



POLICY K: CASE MAINTENANCE

Wyoming Guardians *Ad Litem* Program

Empowering youth & families through legal advocacy

SECTION ONE: PURPOSE, AUTHORITY, & SCOPE

- A. This policy was created pursuant to the Wyoming Guardians *Ad Litem* Rules and Regulations, Chapter 1, § 2(b). The purpose of this policy is to set forth the guidelines for guardians *ad litem* to receive case assignments, maintain information on their cases with the Administrative Office, close cases, and understand their assigned caseloads.
- B. This policy encompasses all guardians *ad litem* (GAL) attorneys contracted or employed with the State of Wyoming, Office of the State Public Defender, Guardians *Ad Litem* Program to provide GAL services in Wyoming.

SECTION TWO: NOTIFICATION OF NEWLY ASSIGNED CASES

- A. A GAL must be contracted or employed with the GAL Program and assigned to one of the program's three panels to be assigned to a case.
- B. Case assignments are at the sole discretion of the GAL Program Administrator or her designee. The GAL has no right to case assignments. When a new case is received from the court by the supervisor, they will determine the needs of the appointment and notify GALs that they find are an adequate and appropriate match based on the following criteria.
 - I. Attorney's current caseload
 - II. Other attorneys' caseloads in that county or GAL Program District
 - III. Needs of the client
 - IV. Needs of the case
 - V. Experience with issues present in the case
 - VI. Other factors at the discretion of the GAL Program Administrator or her designee
- C. GALs will be assigned to new cases by the GAL Program through the use of GAL Supervisors in each county. The supervisors will notify GALs when one is selected for appointment. In order to receive appointments, GALs must ensure the supervisor has current and correct contact information.

- D. Once a GAL has been contacted for appointment, they must respond to the supervisor's request immediately. Supervisors often have less than twenty-four hours' notice from the court before a hearing is held. Providing the Supervisor with a mobile phone number or allowing personal administrative staff to complete conflict checks, calendar checks, and accept case assignments on the GAL's behalf is highly suggested.
- E. Conflict checks must be completed before a GAL can accept said appointment. For more information on attorney-client conflicts of interest, please see *Policy D: Attorney-Client Conflicts of Interest*.

SECTION THREE: CASE MAINTENANCE

- A. Important pleadings must be on file with the GAL Program Administrative Office on all GAL Program Cases. GALs are to assist supervisors in obtaining copies of the Petition and Order Appointing the Wyoming GAL Program to the Administrative Office within seven days of the Petition filed date. Assistance is at the direction and determination of the supervisor. Until the GAL Program receives these documents, monthly payment will be placed on hold.
- B. If an assigned case evolves or leads to the filing of a subsequent juvenile court proceeding, appeal, or termination of parental rights (TPR) proceeding, the GAL must contact the GAL Program Administrator within twenty-four hours of the filing. The GAL Program Administrator will need specific information from the case for documentation and approval, or assignment of the subsequent TPR or appellate case to the Program's Permanency Unit.
 - I. In TPR proceedings, the GAL will be responsible for submitting required copies of their case file from the underlying juvenile proceeding to the Permanency Unit, and the Permanency Unit will be responsible for submitting the Petition and Order Appointing in the TPR proceeding.
 - II. In appellate proceedings, the GAL will be responsible for submitting the Notice of Appeal from the underlying juvenile proceeding to the Administrative Office and the Permanency Unit, and the Permanency Unit will be responsible for submitting the Entry of Appearance and Docketing Letter with the Supreme Court docket number.
 - III. In subsequent juvenile court proceedings, the GAL must submit the Petition and Order from the new case with the new docket number to the GAL Program Administrative Office within seven days of their appointment.

- C. In order to ensure the GAL Program has a correct accounting of a GAL's caseload and in order to be assigned new clients, GALs must submit a GAL Case Closure Memo within ten days of the proceeding being closed or dismissed.
 - I. Timely closures will be spot-audited by the GAL Program. If it is found that the GAL is not closing cases in in the required ten-day timeframe, their contract may be terminated for cause.
- D. Closed case files must be stored by the GAL until they can be archived with Wyoming State Archives by the GAL Program Administrative Staff. Case files are not to be sent by mail to the Administrative Office. Annually, file pick-up trips are scheduled statewide where a GAL Program staff member will travel to each county. Case files may be delivered in-person should one have the opportunity to visit the GAL Program Administrative Office. For more information on archived case files, please see *Policy O: Retention of Files*.

SECTION FOUR: CASELOADS

- A. The GAL Program maintains records of the current number of clients each GAL has been assigned to represent. To obtain an updated client count, please contact the GAL Program Administrative Office.
- B. Each attorney is contracted to represent a specific number of clients at any given time. This is called a caseload. Caseload ranges are classified as follows:
 - I. full-time caseload: 75-85 clients
 - II. half-time caseload: 35-45 clients
 - III. three-eighths-time caseload: 25-35 clients
 - IV. quarter-time caseload: 15-25 clients
 - V. one-eighth-time caseload: 5-15 clients
- C. These caseloads are general guides based on current statewide projections. If an attorney's caseload is consistently more or less than their contracted-specific amount, as defined by three or more consecutive months, the Administrator will review the attorney's caseload and the contracted county caseload projections to determine if any contract changes are required.
 - I. If it is determined that changes need to be made to the GAL's contracted caseload, an amendment to the professional services contract will be executed. GALs will be given thirty days' notice for these changes.

