

### Talking To The Judge

Before you testify, you will be asked to swear that you will tell the truth. Everyone else who testifies, including your abuser, will also be sworn in. Everyone in the courtroom is expected to treat the judge with special respect, so always call the judge "your honor" and do not interrupt when the judge is talking. Speak only when the judge asks you to speak. If the judge interrupts you to ask a question, stop speaking right away. If you don't understand a question you are asked, politely ask for it to be explained to you. If you can answer a question with "Yes, your honor," or "No, your honor" that is all you need to say.

If you need to explain something to the court, try to give just the facts and be brief. When you speak, focus on speaking slowly, look directly at the judge and tell the judge what happened, but try to keep it simple. If you practice your testimony ahead of time, it will be easier to talk in the courtroom, even if you are nervous.

Judges sometimes seem as if they are in a hurry, and they typically deal with many cases a day. Sometimes it can seem as if a judge is angry or irritated. Try not to let this bother you, remain calm, and follow the above suggestions. After you have told your story, your abuser (or your abuser's attorney, if there is one) has the right to present your abuser's side of what happened. This may include asking you questions to try to discredit what you have just told the judge. This is called cross-examination. This may be upsetting, but it is important to stay calm and to not get into an argument with your abuser. Do not say anything until the judge asks you to speak again or tells you to answer the questions. If your abuser lies, simply tell the court the truth about what your abuser said when it is your turn to talk.

Be sure to tell the judge about any threats your abuser has made to stop you from going to court. These may include threats to take or harm your children, to withhold money for support, or to harm you or your friends and family. You should also tell the judge if your abuser has been harassing you in other ways, such as calling you or showing up at your workplace.