

GAL Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes: 01/16/2026

Roll Call:

Members Present

Judge Lori Morgan, Debra Lynch Dubovich, Rosanne Ang, Kelly Lonnberg, Magistrate Ana Osan, Katie Kelsey, Judge Christine Haseman, Mag. Alexis Dedelow

Ex Officio Members Present

Melissa Cunnynggham

Others Present

Joseph Fischer (IOCS), Payton Lester (IOCS), Kathy Wasson

Welcome

Judge Morgan welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes from December 12, 2025, were approved once a quorum was reached. Lonnberg moved to approve. Osan seconded.

Application Reviews

No applications were submitted for review.

Training

The next GAL training is scheduled for February 23rd. Payton Lester emailed reminders to those who indicated interest in the upcoming training. There's been an increase in registrations following the holidays. The training link is now live on the website.

Kathy Wasson from Indiana Office of Court Services: Education Division, joined the meeting to give an update on the LMS, Learning Module System. GAL's will be able to access their training history and CEU requirements from the platform. The LMS will also have the ability to accept external courses. Instructions given on entering external course description and details and how it will show on the GAL's transcript. External courses would have to be approved before credit awarded. Kathy is still working on a plan for how to approve courses. Initially, external courses will be added to the LMS course name list ad hoc. If there is a lot of interest, the training team could reach out to the organization, confirm approval, then add to the course list.

The LMS will capture course completion data and extracted for the committee by Kathy or someone running reports. Kathy is looking into how the LMS can send reminders to those who are behind or close to the deadline for credits. CEU's for attorneys would count as CLE's. All available courses are approved for CLE credit. The platform is a work in progress, so if other information or features seem necessary, committee members can contact Payton.

Registry Update

Payton Lester reported that since the last meeting, 13 new GALs have been added to the Registry. We now have 419 applicants approved. Those applications that have been pending for a while were deleted, about 40 in total. We receive about 5 applications per week. Most new registrants and applicants have been attorneys.

A question was posed about what should happen if someone needs to take a sabbatical or hiatus from serving as a GAL. Do they remain on the registry during that time then re-apply? Or is it a matter of keeping up with credits? Payton responds, advising since the situation has just happened, we will not remove the attorney from the registry or the application process. They are asked to notify us through the website of their change in status and when they will want to be reinstated. We can assess what they will need to do then as far as credit or application completion. This is something to consider when reviewing the GAL Guidelines.

Complaints

No complaints were submitted for review.

Next Steps

Those interested in serving on the GAL Guidelines Subcommittee will convene immediately following the February meeting. This committee is asked to also consider policies on complaints and how those will be handled going forward.

Junge Morgan agreed to circle back with Leslie Dunn on where things stand with a mentorship agreement. Melissa Cunnyingham reported that this was still being discussed with OJA's legal department. No specific discussions have been had about finding a mentor for those who request one.

Next meeting is set for February 6, 2026, 10:00 a.m. EST via Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned

GAL Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes: 2/6/2026

Roll Call:

Members Present

Chair, Judge Lori Morgan, Debra Lynch Dubovich, Magistrate Rosanne Ang, Kelly Lonnberg, Magistrate Ana Osan, Judge Catherine Stafford, Senior Judge Thomas Felts, Katie Kelsey

Ex Officio Members Present

Melissa Cunyningham, Leslie Dunn

Others Present

Joseph Fischer, Payton Lester

Welcome

Judge Morgan welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes from January 16, 2026, were unanimously approved. K. Lonnberg moved to approve. D. Dubovich seconded.

Application Reviews

Leslie Dunn presented updates on four applicants.

