



GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM
Second Judicial Circuit
Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla Counties

Mission of the Guardian Ad Litem Program

Advocating for the child's best interest is the Program's only interest.

A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a trained volunteer appointed by the court to serve as an advocate for the best interest of children in a specific case.

The volunteer GAL advocates as part of a team. The other two members of the team are the Child Advocacy Coordinator and the Child's Best Interest Attorney, both of whom work for the Guardian ad Litem Program. The Child Advocacy Coordinator assists the GAL and performs the duties of the GAL in the GAL's absence.

The GAL team is independent of DCF and all other agencies or professionals who might be involved with the child and family and, therefore, is free to focus strictly on the best interest of the child.

The GAL is required to visit the child at least monthly but may do so more often to monitor the child's well-being and obtain information to help achieve a safe, permanent home for the child.

Visit www.gal2.org or call (850) 606-1200.

Roles and Activities of the Guardian ad Litem

Advocate: Supports, works and speaks for the best interest of the child, particularly in court hearings and in various meetings.

Monitor: Oversees the child's well-being and the family's progress through visiting and talking with the child and family members, extended family and caregivers. Reports any additional suspected abuse or neglect.

Information Gatherer: Collects relevant facts and documents. Meets with Department of Children and Families staff and talks with dependency case managers. Talks with babysitters, daycare workers, teachers, counselors and others as needed such as doctors or law enforcement.

Reporter: Prepares reports for court hearings and gives recommendations to the court. Submits monthly visitation reports to the GAL office. Reviews all reports from other agencies and all documents filed with the court.

Service Facilitator: Assists in identifying resources by assessing child's needs and requesting appropriate services. Ensures adequate and appropriate services are provided. Serves as the child's educational advocate.

Transporter: With approval from the Circuit Director and having made arrangements with appropriate persons, the GAL can transport a child age 5 and above to provide the child opportunities for normal activities. The Circuit Director can give approval for a child under 5 years of age on a child-by-child basis.

A Guardian ad Litem May Not:

1. Supervise family visitation but can observe these visits
2. Disclose the name of anyone who calls in an abuse report.
3. Give legal advice on what to do on a case.