judge to do or refrain from doing certain acts.

Order to Detain: An order signed by a judge of the Superior Court authorizing admission of a juvenile to a Juvenile Detention Center, pending a hearing on the next business day.

Order of Detention (Detention Order): An order issued by a judge of the Superior Court finding that there is probable cause that a juvenile committed an offense or a violation of a court order and ordering that the juvenile be held in a Juvenile Detention Center or some alternative facility until further order of the court.

Orders of Temporary Custody: Also called an OTC. Court order placing a child or youth in the short-term legal custody of an individual or agency authorized to care for juveniles.

P

Parcel: A tract or a plot of land.

Parenting Education Program: A mandatory program for persons involved in a divorce with children or a custody or visitation case. Must be attended within 60 days of the return date on the summons.

Parole: Release from incarceration after serving part of a sentence.

Parties: The people or legal entities that are named as plaintiff(s) and defendant(s) on legal papers.

Party: A person or legal entity that is named as a plaintiff or defendant on legal papers.

Paternity: Legal fatherhood.

Pendente lite order: A court order made before final orders are granted.

Peremptory Challenge: The rejection of a prospective juror by the attorneys in a case, without having to give a reason. State law defines the number of peremptory challenges available.

Perjury: Making false statements under oath.

Petition: A formal written request to a court, which starts a special proceeding. In juvenile court, the legal document which specifies the complaint against the juvenile and/or family; it includes the name, age and address of the minor and his/her guardian, as well as the statutory grounds and facts upon which the request for the court intervention is based.

Petitioner: Another word for plaintiff, the person starting the lawsuit.

Plaintiff: The person who sues or starts a civil case, also called the petitioner or the complainant.

Plea: An accused persons answer to a criminal charge. For example: not guilty; guilty; no contest.

Plea Bargain: The agreement a defendant makes with the prosecutor to avoid a trial. Usually involves pleading guilty to lesser charges in exchange for a lighter sentence.

Pleadings: The court documents filed with the court by the parties in a civil or criminal case. For example: motion to dismiss; motion for modification.

Posting Bond: To pay the court ordered bond amount with cash or property.

Post Judgment: Any request to a court or action by a judge after a judgment in a case.

Practice Book: Contains the rules of court and forms which must be followed in all Connecticut court cases. Available in all courthouse law libraries.

Pre-Sentence Investigation: Also called PSI. A background investigation conducted by a probation officer on a person who has been convicted of a criminal offense.

Pretrial: In a civil case, a conference with a judge or trial referee to discuss discovery and settlement. In a criminal case, a conference with the prosecutor, defense attorney and judge to discuss the case status and what will happen next.

Pretrial Hearing: Conference with attorneys to determine scope of possible trial with view toward resolving issues through agreement.

Probable Cause Hearing: A hearing held before a judge in criminal cases to determine if enough evidence exists to prosecute. The probable cause hearing must be conducted within 60 days of the filing of the complaint or information in Superior Court, unless the accused person waives the time or the court grants an extension based on good cause.

Probate/Probate Court: A court with limited authority to hear certain kinds of cases, such as adoption, guardianship, mental health commitments. Not a part of the Superior Court system.

Probation: When a convicted offender receives a suspended term of incarceration and is then supervised by a probation officer for a period of time set by a judge.

Probation Absconder: A person under probation supervision whose location is unknown, in violation of the conditions of their probation.

Promise to Appear: A type of non-financial bond where the defendant agrees to return to court without giving cash or property.

Pro Se: A Latin phrase meaning for “yourself”—representing yourself in any kind of case.

Pro se Divorce: Do it yourself divorce.

Prosecute: To carry on a case or judicial proceeding. To proceed against a person criminally.

Prosecutor: Also called the state's attorney. Represents the state in a criminal case against a defendant.

Protective Order: A criminal court order issued by a judge to protect a family or household member.

Public Defender: An attorney appointed and paid by the state who defends a person in a criminal case after the court finds that the person is indigent—financially unable to hire a private attorney.

R

Ready: Means ready to start the trial or begin oral argument. Usually said by an attorney or party in response to a judge calling the list of scheduled cases.