1. Police Officer from Illinois: GAL/CASA office made contact. He has experience with families experiencing violence and wants to help. The Committee will review his entire application once all pieces, including background checks and references, are complete. The Committee will also consider whether a mentor would be appropriate.
2. Attorney Carla Ginn, Scottsburg: Attorney Ginn has a previous disciplinary action involving conflict of interest. She has provided supporting letters from judges in her county and a fellow practicing attorney. The Committee reviewed the recommendation letters, considered her continued practice in the county, and that the complaint against her was five years old. Committee approves her for the GAL Registry, requiring she find a registered GAL to serve as her mentor. The mentor must be approved by the Committee. Leslie Dunn will communicate this with the applicant, then report back to the Committee with the name of the mentor for the Committee's approval.
3. Attorney Jennifer Naue: DUI in 2025. GAL/CASA office reached out to her for comment. She was forthcoming and explained she took full responsibility. She has the support of her local judges, who are aware of her background. She worked with JLAP and completed an alcohol assessment which showed no substance use disorder. Committee discussed how recent the incident was and whether that should be a factor in their determination. R. Ang pointed out that there was no corresponding attorney disciplinary action, so the question becomes whether she is fit to serve as GAL or not. Committee

agrees to approve her for the GAL Registry, and should problems continue, the Committee will reconsider her fitness to serve at that point.

4. Jennifer Jacobs: Retired Social Worker, Blackford County: All requirements are completed. The Committee agrees to approve her for the GAL Registry, but questions if she needs a mentor since she is not an attorney. Committee agrees she needs a mentor at least through the time she writes her first report and gives testimony. She should find someone who is willing to stay on longer if necessary or be available to give guidance in the future.

Training

No new updates on Training

Registry Update

Payton Lester reported that since the last meeting, 12 GALs were added to the Registry in January 2026. One was removed due to obtaining a new position. The number of GAL registrants now totals 425.

Complaints

Leslie Dunn submitted one complaint to the Committee. IOCS has acknowledged receipt of the complaint but has taken no further action. Leslie advised the Committee that she spoke with Larry Newman at the Office of Attorney and Judicial Regulation (OJAR) about complaint procedures and best practices. He recommended a general letter of dismissal with no detail. Leslie's office can work on a draft for the complainant and a draft for the GAL. Larry further advised their office does not get concerned about retaliation, such as a judge retaliating against a litigant for filing a complaint against the judge. He also said his office does not see repeat complaints with more detail, the dismissal usually stops the momentum. Their dismissals are final with no appeal process.

The Committee considered what kind of procedures should be put in place to ensure a fair and even-handed process. Discussions included whether looking at the CCS should be a part of the complaint review process, along with looking at whether the nature of a complaint rises to the level of concern for the committee. L. Morgan felt it was the duty of the Committee to check the CCS to confirm the complaints' accuracy and eligibility for review. D. Dubovich expressed that if, on its face, the allegations could state a claim, then we should ask for a response from the GAL and do our due diligence. The question of whether a GAL can share their report with the Committee came up. Leslie to consult with Jeff Wiese on whether a GAL can release their report to the Committee as part of the complaint review process. The Committee considered how to respond to complaints when the case ended in agreement. The Committee also contemplated whether they should issue an opinion following a determination. All agreed that further discussion on best practices was warranted and welcomed. T. Felts supports following the process used by OJAR; if it is clear that there is nothing there, dismiss the complaint; if it could state a claim, we should ask for a response.

In the complaint at issue, discussion revolved around the nature of the complaint claiming the GAL did not do a thorough investigation. If true, the GAL would be in violation of the Guidelines. D. Dubovich motions to take the step of reaching out to GAL for a response. Leslie will find out if GAL can share her report and/or file with the Committee, and Leslie will include instruction

based on her findings in the letter to the GAL. C. Stafford seconds. Without further discussion, the motion passes with one dissenting vote.

Mentoring Agreement

Leslie Dunn offered sample mentorship agreements and documents for the Committee's consideration. D. Dubovich has agreed to mentor and serve as a pilot case. She will report back to us from her perspective and will share the mentee's feedback. Leslie recommends keeping any agreement or letter general, allowing for modifications as circumstances warrant. The Committee wants to see guidance for different stages of the case, such as report writing, testifying, investigating, and motion drafting. The mentor can help the new GAL develop a game plan for the case. The mentoring can be customized based on the applicant's experience.

New Business: Payment of GAL's

Chair, L. Morgan, summarizes an issue presented by a fellow judge. There have been instances where a GAL is appointed on a family law case, time goes by, then when the judge sets a hearing and asks the GAL for an update, the GAL has not seen the child or talked to the parents because they were not paid, resulting in the case being delayed. What can be done? The GALs have to be paid but we do not want cases unnecessarily delayed. The Committee members discussed what they would do in those instances and recommended judges look into using ADR funds (if the county has an ADR Fund) and if the litigants are eligible. (ADR Funds are for litigants with the least ability to pay.) No action was taken on the topic.

