

Guardian ad Litem Job Description

A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a trained community member appointed by a district court judge to investigate and determine the needs of abused and neglected children and youth petitioned into the court system by the Department of Social Services. The GAL is paired with an Attorney Advocate to represent the child's best interest in court.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Digging for Details

- Gather and assess independent information about the child's situation and needs by
 - Getting to know the child
 - Interviewing parents, caretakers, social workers, teachers, service providers
 - Reading records related to the child and family

Collaborating

- Seek cooperative solutions with other participants in the child's case
- Communicate with the GAL Attorney Advocate to develop legal strategies and prepare for court
- Attend court hearings and other meetings

Recommending the Best

- Write child-focused reports for court hearings
- Make recommendations in the child's best interest
- Testify, when needed, to support recommendations or inform the court of changes in the child's situation

Empowering the Child's Voice

- Ensure that the court knows the child's wishes
- Keep the child informed about the court proceedings
- Facilitate the child's participation in court hearings as appropriate

Staying Vigilant

- Monitor the situation on an on-going basis
- Consult with local program staff for support and guidance

Confidentiality is Key

- Keep all records and information confidential

QUALIFICATIONS

A Guardian ad Litem possesses:

- A sincere concern for the well-being of children
- A commitment to advocate for a child until a safe and permanent home is established and court involvement is no longer required
- The ability to be objective and non-judgmental
- The ability to interact respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds
- Good verbal and written communication skills

REQUIREMENTS

A guardian ad litem serves on a child's case until a permanent plan is approved by the court and achieved for the child. Achieving permanence usually takes at least a year. Monthly time commitments vary depending on the child's needs.

In order to become a GAL, you will need to complete:

- an application
- a screening interview with program staff
- a criminal record check

GAL candidates successfully complete 30 hours of training before being accepted into the program, sworn in by a judge and appointed to advocate on behalf of a child. In addition to advocating for the child, GALs attend continuing education trainings on advocacy issues.

SUPERVISION

Guardians ad Litem are supervised by program staff.