

Recommendations for Changes in Courtroom Language ¹

Current as of May 16, 2019

COMMONPLACE LANGUAGE	“SUGGESTED LANGUAGE”
Clean/dirty (regarding toxicology results)	“Tested positive/ negative for X” (no one is “dirty”)
Afterborn	Newborn or baby
Resource	Family member or family friend
Biological mother/father Bio mom/dad / Birth mom/dad RM, RF, PLR / Respondent/ Adoptive mother/father	Ms. or Mr. [last name] Respondent Parent
Mentally ill/mental problems / sick (when discussing mental health diagnosis or concerns including speculative by ACS)	“Mr. Smith is diagnosed with schizophrenia” “ACS recommends that Ms. Smith meet with a mental health professional because Ms. Smith told the CPS that ‘she feels like dying’ sometimes.” “Ms. Smith is living with a mental illness.”
Mental retardation, slow, delayed (re: ID/DD)	Person w/an intellectual/developmental limitation
Paramour	Use term that reflect the language the family uses, like “boyfriend/girlfriend” or “partner”
Kinship home/placement	Family member’s home / their “grandmother’s home” extended family friend E.g. “Lucy is temporarily living with her grandmother”
Compliant	Ms. X is “engaged” or is “not engaged” in her services ... She demonstrates ongoing commitment to ...
Inmate/Body Produced	Mr. X is “incarcerated” and was or was not brought to court

¹ Suggestions made by Bronx Early Engagement Committee Members, which includes staff of: Bronx Legal Services, NYC, The Bronx Defenders, Children’s Law Center, Legal Aid Society, NYC Children’s Services/ACS, Rise Magazine, Bronx Mental Health Services, and other Family Court Personnel.

COMMONPLACE LANGUAGE	“SUGGESTED LANGUAGE”
Refused	<p>“Did not” “Declined to”</p> <p>Mr. X did not attend the scheduled drug test</p>
Admit [i.e., context of substance use, mental health] (Ms. Smith admitted she has a diagnosis of depression)	Ms. Smith “stated” that she has a diagnosis of depression
Deny/denied (i.e., Mr. Smith denied using alcohol)	Mr. Smith “stated” he does not use alcohol
Substance abuse	Substance use
Sandwich visits	Visitation/parenting time that is supervised at the beginning and at the end by the agency caseworker or a relative or a family friend.
Produced the child/ren	Brought the child/ren to court for an interview

LEGAL LANGUAGE / ACRONYMS

We recognize that certain terms are unavoidable in a legal context, but it is important to translate them to “plain language” for litigants

RM, RF, Respondent

PLR/Person Legally Responsible

Kinship home/placement

Adjourned / Adjournment

Produced (e.g. children; prisoners)

KinGAP / Kinship Guardianship

Temporary release

Parole

Direct placement

PPRS/Preventative Services

Resource

1027 / 1028

Fact Finding

Permanency Hearing

Allocution

Surrender

TPR/Termination of Parental Rights

ACD/Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal

Disposition

COI/Court Ordered Investigation/ I & R – Investigation and Report