Next Steps

GAL guidelines discussion on handling complaints and implementing a mentor program will continue in sub-committee meeting to be held at a later date. We need to have a written complaint process.

Leslie will consult with Jeff Wiese on whether a GAL can share their GAL report with this committee in response to complaints. K. Meger will help compile materials to help list guidance on topics for mentors.

Lake County Bar Association is sponsoring a CLE that may be eligible for GAL credit. It may also offer the opportunity to elicit feedback on GAL Guidelines as to what is working and what is causing concerns.

Next meeting is set for March 6, 2026, 10:00 a.m. EST via Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned

GAL Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes: 3/6/2026

Roll Call:

Members Present

Chair, Judge Lori Morgan, Magistrate Rosanne Ang, Kelly Lonnberg, Magistrate Ana Osan, Judge Catherine Stafford, Senior Judge Thomas Felts, Judge Christine Talley Haseman, Katie Kelsey

Ex Officio Members Present

Melissa Cunnynggham, Leslie Dunn

Others Present

Tara Rochford, Joseph Fischer, Payton Lester

Welcome

Judge Morgan welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes from February 6, 2026, were unanimously approved upon reaching a quorum.

Application Reviews

Leslie Dunn presented updates on two (2) applicants.

1. J. P.: application shows she is a non-attorney with no licensed mental health or social work experience and no other special licensures. To obtain the requisite references, it is recommended that before serving as a paid GAL, she first volunteer with a local CASA program on at least one case (including writing a report and making court appearances) until she can get some experience in court and get a judicial reference and/or a reference from the CASA Program Director, and then reapply. The Committee agrees to have her proceed as recommended.
2. J. L., police officer from Illinois: Background checks are complete and he is wanting to move forward with the training. His status of being from out-of-state was discussed. Because he is not a licensed attorney in Indiana, nor does he have other licensing connections to Indiana, the Committee is hesitant to have him proceed. A recommendation is made that he should volunteer with a local CASA program in Indiana on at least one case (including writing a report and making court appearances) until he can get some experience in court and get a judicial and/or CASA program director reference and then reapply. This is consistent with what the committee recommended for applicant J.P., above, who is also a non-licensed, non-attorney with no GAL experience. We will reach out to him to explain this. The

committee also discussed whether they should consider adding a requirement to the GAL Guidelines that an applicant reside in Indiana or have Indiana licensure in a related field; the committee decided that this should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Ongoing Training Topics

Emily Angel-Shaw, GAL/CASA initial and ongoing trainer with Kids Voice, inquired about what training topics the Committee would like to see offered by her program. Suggestions from the committee included skills for interviewing children, how to navigate sex abuse allegations within cases to preserve later forensic interviewing, training GAL/CASA to screen for domestic violence, and information on when to recommend psychiatric and/or psychological evaluations and what is covered in each.

Kids Voice representatives responded to having GAL/CASA screen for domestic violence, advising that they steer away from encouraging this because GALs and CASA volunteers are not professionally trained or skilled in this area. Concerns with having volunteers and attorneys conduct screens were expressed and discussed. GAL/CASA State Office will reach out to other states to see how they handle domestic violence screening by GALs and/or CASA volunteers.

Mentoring Update

Leslie Dunn reports that applicants, Ms. C.G. and Ms. J., can be approved for the GAL Registry as they agreed to work with a mentor. Ms. C.G. is familiar with GALs on the Registry and will proceed under an informal arrangement. Ms. J. would like a more formal arrangement. Efforts to find her a mentor in her area are underway. Deb Dubovich is also mentoring a previous applicant and piloting a formal process. At this time, IOCS acknowledges that they may be without the resources to run a completely formal mentorship program but can informally guide those who request it to resources and willing mentors. More of the process will be fleshed out in writing as discussions continue.

