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State Guardian ad Litem Board

Agency Profile 1

State Guardian ad Litem Board — Agency Profile

https://mn.gov/guardian-ad-litem/

AT A GLANCE

- Advocated for over 10,000 children in 5,300 Juvenile court cases in 2025
- Assigned to over 1,000 family court cases during 2025
- 252 total employees (includes management, family court) and 55 volunteers

PURPOSE

The State Guardian ad Litem Board (GALB) administers the Minnesota Guardian ad Litem program which exists to advocate for safe, permanent, and nurturing families for all abused and neglected children through well-trained, culturally aware, and independent best interest advocacy. GALB's vision is a Minnesota in which all abused and neglected children are heard and supported through best interest advocacy that protects their safety, supports their well-being, and promotes healthy futures.

The court appoints guardians ad litem in all child protection cases as mandated by state and federal law. Guardians ad litem serve for the duration of the case, regularly see the child, attend all court hearings, and file reports advocating for the child's best interest.

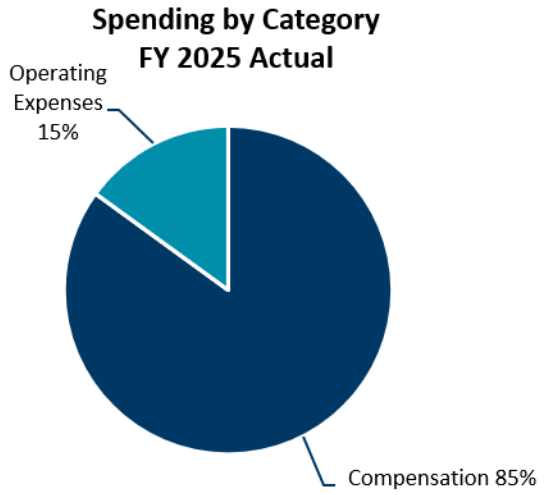
Guardians ad litem are appointed to help ensure:

- Children are safe
- Concurrent permanency planning with relative/kin begins on day one
- Children spend the least amount of time under court jurisdiction
- Children receive appropriate services, including trauma-informed care
- Parents participate in services that reflect the best interests of their children
- Physical and mental health, educational, and cultural needs of children are met
- Children are reunited with parents if it is in the best interests of the child
- Children do not re-enter the child protection system

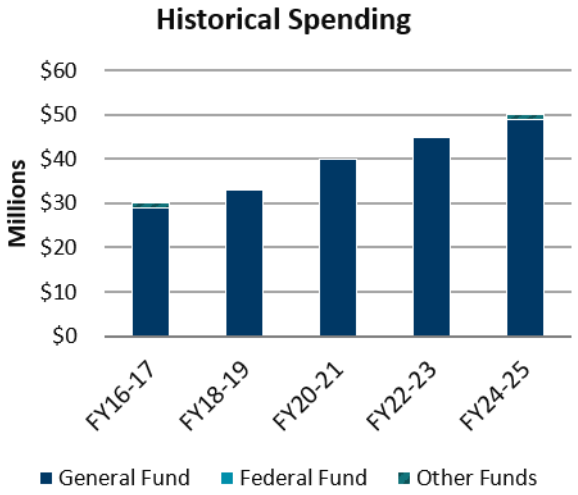
The court appoints guardians ad litem in family court cases as mandated by statute. The guardian ad litem advocates for the child's best interest and makes recommendations regarding specific issues as requested by the court. These may include recommendations for custody, parenting time, and services for children and parents.

BUDGET

In 2010, the Minnesota State Legislature created the GALB to transition the Guardian ad Litem program out of the state court system and establish an independent program. Historical spending began in FY 2011. GALB has a total FY 2026-27 biennial base budget of $51,240,000, with 82 percent of appropriated funds budgeted for compensation, and operating expenses consisting of 18 percent of budgeted appropriated funds. The budget is funded primarily by general fund appropriations.



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

STRATEGIES

The Guardian ad Litem program achieves the program's mission first by assigning guardians ad litem when appointed by the court for every child alleged to be abused or neglected and for every mandated case in family court. As resources allow, the program also provides guardians ad litem to help meet the court's critical need for guardians ad litem in permissive family court cases.

The program includes a nationally recognized Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) division staffed by guardians ad litem and supervisors with additional, specialized training in the ICWA. ICWA division guardians ad litem represent the best interests of children in cases where ICWA or Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) applies. The division is a key strategic component of the program's mission to provide culturally aware, well-trained, independent advocates.

The program has developed an internal attorney division, currently staffed by three attorneys. The division is available to consult with guardians ad litem and in certain cases represent the guardian ad litem at hearings and trials. Additional availability of counsel is a strategic priority of the program as child protection and family court matters become increasingly complex and contentious. To effectively advocate for the best interests of children, guardians ad litem must, in many cases, have the benefit of counsel.

The program has consistently improved its use of data to inform practice and measure performance. In 2020, the program was the first entity to integrate with the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) for e-filing court reports. This integration provides the program with objective data on compliance with court report requirements. The program's near-term strategic priorities include improving data collection related to child outcomes.

With recent funding from the legislature, the program has begun to revitalize the volunteer program. GALB has hired three volunteer supervisors and immediately began to recruit and train new volunteers. In a little more than a year, the volunteer program has increased significantly. Currently 25% of juvenile court guardians ad litem are volunteers.

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
New cases assigned	Quantity	GAL case management system	Declined from 3,125 in FY 2024 to 2,699 in FY 2026	2,699 in FY 2026
Court reports filed and on time	Quality	GAL case management system	The percentage increased from 71 percent in FY 2023 to 84% in FY 2026	84% in FY 2024
Compliance with federal and state mandates	Result	GAL case management system	98% in FY 2023 and FY 2024 to 100% in FY 2026. The program has eliminated the previous unassigned case list.	100% in FY 2026

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

GALB activities cannot be evaluated using randomized control or quasi-experimental design methods.

M.S 480.35 https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/480.35 established the State Guardian ad Litem Board; M.S. 260C.163 https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/260C.163 provides for the appointment of a Guardian ad Litem in juvenile court proceedings and M.S. 518.165 https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/518.165 for family court.