

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 16TH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF
FLORIDA IN AND FOR MONROE
COUNTY

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 6.002/97-1
AMENDED

IN RE:

GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

NOW, THEREFORE, IN ACCORDANCE with the authority vested in the Chief Judge by Rule 2.050(b) Fla.R.Jud.Admin., and

WHEREAS, a Guardian ad Litem Program was created in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit in 1986 pursuant to mandates of the Legislature of the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, the Court Administrator's Office, Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, was then, and continues to be, appropriated funds for a volunteer Guardian ad Litem Program in cooperation with the Office of the State Courts Administrator and Monroe County; and

WHEREAS, certain policies and procedures of the Guardian ad Litem Program in the Circuit need to be reiterated and updated;

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED that:

1. The Guardian ad Litem Program shall train lay citizen volunteers to serve as assistants to the court and perform functions of investigator, monitor, protector, spokesperson and reporter for the children alleged to be abused, neglected, or any child in any action whose rights may be affected. Such volunteer Guardians ad Litem shall thoroughly research and investigate what action, if any, should be taken in the best interest of the child.
2. Any judge of this Circuit shall appoint a Guardian ad Litem to represent the best interest of a child in any proceeding if that child is a victim of or witness to child abuse or neglect; in a Dependency Proceeding in which the child is alleged to be a victim of abuse or neglect; or where the child is the victim of a sexual offense or witness to a sexual offense; or in a Family Law proceeding in which there is a well-founded allegation of child abuse or neglect, which allegation is verified and determined by the Court to be well founded.
3. Any judge of this Circuit may appoint a Guardian ad Litem to represent the best interests of a child in other cases where a child is involved as a victim or

witness, or in any action, to represent a child whose rights may be adversely affected, to the extent that duly qualified volunteers are available.

4. Volunteer Guardians ad Litem shall represent the child under the direction of the Guardian ad Litem Program.
5. Upon receipt of an Order Appointing Guardian ad Litem from the judge, the Guardian ad Litem Circuit Director shall assign a duly certified and trained volunteer to act as Guardian ad Litem in the case. Upon assignment, said volunteer shall immediately sign a Notice of Acceptance which will be filed with the Court, and notice given to all parties of record.
6. The duties of the Volunteer Guardian ad Litem shall not encompass the practice of law. In the discretion of the appointing judge, an attorney may be appointed as Guardian ad Litem, or the Program may engage the services of an attorney to assist the Volunteer Guardian ad Litem when necessary.
7. It is not the purpose of the Program or its volunteers to perform the services assigned to other agencies or professionals already responsible for children. The purpose of the Program is to assist children in abuse or neglect cases whose interest may be affected by existing court proceedings and to assist the court at the discretion of the presiding judge. To this end, all public and private agencies, professionals and other persons working with children are requested to provide all possible assistance to the court, the Program, and its volunteers.
8. The Court Administrator's Office, under the direction of the Chief Judge, shall be authorized to staff the Program and seek funding and professional assistance as may be needed for the Program's efficient and successful operation.
9. Each volunteer in the Guardian ad Litem Program shall be duly qualified, recruited, screened, and trained. Due to the sensitive nature of court records concerning children, each volunteer shall maintain the confidentiality of all records and information pertaining to said children. Such volunteers shall be supervised, monitored, and periodically evaluated by the Guardian ad Litem Program staff, and shall receive continuing in-service training throughout their participation in the Program and service in court cases.
10. In those cases in which the parents are financially able, the parent or parents of the child shall reimburse the court, in part or in whole, for the cost of providing guardian ad litem services.

DONE AND SIGNED in Chambers, at Key West, Monroe County, Florida, this the 24 day of March, 1997.

Richard G. Payne
Chief Judge