

Guardians ad Litem (GAL)

8th Judicial District Court

Who They Are

A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a neutral person appointed by the court to investigate and advocate for the best interests of a child or incapacitated adult in a legal proceeding.

GALs are attorneys who know the law regarding the cases they are assigned to.

They serve as the “eyes and ears” of the court.

Roles of a GAL

- ✚ **Investigation:** Interviews with family, teachers, and counselors; gathers facts about the child’s environment.
- ✚ **Advocacy:** Ensures the child's needs and welfare are represented in court.
- ✚ **Reporting:** Prepares written findings and recommendations for the judge.
- ✚ **Court Representation:** May testify or present evidence during hearings.
- ✚ **Recommendations:** Advises on custody, visitation, or treatment plans.

Not Legal Counsel: Does not offer legal advice or serve as the child’s attorney.

When is a GAL Appointed?

Situation	Purpose
Custody Disputes	When parents cannot agree on custody/visitation.
Child Protection Cases	When a child's safety or welfare is in question.
Divorce Involving Children	When custody issues arise during divorce.
Adult Guardianship	When an adult is unable to care for themselves.
Adoption Cases	When a child is being placed for adoption.
Kinship Guardianship	When a child is being placed with relatives.