Public Defender Guidelines Clarification

Katie Meger from Kids Voice reports that some Marion County public defenders are trying to apply the Family Law GAL Guidelines to their CHINS cases and are raising this issue in cross examination in an attempt to discredit the GAL/CASA work product. No one on the Committee outside of Marion County has heard of this happening. The language in the Preamble to the GAL Guidelines says, "including but not limited to," the listed case types; this may be the source of the "confusion." However, the intent was to capture even the lesser-used civil family law case types, not for the GAL Guidelines to apply to CHINS and TPR cases. Judge Felts suggests we consider clarifying this issue when we revise the GAL Guidelines.

Magistrate Osan and Deb Dubovich provided a GAL Guidelines CLE webinar and received some suggestions from participants. One request was to flesh out in the GAL Guidelines what constitutes the GAL's file; does it include their written notes? Also, what constitutes a home visit and does it have to be in the home? What else might be acceptable?

Further consideration of these topics will be taken when the guidelines are reviewed and revised.

Complaints

The Committee reviewed a draft initial letter to GALs with complaints made against them. Paragraph 2 revision will include the phrase "After a preliminary investigation, this is a request..." Paragraph 3 revision will include the phrase "The commission will conduct further investigation based on your response..." Judge Morgan requests that we include how long it will be for them to hear back from the committee. The committee approves utilizing this letter with the noted revisions. Additional draft letters are being prepared for the committee's review at the next meeting.

Leslie Dunn presents one new complaint from K.S., for the Committee's consideration. Judge Morgan notes that this is an Allen County GAL so she is not going to weigh in. The question here is whether this merits further investigation.

The complaint meets the eligibility requirements for consideration as to when the GAL was appointed. However, the CCS shows that the final order on modification of custody was issued on January 30, 2026, so it has not been 60 days since the final order. The complainant will be notified that the complaint is being dismissed and will have to be re-filed sixty days after the final order. Discussion of whether the latest order was a final order took place. The committee asked whether the Committee could listen to the recording of the court proceeding. Leslie Dunn will seek advice on that from OJAR. The Committee found it helpful to review the CCS as part of the complaint evaluation process. Discussions will continue on complaint procedures and best practices.

Registry Update

Payton Lester reported 9 additional approvals to the GAL Registry this past month. All were participants in the Kids Voice training. We should have approximately 15 more coming through for approval in April. There are now 439 GALs on the GAL Registry.

Next Steps

The committee will continue to fine tune the mentoring process. A small group will meet and discuss recommendations for amendments to the GAL Guidelines. Katie Meger will let Emily Shaw at Kids Voice know about the training topics recommended by this committee. Next meeting is not confirmed as April's meeting falls on Good Friday. Payton Lester will send a survey out for the selection of an alternate date. We will also do a meeting date poll for July 3 and September 4, the Friday before Labor Day.

Meeting Adjourned

GAL Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes: 5/1/2026

Roll Call:

Members Present

Chair Judge Lori Morgan, Deb Dubovich, Katie Kelsey, Magistrate Rosanne Ang, Kelly Lonnberg, Judge R. Stuard, Magistrate Osan

Ex Officio Members Present

Leslie Dunn, Melissa Cunnyingham

Others Present

Tara Rochford, Joseph Fischer, Payton Lester, Kathy Wasson

Welcome

Judge Morgan welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

Upon reaching a quorum:

- Motion to approve the Minutes from 3/6/2026 was entered by K. Kelsey. K. Lonnberg seconded the motion. Motion passes.
- Motion to approve the Minutes from 3/27/2026 was entered by D. Dubovich. K. Kelsey seconded the motion. Motion passes.

Application Reviews

Leslie Dunn presented GAL applications for review:

- Application (#1): Non-attorney applicant with no licenses in social work, but some field experience. Provided personal references, not considered strong, and no judicial references. Other concerns with the application were discussed. The applicant completed training but Committee felt more child-focused, best interest advocacy experience was required. Committee recommended the applicant volunteer with a local CASA program to obtain additional training and experience.