Record: The pleadings, the exhibits and the transcript made by the court reporter of all proceedings in a trial.

Referee: Judges who reach the mandatory retirement age of 70 may be designated as Judge Trial Referees by the Chief Justice and can hear and decide certain types of cases.

Regional Child Protection Docket: A specialized court designed to hear complicated child protection cases. One judge hears the case from start to finish. Located in Middletown.

Regional Family Trial Docket: A specialized court designed to hear complicated family cases. One judge hears the case from start to finish. Located in Middletown.

Residential Treatment Programs: Programs that provide extensive drug or alcohol treatment on an inpatient basis.

Respondent: Another word for defendant; the person responding to a lawsuit. In Juvenile court, the word refers to the person or persons named in a petition. When used in Practice Book Sec. 2-29 through 2-62 the word “respondent” shall mean the attorney against whom a grievance complaint or presentment has been filed or a person who is alleged to have been engaged in the unauthorized practice of law pursuant to General Statutes § 51-88.”

Rest: To be done presenting the evidence in a case, as in “the plaintiff rests”.

Restitution: Money ordered to be paid by the defendant to the victim to reimburse the victim for the costs of the crime. Generally making good, or giving the equivalent for any loss, damage or injury caused by a persons actions. Often a condition of probation.

Restraining Order: A civil court order to protect a family or household member from physical abuse.

Return Date: The date on which the 90-day waiting period for a divorce begins. Also, the date by which the defendant should file an appearance. Nothing happens in court on the return date and no one needs to go to court on the return date. The return date is always a Tuesday in civil and family cases. In a summary process, eviction case the date is approximately 12 days from the date it was signed excluding legal holidays and Sundays.

Revocation Hearing: A hearing held before a judge to determine whether or not a person has violated the conditions of probation. If there is a finding that a violation has occurred, the judge may impose all or part of the original sentence.

Rule to Show Cause: Summons compelling a person to appear in court on a specific date to answer to a request that certain orders be modified or vacated.

S

Seal: A court order closing a case file from public review, usually in cases of youthful offenders and acquittal. Prevents the public from obtaining information on the cases.

Senior Judge: A judge who reaches the age of 65, or who meets certain other requirements and chooses senior status. Senior judges hear cases on a part time basis until they reach the mandatory retirement age of 70.

Sentences: The penalty imposed by a judge after the defendant is convicted of a crime. Sentences can be: **Concurrent** - Multiple sentences will be served at the same time (i.e., sentences of 10 years, 8 years and 2 years - to be served concurrently - equal a total effective sentence of 10 years.) **Consecutive** - The sentences are served back-to-back. The same example above would equal a total effective sentence of 20 years.

Sentencing: When a criminal defendant is brought before a judge after conviction for ordering the terms of the punishment.

Sentence Modification: A defendant's written application to the sentencing judge or court to reduce the sentence at any time during the sentence. The judge conducts a hearing. If the original sentence was more than three years, the prosecutor must agree.

Sentence Review: A defendant's written application to a three judge panel to review the sentence. Must be filed within 30 days after being sentenced with the court clerk. A review decision can increase or decrease the sentence.

Serious Juvenile Offender: A child who has been adjudicated by the juvenile court for a serious juvenile offense.

Serious Juvenile Offense: Certain criminal offenses listed in the Connecticut General Statutes, which are crimes against persons, serious property crimes and certain drug offenses. A juvenile charged with a

Serious Juvenile Offense by police may be admitted to a Juvenile Detention Center with a prior court order and may be released only by order of a judge of the Superior Court.

Service: The legal method for giving a copy of the court papers being filed to other parties in a case.

Short Calendar: A list of cases in which hearing by the judge or magistrate is requested or required.

Slip Opinions: Opinions, or written decisions, of the Supreme Court or the Appellate Court that are publicly released prior to their official publication in the Connecticut Law Journal.

Small Claims: Civil actions to recover damages, or money, up to \$5,000. The rules of evidence are relaxed and people often represent themselves instead of hiring an attorney.

