



LEGAL FIRST AID

BY BENNETT & BENNETT, LAWYERS

COURT EDITION

(“I HAVE TO GO TO COURT. WHAT DO I DO?”)

1. **DON'T PANIC.**
2. **PLAN YOUR ROUTE AHEAD OF TIME.**
DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE MORNING OF COURT TO FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU HAVE TO BE.
3. **DRESS FOR THE OCCASION.**
DRESS LIKE YOU WOULD FOR CHURCH WITH YOUR GRANDMOTHER ON MOTHER'S DAY.
4. **LEAVE THE KIDS WITH A BABYSITTER IF POSSIBLE.**
THE CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE IS NOT A GOOD PLACE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.
5. **GET TO THE COURTHOUSE EARLY.**
BRING A BOOK TO READ.
6. **GO TO THE BATHROOM NOW.**
YOU MAY HAVE A LONG WAIT AHEAD OF YOU. RELIEVE YOURSELF NOW.
7. **BE IN THE COURTROOM FOR DOCKET CALL.**
REMAIN IN THE COURTROOM UNTIL YOU ARE EXCUSED BY THE COURT.
8. **BEHAVE.**
REMAIN AWAKE. DON'T CHEW GUM, EAT, OR DRINK. DON'T READ THE NEWSPAPER.
9. **STAND UP WHEN YOU ARE SPOKEN TO.**
NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO SHOW HOW MUCH CONTEMPT YOU HAVE FOR THE SYSTEM.
10. **ANSWER THE JUDGE'S QUESTIONS CLEARLY.**
ARE YOU PRESENT? “PRESENT, YOUR HONOR.” DO YOU HAVE A LAWYER? “NOT YET, YOUR HONOR.” DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO THE PROSECUTOR? “NO THANK YOU, YOUR HONOR.”
11. **DON'T TALK TO THE PROSECUTOR (OR ANYONE ELSE) ABOUT YOUR CASE.**
THE PROSECUTOR IS NOT YOUR FRIEND. HE'S NOT GOING TO FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, AND DISMISS YOUR CASE. NEITHER IS THE JUDGE — NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO ARGUE YOUR CASE.
12. **WAIT FOR A RESET FORM.**
YOU WILL HAVE TO SIGN A PROMISE TO RETURN BEFORE YOU ARE ALLOWED TO LEAVE. TAKE TWO COPIES WITH YOU (ONE FOR YOU AND ONE FOR YOUR LAWYER).
13. **HIRE A LAWYER.**
JUST AS FIRST AID IS NOT INTENDED TO REPLACE EXPERT MEDICAL ATTENTION, LEGAL FIRST AID IS NOT INTENDED TO REPLACE EXPERT LEGAL ASSISTANCE, BUT ONLY TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION UNTIL YOU CAN GET SUCH ASSISTANCE. THERE ARE THINGS THAT A COMPETENT LAWYER CAN DO IMMEDIATELY TO IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING THE CASE. IT IS BEST TO HIRE COMPETENT COUNSEL BEFORE YOUR SECOND COURT APPEARANCE.

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