

HOW MUCH DOES A GUARDIAN *AD LITEM* EVALUATION COST?

WHO WILL PAY FOR IT?

If the GAL is paid for by the state, you will not be responsible for the fees.

If the Court directs the parties to pay all or part of the fee, the Court will determine the portion of the fee for which you are responsible.

The GAL will provide an explanation of fees and costs. He or she may require a retainer (deposit).

You are entitled to receive statements from the GAL that includes detailed information about tasks performed and hourly rate charged.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Massachusetts Trial Court website @ www.mass.gov/courts or contact the Probate and Family Court Administrative Office:

617.788.6600

Probate and Family Court Administrative Office

One Pemberton Square
John Adams Courthouse
Mezzanine Level
Boston, MA 02108
617.788.6600



www.mass.gov/courts

GUARDIAN *AD LITEM* PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT



A VOICE FOR THE CHILDREN IN THE COURTROOM



Every year in Massachusetts, thousands of children are involved in court cases. In cases filed in the Probate and Family Court, a child may face life-changing circumstances at home.

WHAT IS A GUARDIAN AD LITEM? (GAL)

A GAL is an impartial person appointed by the court to investigate or evaluate your family situation. This investigation or evaluation may include interviews with each party, interviews with the child(ren), and home visits to observe each parent with the child(ren).

THE JUDGE HAS APPOINTED A GUARDIAN AD LITEM, NOW WHAT?

If a judge appoints a Guardian *ad litem* (GAL), they will issue a detailed Order. Read the Order. The GAL is selected by the judge from a court approved list or the judge may appoint a person who is not on the list based on credentials and expertise.

A GAL is not the judge; they are investigators or evaluators who gather information and file a report with the court. The report the GAL

prepares is not a court order or judgment. It is a document that the judge will review and consider before making a final decision.

An investigation/evaluation can take up to 6 months. You will meet with the GAL but before you do, organize what you want to say. Make an outline or summary so you don't forget important facts or events. Remember, a judge must consider important issues in your case and needs accurate information. Make sure you give that information to the GAL. If you want the GAL to interview people who have information about you or your family, let the GAL know what information those people have to offer.

There may be a cost associated with the GAL that you will be required to pay which is why you should use the GAL's time wisely.

Remember, the GAL is not your attorney. The GAL is an impartial third party tasked with gathering information and in some instances, making recommendations to the judge. During this process, it is common for a party to feel that the GAL doesn't believe them, or doesn't understand the situation. It is important to remember the GAL doesn't take sides and must remain impartial.

The GAL may need to interview your child(ren). If this happens don't be alarmed. More importantly, don't alarm your child(ren). Be supportive. Do not make them feel that what they say to the GAL will decide the case. Don't put pressure on the child(ren)- just encourage them to be truthful.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Provide the factual information requested by the GAL and participate in interviews.
- You may choose to sign the releases (consent forms) necessary for the GAL to obtain confidential information from professionals who have been involved with the family.
- Whether or not you are represented by an attorney, you have the right to read the final GAL report.
- You may not copy the report or any part of the report without permission of the judge.

