

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Guardian ad Litem Project Commences CASA Program Planning in Cuyahoga County

CLEVELAND, Ohio (December 8, 2014) The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Project of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association is pleased to announce that it has been awarded funding by Ohio CASA to start the planning phase to establish a nationally recognized Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program in Cuyahoga County. Mary Bush, Chairperson of the GAL Project indicated, "We have convened a Steering Committee composed of knowledgeable community members committed to advocating for the best interests of abused and neglected children to help develop the framework for Cuyahoga County CASA.

Administrative Judge Kristin W. Sweeney believes CASA will expand child advocacy efforts in the Court and child welfare community. "It is our hope that Cuyahoga County CASA will become an integral part of the Guardian ad Litem Project with CASA volunteers working in close partnership with guardians ad litem, the Cuyahoga County Division of Children & Family Services (DCFS) social workers, and the Juvenile Court judges and magistrates to augment the already superior advocacy Cuyahoga County's children receive and to improve the early placement of foster children in safe and permanent homes."

A collaboration of this magnitude between CASA and the Guardian ad Litem Project, which has trained attorney GALs in Cuyahoga County for 36 years, will ensure that our County's most vulnerable children have the best advocacy within the child welfare and judicial systems.

Patricia Rideout, Director of DCFS, believes CASA will strengthen the child welfare system in our county by ensuring that children's perspectives are more strongly represented in court. "A trained CASA volunteer can make a connection with a child at a most difficult time in their life and ensure that the child welfare and judicial systems do all that they can to achieve a permanent, safe, and stable family for all of the children they serve."

For more information or to volunteer, contact the Guardian ad Litem Project by email at info@galproject.org or by phone at 216-443-3377.