



GUARDIAN AD LITEM JOB DESCRIPTION
OTTAWA COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
JUVENILE DIVISION

Title:

Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

Position Expectation:

To serve as a trained and approved Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), working independently from the court to investigate and monitor cases of juvenile abuse, neglect, and/or dependence in the Ottawa County Juvenile Court and civil cases regarding custody and visitation.

Reports To:

Coordinator of Court Services

Requirements:

- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- Undergo and pass an extensive background check as identified in the Volunteer Application.
- Complete 12 hours of court-approved pre-service training and 2 hours of court observation.
- Complete 6 hours of court-approved continuing education each year.
- Work flexible hours as necessary for assigned cases (8-10 hours per month, per case).
- Commit to serving at least two (2) years.
- Maintain a current, valid Ohio driver's license and have access to a vehicle.

Role and Responsibilities:

- Attend screening interviews, court observations, pre-service, and in-service training sessions.
- Serve on at least one case annually by investigating and monitoring the situation while the child is under court jurisdiction. Conduct an independent investigation to gain a thorough understanding of the assigned case.
- Conduct interviews with the child, OCDJFS caseworker, parents/guardians, relatives, friends, teachers, neighbors, foster parents, and/or any person with relevant information about the child.
- Review files at appropriate agencies relative to the child's case.
- Have regular and sufficient contact with the child to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case to make fact-based recommendations to the court. The Volunteer GAL shall meet in person with the child once every thirty days at a minimum. An exception may be granted at the discretion of the Coordinator of Court Services; however, the justification and reasons for a decision to permit less frequent in-person contact must be documented.
- Maintain and provide to the office, as required, accurate and timely forms and case records, including monthly office updates and court reports.
- Attend all pertinent hearings, reviews, and/or meetings to advocate for the child's best interest and provide testimony when necessary.
- Maintain a mandated standard of confidentiality on information about each case.
- Report any incident of child abuse or neglect or any situation in which the Volunteer GAL has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the appropriate authorities and the Coordinator of Court Services, following state legal requirements for mandated reporting.
- Make recommendations to the court for appropriate services for the child.
- Maintain complete written records about the case, including dates, regarding appointments, interviews, and information gathered about the child, the child's life circumstances, and significant others.

- Assure that the “child's best interests” are being represented at every stage of the case, attend court hearings, and provide a signed written report with findings and recommendations to the Court, based on what placement and services are best for the child.
- Participate in any planning or treatment team meetings involving the child, to keep informed of progress in the case and to act as the representative of the child's best interests.
- Advocate for the child’s best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational, and other community systems to ensure that the child’s needs in these areas are met.
- Receive direct supervision and guidance from the Coordinator of Court Services by consulting regularly concerning the assigned case, reviewing progress in the case, and reviewing recommendations and court reports with the staff before submitting them to the Court.
Note: The Coordinator of Court Services is prohibited from altering reports or recommendations without the knowledge and agreement of the Volunteer GAL.
- Return the entire case file to the Coordinator of Court Service’s Office after the case is closed.

Acknowledgment:

I acknowledge that the above description is a representation of the major duties and responsibilities of this position. I understand the responsibilities and expectations and have been allowed to seek clarification if and when I do not understand.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Coordinator Signature

Date