

## **DUTIES OF A GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL)**

The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) is a full participant in the court proceeding and is the only party whose sole duty is to protect the minor child's needs and interests. The GAL assumes the role of an advocate for the child's interests and in no way represents the petitioner (usually an agency) or the respondents (usually the parents or custodians).

In fulfilling this child-centered role, the GAL performs five important and interrelated duties. The GAL:

1. Acts as an independent fact finder (or investigator) whose task it is to review all relevant records and interview the child, parents, social workers, teachers, and other persons to ascertain the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
2. Ascertains the interests of the child, taking into account the child's age, maturity, culture, and ethnicity including, as appropriate, explaining the court proceedings to the child in language and terms that the child can understand and maintaining a trusting meaningful relationship with the child via face-to-face contact.
3. Seeks cooperative resolutions to the child's situation within the scope of the child's interest and welfare.
4. Provides written reports of findings and recommendations to the court at each hearing to assure that all the relevant facts are before the court, unless otherwise ordered by the court.
5. Promptly provides a written report to the court if the services are not being made available to the child and/or families, if the family fails to take advantage of such services, or if such services are not achieving their purpose and brings to the court's attention any violation of orders, new developments or changes.