

GUARDIAN AD LITEM

WELCOME TO THE GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

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Together we can make a difference

THE GAL/CASA MISSION

Our mission is to provide trained independent advocates to represent and promote the best interest of abused and/or neglected children in the state court system, working toward a plan that ensures these children are in a safe and permanent home.

ABOUT US

The purpose of the Guardian ad Litem Program is to ensure that the best interest of abused and/or neglected children is represented in Court. Volunteer Guardians ad Litem play a critical role on behalf of abused and neglected children by working to protect each child's best interest. We provide training to ensure our volunteers are at ease in their role. Volunteer Guardians ad Litem are teamed with an attorney advocate in Court. Since 1983, the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program has served the best interests of thousands of children. Many children were able to return home, some now live with family members, still others have been adopted. We try to ensure that all of the children that we represent remain safe and that their homes are permanent.

HOW DO I BECOME A GAL VOLUNTEER?

- 📄 **Complete a 35-hour training course**
- 📄 **Submit to a criminal record check**
- 📄 **Have the time available to make contact with children and their families and investigate the case that is assigned to you.**

We would like to welcome our new GAL volunteers.

Heather, Ann P, Ann L, Kristen, David, Angela, Terry, Shaun



The qualifications and duties of a GAL Volunteer

The main qualification of becoming a GAL is having “a sincere concern for the well-being of children”. A volunteer must be “a mature adult of sound character with good communication skills and must be able to interact and talk with people of various educational and ethnic backgrounds”.

An “essential characteristic” of a Guardian is the ability to be objective and nonjudgmental.



The duties of the GAL volunteer include:

- Visiting the child on a monthly basis
- Ensuring that the child’s wishes are known to the Court
- Interviewing the parents, guardians and caretakers
- Interviewing the social workers and other service providers and reviewing records related to the family
- Gathering and assessing independent information about the child in order to recommend a resolution that is in the child’s best interest
- Seeking cooperative solutions with other participants in the child’s case
- Preparing written reports for court hearings
- Attending and participating in court hearings and other related meetings
- Keeping all records and information confidential
- Monitoring provisions of service plans and court orders
- Explaining the role of the GAL to the children who are old enough to understand
- Keeping the child informed of all aspects of the court proceedings when age appropriate
- Consulting with Program staff for support and guidance

Mission

The mission of the N.C. Guardian ad Litem program is to provide trained, independent advocates to represent and promote the best interests of abused, neglected and dependent children in the state court system and to work expediently toward a plan that ensures that these children are in a safe, permanent home.

History

- In 1983, the General Assembly established the Office of Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Services in the Administrative Office of the Courts.
- This year, the GAL program is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

About

- North Carolina Guardian ad Litem advocacy helps to move children out of the court system in a timely manner and into a safe and permanent home. GAL is mandated by statute to protect and promote the best interest of juveniles in abuse and neglect court proceedings.
- Independent investigations are conducted by GAL to determine the facts, needs of the child and the resources appropriate to meet those needs. Guardian ad Litem’s also determines the wishes or expressed preferences of the child, and reports those to the court.
- The GAL program advocates for children in each county of the state. Offices include trained staff, attorneys and community volunteer guardians ad litem.
- More than 180 paid and pro bono attorneys are a part of the program’s team representation model, partnering GAL volunteers with attorneys when representing children in court proceedings.

Giving Children a Voice

- The need for volunteers has increased because of the continued rise of child abuse and neglect hearings - 38,043 in 2008.
- In the same year, the program, required by both federal and state laws, provided legal representation to more than 17,000 abused and neglected children.
- Last year, GAL volunteers gave the state 886,656 hours of service in training and casework (valued at more than \$16.6 million).

The year also saw 4,767 volunteers participate in the GAL program.

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