

Guardian ad Litem Project

A Project of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
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MISSION STATEMENT

To promote proficient and skillful representation of the interests of children and others before the juvenile court: To vindicate their rights, and achieve their best interests as valued members of our community.

The Guardian ad Litem Project was formed in 1978 in response to legislation requiring the appointment of a guardian ad litem (GAL) in all abuse and neglect cases, as well as in other juvenile court cases in which there is a parent/child conflict, where the child has no parent, where the parent is a minor or appeared to be mentally incompetent, or where appointment is otherwise necessary to insure a fair hearing.

The Guardian ad Litem Project recruits and trains GALs and monitors their performance. The Project serves as the liaison between the GALs, the Juvenile Court, and the public. The Project operates according to its By-Laws under an Administrator and Advisory Committee. Throughout the years, the Advisory Committee has been comprised of attorneys, psychologists, college faculty, social workers, foster parents, and members of valued community organizations. The Executive Director of the Bar Association, the Program Director of Mediation, and the Juvenile Court Administrative Judge and Chief Magistrate serve as *ex-officio* members of the Advisory Committee.

Guardian ad Litem practice is governed by the Guardian ad Litem Guidelines, the Juvenile Court's Local Rules, Rules of Superintendence, and O.R.C. 2151.281. Some attorneys serve as guardian ad litem pro bono, while others earn a fee, either paid by Cuyahoga County or the parties to the case. The Guardian ad Litem Project provides a two-day training for attorneys to become qualified GALs in Cuyahoga County. Advanced Trainings, also provided by the Project, are required to continue serving as a GAL.

The Guardian ad Litem Project also sponsors important community outreach programs:

Books GALore - Provides new books donated by community members to the GALs' wards and family members and also provides boxes of new, like-new, and used books at supervised visitation centers, the Detention Center and Juvenile Court waiting areas.

GALlop for Children - Annually on the 2nd Sunday in December

This year: Sunday, December 13, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

5k (3.1 miles) walk/run and ½ mile non-competitive kids' fun run

Location: The Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court, 2163 East 22nd Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Holiday GALa, Silent Auction, and Raffle – Annually on the 1st Friday in December

This year: Friday, December 4, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

Location: TBD

Both the **GALlop for Children** and the **Holiday GALa** raise funds for wards of guardians ad litem and caregivers. The GALs ask their wards or the caregivers for the child's "wish list" and what the family needs, and the GALs fulfill those wishes.