Guardian ad Litem FAQs

FAQs

Q. What is a Guardian ad Litem?
A. A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a trained volunteer who is appointed by the court to advocate for the best interests of an abused or neglected child. In court, the GAL serves as an important voice for the child. Guardians ad Litem are also called Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Q. Who can be a Guardian ad Litem?
A. Guardian ad Litem volunteers come from all walks of life and have a variety of professional, educational and ethnic backgrounds. No special education or experience is required.

Q. How will I know what to do?
A. The Guardian ad Litem offices across the state use a nationally-recognized training program. You will learn all about state and federal law, roles and responsibilities of the GAL volunteer and many other topics. You will also have the support of other GAL volunteers and the staff of your local GAL/CASA program so you can be confident when you take your first case.

Q. What is the time commitment for a Guardian ad Litem?
A. The initial training program takes 25-30 hours to complete, usually in the evenings or on the weekends. After you are assigned a case, you will spend 10-15 hours per month interviewing parties, reviewing reports, attending court (if scheduled that month), and visiting with the child. The time commitment varies from case to case.

Q. How many cases do I have to take?
A. We have no minimum number of cases for volunteers. The maximum number of cases a volunteer can take is five. Each GAL volunteer accepts only as many cases as he/she has time to handle.

Q. Would I be liable for my work?
A. The Idaho Child Protective Act shield volunteers from liability: Any person appointed as a guardian ad litem shall be personally immune from any liability for acts, omissions or errors I.C.P.A. 16-1635.

Q. Will I have to testify in court?
A. It is a possibility. Most of the time, the people who will be called to testify are those with first-hand knowledge, such as the social worker or a doctor. If you do have to testify, the GAL staff will prepare you thoroughly and the program will make every effort to ensure an attorney is with you in the courtroom.

Q. I worry that the parents will resent me and become uncooperative.
A. It comes as a surprise to many people that the parents are usually more than glad to tell their version of the events that have caused this case to come before the court. As a GAL, you are just asking questions and listening at the outset, and most parents do not find this threatening.

Q. May I take the child to a movie or give them gifts?
A. No. Your role is not to provide services, but to investigate and observe, and to be an advocate. That in itself is an important gift to the child, but it requires good judgment, objectivity, and a clear understanding of your role. For this reason, you also must not give significant gifts to the child.

Q. How can I make a donation?
A. All donations are tax deductible and any amount helps. If you would like to DONATE NOW, contact the GAL/CASA program [1] in your area to find out how you can help. The state program cannot accept donations from individuals.

Source URL: http://isc.idaho.gov/guardian/faqs

Links:
[1] http://isc.idaho.gov/location