Special Sessions of the Superior Court: A program of the Judicial Branch where cases of a single type are heard by the same judge through the entire case. For example: Drug Session; Tax Session; Community Court.

State Referee: A retired judge who presides over cases referred by the court with agreement of counsel for both parties. Has full powers of an active trial judge.

States Attorney: An attorney who represents the state in criminal cases; the prosecutor.

Statute: A law enacted by a legislative body.

Statute of Limitations: A certain time allowed by law for starting a case. For example, six years in a contract case.

Stay: Temporarily stopping a judicial proceeding.

Stipulation: Also called a “stip.” A written agreement by the parties or their attorneys.

Subpoena: A command to appear in court to testify as a witness.

Subpoena Duces Tecum: A legal paper requiring someone to produce documents or records for a trial.

Substance Abuse Education: A community based program for drug offenders that provides education about the harmful effects of drug abuse and also supervises community service.

Substitute Charge: In a criminal case, a charge that replaces the original charge by the prosecutor.

Summary Process: An eviction case.

Summons: A legal paper that is used to start a civil case and get jurisdiction over a party.

Summons (Juvenile): A written notice issued by the court commanding a person to appear in a court at a given date and time. A summons is issued to an individual charged or other party on a petition or complaint.

Support Enforcement Officer: A person who supervises child support payments and brings parents to court to enforce child support orders. May also file legal papers to modify or change child support orders.

T

Testimony: Statements made by a witness or party under oath.

Time Served: A sentence of incarceration equal to the amount of time a defendant has already spent in state custody waiting for disposition of the case.

Title: Legal recognition of the ownership of property, usually proven by a document.

Tort: A civil injury or wrong to someone else, or their property.

Transcript: The official written record of everything that was said at a court proceeding, a hearing, or a deposition.

Transfer: Assignment of a case to another court location by court order.

Transfer Hearing: Juvenile Court hearing to determine whether a child, 14 or older, charged with a serious juvenile offense should have his/her case transferred to a criminal court and be subject to the same processes and penalties as an adult charged with the same crime.

Trial De Novo: A new trial or retrial in which the whole case with evidence and witnesses is presented as if no previous trial had been held.

Trial Referee: An attorney appointed by the Chief Justice to hear any civil non-jury case where the parties agree to use a trial referee and all the legal papers have been filed.

U

Uncared For: Legal description of a child or youth who is homeless or whose home cannot provide the specialized care which his/her physical, emotional or mental condition requires.

Unconditional Discharge: A sentence in a criminal case in which the defendant is released with without imprisonment, probation supervision or conditions.

V

Vacate: To cancel or rescind a court order.

Venue: The court location.

Victim Services Advocate: A person who assesses a victim's needs and helps the victim understand the court case, how to exercise their rights and how to access other resources.

Visitation: A court order deciding the amount of time a non-custodial parent may spend with his or her child, also called parenting time or access.

Violation: An offense for which the only sentence authorized is a fine.

Violation of Probation: Action or inaction that disobeys a condition of probation.

Voir Dire: “To speak the truth.” The process of questioning prospective jurors or witnesses about their qualifications.

W

Wage Execution: The process of deducting money from wages to pay a judgment. Also called a garnishment or attachment.

Wage Withholding: A court order to deduct child support or alimony payments from someone’s wages. All child support court orders must include an income withholding order unless both parents ask the judge not to.

Witness: A person who testifies to what they saw, heard, observed or did.

Writ: Legal paper filed to start various types of civil lawsuits.

Y

Youth: Any person sixteen (16) to eighteen (18) years of age.

Youthful Offender: A legal status available to persons who have been arrested for a crime committed when they were between the ages of 16 and 18 and who meet other eligibility requirements. If the court grants Youthful Offender status, the information and proceedings are confidential and do not become a part of the person’s criminal record.

The image shows a document template. At the top, there is a solid blue header bar. Centered within this bar is the word "NOTES" in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font. Below the header bar, the background is white. The page is filled with horizontal blue lines, spaced evenly apart, providing a ruled area for writing. The lines extend across the width of the page, leaving a small margin on the left and right sides. There are 18 horizontal lines in total, starting from the top of the white area and ending near the bottom of the page.