

DURHAM GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

201 NORTH ROXBORO STREET
3RD FLOOR, JUDICIAL ANNEX BUILDING
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27701
TEL: (919) 564-7290 FAX: (919) 560-3307

Thank you for accepting the _____ case!

Below are important dates and names to remember.

THE NEXT NON-SECURE CUSTODY HEARING IS:

THE ADJUDICATION/REVIEW DATE IS:

THE PRETRIAL CONFERENCE IS:

YOUR TYPED REPORT IS DUE ON:

THE ATTORNEY IN THIS CASE IS:

THE JUDGE IN THIS CASE IS:

THE SOCIAL WORKER IN THIS CASE IS:

Please gather complete, objective information and maintain strict confidentiality. If you have any questions or concerns, please call your Guardian ad Litem supervisor.
Thanks again for all that you do!

PHONE LIST

GUARDIAN OFFICE

564-7290

Shirley Harley-Smith (Shirley.H.Smith@nccourts.org)	564-7290
Clara Sellars (Clara.S.Sellars@nccourts.org)	564-7291
Melissa Love (Melissa.Y.Love@nccourts.org)	564-7293
Denine Nicholson (Denine.Nicholson@nccourts.org)	564-7292
Wendy Sotolongo (wsotolongo@nc.rr.com)	564-7294
Christy Hamilton (christyannhamilton@yahoo.com)	451-1613

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Investigations	560-8424
Foster Care	560-8467

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Jail	560-0912
Police, Criminal Investigation	560-4448
Police Records	560-4423
Sheriff	560-0900

COURTS

Clerk (Child Support)	564-7170
Criminal Magistrate	560-6826
Juvenile Court Counselors	560-6824
Probation Office	560-6871

MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

The Durham Center	560-7400
Durham Child Development and Behavioral Health Clinic	286-4456
Children's Developmental Services Agency	560-5600
John Umstead Hospital	575-7211
Adult Unit	575-7973
Children's Unit	575-7621
Intensive Diagnostic Treatment Unit (IDTU)	575-7904

HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Center for Child and Family Health	419-3474
Duke Medical Center	
Main Number	684-8111
Records	684-6831
Durham Regional Hospital	470-4000
Health Department	
Nursing Division	560-7700
Vital Statistics	560-7670
Immunizations	560-7608
Lincoln Health Center	956-4000

OTHER

Child Advocacy Commission	682-1129
Housing Authority	683-1551
Durham County Youth Home	560-0840

THE PROCESS

1. MEET WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

This can be done by phone or in person. At this initial meeting, you will receive all the information you need to start working on a case as a Guardian. You'll learn what the allegations are, where the children are living, and who the social worker is. If you hold this first meeting by phone, you'll need to arrange a time to pick up the case file folder. If you are unable to pick up the case file, the GAL office will mail it to you. The case file folder contains a juvenile petition, a court order appointing you as the Guardian, and any notes or information that have already been collected.

2. GO TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)

At least 24 hours before you plan to review the DSS records on the case, call the case social worker. Ask if he or she would be able to pull the case records for you and be available for an interview during your visit to DSS. Be prepared to take notes on the information you get from both the case file and the social worker. (For interview pointers, see next section)

3. REQUEST AND REVIEW RECORDS

You'll need to review some or all of the following records from the family members and caretakers involved in your case: criminal history, school, medical, substance abuse, and mental health. Provide the GAL office with each person's full name, date of birth, and social security number (available from the case file at DSS), and the Guardian ad Litem office will request the records from the agencies you indicate. You can get police records yourself by going to the third floor of the Judicial Building and using the computer system there (instructions on using the system are posted on the wall). Remember, you must have names, social security numbers, and dates of birth for each person to request records.

4. CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

You should interview the child(ren), case social worker, school or child care personnel, the parents and/or foster parents, anyone who has provided services to the child or the family, and any relatives or close neighbors. It is very important that you keep all information about the child and his or her family confidential. If you feel the need to release confidential information to someone other than those named in the Administrative Order to best serve the child, contact your supervisor and she will prepare a Release or Information Order for you. You must have this special court order in order to release confidential information.

5. PREPARE YOUR PRELIMINARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Please review the report outline section. This outline will help ensure that all the required information is provided in a clear and efficient manner for the Court. This report will stay in the child's court file.

6. CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR

Call or meet with your supervisor to go over your preliminary report and recommendations. Do this at least one week before the Judicial Settlement Conference or Pretrial.

7. PREPARE YOUR FINAL REPORT

Incorporate any changes or information your supervisor has provided. Your final report must be typed. Make sure your report is in the GAL office on the Friday before the Pretrial Conference. If you are unable to type your report, bring your report to the GAL office the Thursday before your Pretrial and your supervisor will type it for you (Pretrials are on Mondays).

8. CASE FILE INFORMATION

Keep your case file up to date. It is important to keep all the information you gather on your case while you are working on it. **When the case is closed, give the information to the GAL office for filing.**

INTERVIEWS

The following guidelines will help you make the most of your interviews.

THE SOCIAL WORKER

It may be most helpful to make this your first interview and is best done when you review the records at DSS. During this interview, gather current information about the child and his or her family including:

- Current address
- Family status
- Number and location of siblings (if any)
- Dates of birth
- Social security numbers for all adults
- What services, if any, have been offered to the family
- The agency's plan for the family
- What DSS will be recommending at the hearing

THE CHILD

You must have a face-to-face meeting with the child regardless of how old the child is.

