



GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL) PRO BONO PROGRAM

STATEWIDE APPEALS DATA FISCAL YEAR 2019–20

Appellate Cases

185 appeals filed
43 appeals represented by GAL Program
14 appeals represented by Attorney Advocates
93 appeals represented by GAL Pro Bono Attorneys

Appellate Attorneys

1 Appellate Counsel
1 Associate Counsel
1 Staff Attorney
125 Pro Bono Appellate Attorneys

PRO BONO ATTORNEY TESTIMONIALS

“I believe it is important for all attorneys to be involved in some sort of pro bono work, and this program is a great way to perform a meaningful role for children who need a voice. I take the responsibility seriously, knowing that I am representing some of the most vulnerable and unwilling participants in the judicial system. And as a parent myself, it is an area of the law that I am particularly interested in.” — **Kip Nelson, Fox Rothchild, LLP**

“Every attorney has the responsibility and privilege to use her legal skills for the greater good. I wanted to use my appellate experience to help protect the interests of children in difficult domestic situations. The most vulnerable in society, including children, need advocates to protect their legal interests. I hope that, through this work, I can help to improve the current and future situations of the children involved in the appeal.” — **Mary Cavanagh, Ward and Smith, PA**

“I think it’s very important to give back to my community, and this is one way that I am able to do so. I find that the work is not only enjoyable, but is an important cornerstone of the court system. Many children get lost in the shuffle of the court system. By having an attorney who is dedicated to representing the best interests of the child, not the parent nor the government, the child’s voice is not lost and is able to be heard in court. Although I may not ever meet these children and vice versa, I feel that the impact in representing them is great.” — **Sophie Goodman, K&L Gates, LLP**



In 1983, the North Carolina General Assembly established the Office of Guardian ad Litem Services as a division of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. The North Carolina Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program equips community volunteers to serve abused and neglected children by advocating for their best interests in court. At the trial level, GAL volunteers and attorney advocates, along with program staff, provide team representation for the child. When orders entered in juvenile cases are appealed, the GAL program continues to provide advocacy for the child’s best interests through staff, contract, and pro bono attorneys. Contract and pro bono attorneys are supported and trained by GAL Appellate Counsel and Associate Counsel.

GAL Pro Bono Attorneys

- Help abused and neglected children achieve permanence and safety by representing their best interests in North Carolina’s appellate courts.
- Write and file appellee briefs, and other documents, on behalf of the child, and appear for oral argument when appropriate.
- Review transcripts and court files to settle the record on appeal, and conduct legal research.

Juvenile Appellate Procedure at a Glance

- Appeals in juvenile cases are expedited by Rule 3.1 of the Rules of Appellate Procedure and heard by both the North Carolina Court of Appeals and Supreme Court of North Carolina. Rule 3.1 mandates shorter deadlines for transcripts and records and disfavors extensions of time.
- GAL appellate briefs are typically due about 165 days from the filing of the notice of appeal. The due date is predictable because of the expedited timeline.
- Expedited appeals are typically resolved within 12 months. Most are resolved without an oral argument, based on the record and the written briefs.

To represent all of North Carolina’s abused and neglected children on appeal, the GAL Program relies on the contributions of pro bono attorneys. Our pro bono program provides attorneys with a unique opportunity to develop and sharpen appellate advocacy skills in a flexible program that accommodates their daily responsibilities. Take a case with our pro bono program today, and use your legal skills to help a child in need achieve permanence and stability.