

Rule 40.1. Duties and Responsibilities of Appointed Counsel and Guardians Ad Litem

A. Attorneys appointed for children shall make clear to children and their caregivers whether their appointment is as a guardian ad litem or as an attorney and the ethical obligations associated with their role.

B. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall inform the child, in an age and developmentally appropriate manner, about the nature of the proceedings, the attorney's role, that the child has the right to attend hearings and speak to the judge, the consequences of the child's participation or lack of participation, the possible outcomes of each hearing, and other legal rights with regards to the dependency proceeding and the outcomes of each substantive hearing.

C. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall participate in discovery and file pleadings when appropriate and attorneys must develop the child's position for each hearing. The duties of the attorney and the guardian ad litem may include identifying appropriate family and professional resources for the child, as well as subpoenaing witnesses, and the attorney and guardian ad litem shall inquire of the child regarding potential placements and communicate this information to the Department of Child Safety as appropriate.

D. The attorney and guardian ad litem shall meet in person with the child before the preliminary protective hearing, if possible, or within fourteen (14) days after the preliminary protective hearing. Thereafter, the attorney and guardian ad litem for the child shall meet in person with the child and have meaningful communication before every substantive hearing. Substantive hearings include all preliminary protective hearings, all periodic review hearings, permanency hearings, any hearings involving placement, visitation or services, or any hearing to adjudicate dependency, guardianship or termination. If the child is under the age of 5 or is not able to communicate effectively, meetings should include observations within each placement home. At each substantive hearing the attorney or guardian ad litem shall inform the court as to the child's position concerning pending issues and, if the child is not present, an explanation for the child's absence. In all cases, attorneys and guardians ad litem for children should also communicate with placements, and if practicable, observe the placement. Upon a showing of extraordinary circumstances, the judge may modify the above requirements for any substantive hearing.

E. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall also maintain contact with caretakers, child safety investigators and workers, service providers, childcare providers, CASAs, relatives and any other significant person in the child's life as appropriate in order to meet the obligations of informed representation of the child.

F. To the extent possible, attorneys and guardians ad litem should attend or provide input to Department of Child Safety staffings, Foster Care Review Board reviews and Child and Family Team meetings.

G. Attorneys and guardians ad litem may use appropriately trained support staff to assist in the performance of the duties listed herein unless otherwise required by law. The support staff performing these duties must adhere to this rule.

H. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall promptly identify any potential and actual conflicts of interest that would impair their ability to represent a child. Either the attorney or the guardian ad litem shall, if necessary, move to withdraw or to seek the appointment of an additional attorney or guardian ad litem if he or she deems such action necessary.

I. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall be knowledgeable of the child welfare agencies, governmental programs, and community-based service providers and organizations serving children (e.g., behavioral health, developmental disability, health care, education, financial assistance, counseling support, family preservation, reunification, permanency services and juvenile justice). Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall be knowledgeable about how these services are accessed and shall advocate for such services as appropriate for the child.

J. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall be familiar with the substantive juvenile law. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall stay abreast of changes and developments in relevant federal and state laws and regulations, Rules of Procedure for the Juvenile Court, court decisions and federal and state laws concerning education and advocacy for children in schools. Attorneys and guardians ad litem shall complete an introductory six (6) hours of court approved training prior to their first appointment unless otherwise determined by the presiding judge of the juvenile court in which the attorney or guardian is practicing for good cause shown and an additional two (2) hours within the first year of practice in juvenile court. All attorneys and guardians ad litem shall complete at least eight (8) hours each year of ongoing continuing education and training. Education and training shall be on juvenile law and related topics, such as child and adolescent development (including infant/toddler mental health), effects of substance abuse by parents and by and upon children, behavioral health, impact on children of parental incarceration, education, Indian Child Welfare Act, parent and child immigration status issues, the need for timely permanency, the effects of the trauma of parental domestic violence upon children and other issues concerning abuse and/or neglect of children. Some or all of this training and continuing education may qualify as mandatory Continuing Legal Education under State Bar of Arizona requirements.

Attorneys shall provide the judge with an affidavit of completion of the six (6) hour court approved training requirement prior to or upon their first appointment as attorney or guardian ad litem for a child after the adoption of this rule unless a waiver of this requirement has been obtained from the presiding judge of the juvenile court in which the appointment is to be made. The affidavit of completion shall include a list of courses including the name of the training, the date of the training, the training provider, and the number of hours for each course. All attorneys shall file annually an affidavit with the presiding judge certifying their compliance with this section. Such affidavit shall be filed concurrently with the affidavit of compliance with State Bar MCLE and shall include a list of courses including the name of the training, the date of the training, the training provider and the number of hours for each course.