- Introduce yourself
- Explain what you will be doing as their GAL
- Start getting to know the child, including their home life, goals, needs, and desires.

Schedule more interviews with the child before the court hearing so you can continue to keep up with changes in the child's life.

THE PARENTS AND/OR FOSTER PARENTS

While it may be easiest to meet the foster parents during your visit with the child, non-secure custody hearings may be the best (and in some cases, only) opportunity you'll have to make contact with the birth parents. For both birth and foster parents:

- Introduce yourself and explain your role
- Gather information about the parents' concerns, hopes, and plans for the child
- Gather information about the parents' home status and long- and short-term plans

Often, natural parents can also provide information on relatives who would be willing to provide a home for the child(ren).

SCHOOL OR CHILD CARE PERSONNEL

School and child care personnel can be excellent sources of information about the child. Interview the child's teachers and gather information about:

- Class behavior and attitude
- Academic achievement
- Social skills
- Changes in demeanor or personality

PEOPLE/AGENCIES WHO HAVE PROVIDED SERVICES TO THE CHILD AND/OR FAMILY

This may include:

- Medical providers
- Psychologists
- Therapists
- Teachers
- Anyone else who may have assisted the family or child.

Check the case records to see who you will need to meet with. Gather information about:

- The type of service provided
- Dates of service
- Outcomes of service
- Any other relevant information

These interviews may be conducted by phone.

RELATIVES AND OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED

When you meet with the child and his or her parents (both birth and foster), try to determine who else plays a significant role in the child's life. This may include:

- Relatives who visit often
- Neighbors who know the family or the child well
- Any other people important to the child

Use these interviews to help you gain a clearer picture of the child and his or her family. These interviews may be conducted by phone.

COURT REPORT OUTLINE

The following outline will help ensure that all the required information is provided in a clear and effective manner for the Court.

HEADING

Make sure you title your report appropriately. In your heading, include the name and date of birth of the child, the case file number, and the date of the adjudication. This information will be in the case folder.

SECTION I: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

In this section, list the names of people you have interviewed and what their involvement in the case is (i.e. Donna Doe, Social Worker). Don't forget to refer to foster parents using their last initial (i.e. Mrs. H) to preserve anonymity.

SECTION II: RECORDS REVIEWED/REQUESTED

In this section, list all the records you have reviewed. Also list the records you have requested even if you have not reviewed them yet.

SECTION III: BRIEF BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

In this section, **briefly** describe the history of the child and how she or he became involved with the Department of Social Services.

SECTION IV: SUMMARY

In this section, describe what has taken place since the last court hearing and any changes in the child's needs.

SECTION V: CHILD'S WISHES

This section should reflect the specific wishes of the child. Wishes are to be documented even if they are contrary to what is in the child's best interest.

SECTION VI: ISSUES FOR THE COURT'S CONCERN

Use this section to highlight information you want to make sure is known to the Court. Use bulleted items for this section.

SECTION VII: RECOMMENDATIONS

List your specific recommendations in a numbered list format. The first recommendation should always be about legal and physical custody of the child ("Legal custody of Sam with DSS with placement authority in that agency"). Your last recommendation should always indicate the timing of the next court review ("This case should be reviewed again in three months"). You can request court reviews at any time, however reviews are usually scheduled every three to six months.

CLOSING

Make sure you print, sign, and date your report. It is appropriate to use the closing "Respectfully submitted," before your signature.

Durham Guardian ad Litem Program Court Report

Date: (of scheduled hearing)

Name of Child: DOB: File No.:

Persons Interviewed/Contacted:
Name, Title

Records Requested/Reviewed:

Brief History:
(Adjudications only)

Summary:
(for Reviews, summary is from last court date to present)

Child's Wishes:

Issues for the Court's Concern:

- 1.
- 2.

Recommendations:

1. Custody
2. Placement
3. Visitation
4. Services for the child(ren)
5. Services for the parents
6. Review in three months

Respectfully,
Your name
Guardian ad Litem

TERMS TO KNOW

PPAT: Permanency Planning Action Team Meeting. In-house review done by the Department of Social Services at 60 days, 90 days, and every six months thereafter when children are in DSS custody. Meetings take place at the Department of Social Services. NOT A COURT REVIEW.

CFT: Child and Family Teams. All the players in a case (i.e. social worker, Guardian ad Litem, Mental Health case manager, foster parents, therapist, etc.).

CCFH: Center for Child and Family Health. Performs child medical exams and child mental health evaluations; provides mental health treatment.

IEP: Individualized Education Plan. For students in special education.

TPR: Termination of Parental Rights. Permanently severs legal ties between parent and child.

TDM: Team Decision-Making Meeting. Held whenever there is a possible disruption in the placement of a child. Meeting is held at the Department of Social Services by a DSS facilitator, and includes all parties involved.

LME: Local Managing Entity. Make decisions about the money that controls the mental health services that children can receive. Authorize higher levels of care above standard foster care.

CAMART: Child Abuse Multi-Agency Review Team. Multi-agency meeting facilitated by the Center for Child and Family Health. Agencies review children who have recently been evaluated by CCFH.

FDTC: Family Drug Treatment Court. Intensive, holistic approach to substance abusing parents.

CME: Child Medical Exam. Performed at the Center for Child and Family Health.

Care Review: Meeting where children must be presented in order to be authorized for a higher level of care.

CBS: Community-Based Services. Mental health services. A CBS professional comes into the home and works with the family, while a CBS paraprofessional serves as a paid mentor.