Registry Update

- Registry Search Tool: Kathy Wasson from Indiana Office of Court Services, Education Division, presented a demonstration of an AI based search tool that allows judges to search the GAL Registry by multiple fields including Name, City, County, by years of experience, and by whether they are an attorney and whether they accept sliding scale fees. The tool can search any fields entered into the Registry; however, being AI based and in the pre-approval stage, it does not search for data or code in other systems and does not store information. The tool can also provide a random selection of GALs for a panel. Any change in the Registry site could “break” the search tool as it is specific to the current Registry platform. Judges can access the GAL Registry PDF through the judicial education platform, download, then apply the tool. The tool still needs approved

by AI oversight committee and is not intended to be used publicly. The tool was well received by the committee, with the request that options for use by attorneys be considered in the future.

- Payton Lester reports that there are approximately 447 people on the GAL Registry. An average of 10 applicants are added per month. Kids Voice held training on April 29 with 19 attendees. Payton noted an increase in applications from non-attorneys, anticipating more applications will need Committee approval in the near future.
- Leslie Dunn reports there are approximately 6 judicial officers on the GAL Registry who are currently on the bench and asks whether the committee feels this is a conflict. Leslie will reach out to Adrienne and/or Heather Faulks regarding any potential ethical issues. D. Dubovich brings up reasons why this may be occurring, saying they may want to keep their GAL status in case their term is temporary or subject to election swings. Payton confirms that in such cases, a judicial officer can keep their application and status on file with the GAL office, and GAL office can remove them from the public Registry. Leslie will consult with Adrienne or Heather before taking any action on this issue.

Updates to Parents' Guide to Working with a GAL

Leslie Dunn reminded the Committee of the history of the Parents' Guide. Leslie and Rae Feller contributed to the original draft which was vetted by the Family Law Taskforce. It is posted on the Family Law GAL website. In previous meetings, the Committee has suggested various additions to the Guide. Leslie has made revisions and proposes those to the Committee. Magistrate Ang has reviewed and gave comments.

Some of the changes include emphasizing that this is only for Family Law cases, clarification on GAL neutrality and that GALs independently gather information and not at the direction of a parent. Also, add a reminder that GALs do not determine outcomes, and clarification of sanctions the GAL Oversight Committee can impose if there are violations. What to do if you disagree with a GAL report is now broken out into bullet points. Overall, the Committee supports the changes.

There is discussion on whether suggesting a parent can file a response to a report (on page 5 of the Guide) is consistent with the Trial Rules. Discussion held on whether to leave the language as is, delete it, or change to "if permitted by the court." The committee will further review the language and this section and provide feedback for discussion at the next meeting.

Update on Background Check Policy for GAL

Tara Rochford, Indiana Office of Court Services, GAL/CASA office, presented updated guidance from Safe Hire/ Safe Visitor regarding compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act. Each instance reported will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and consistent with a set of certain factors, including:

- Timeframe of offense. (Convictions older than five (5) years that are not of a particularly serious nature or directly related to the GAL role would not present a specific concern)
- Nature or severity of the offense
- Relationship to the work of a GAL
- Remedial steps taken or agreed to by the applicant

- Forthrightness with which applicant self-discloses criminal history

An applicant may dispute the results of a background check by contacting Safe Hiring.

Complaints

- Complaint #1 (three companion complaints): The modification order was issued less than sixty days from the submission of the complaints. Committee staff recommend dismissing the complaint as it is not ripe for consideration and send communication to the complainant stating the same.
- Complaint #2: The order referenced by the complaint is not a final order. Staff reviewed the CCS to confirm the order states it is temporary and a final hearing has been set. Indications led staff to believe the complaint was written by a non-party relative. Committee staff recommend dismissing the complaint because the order referenced was not a final order and send communication to the complainant stating the same.
- Motion to Dismiss White and Scotto complaints and send notice to complainants was made by R. Stuard. Seconded by D. Dubovich. Motion passes.
- Complaint #3: The complainant is a current resident of Las Vegas. The cause numbers cannot be found on the CCS. Staff searched by cause number, party name, and GAL name with no results. Staff recommend sending correspondence to the complainant requesting more information. Discussion was held whether this was a dismissal and request to resubmit with more information, or a hold on the current complaint while requesting more information. Committee decides to send a notice and request more information from complainant and give the complainant 30 days from the date of the letter/email to respond or the complaint will be dismissed. The complaint will be reviewed again at that time if it is re-submitted.

Next Steps

Work to finalize updates to GAL Guidelines and internal policies. Subcommittee will meet immediately following today's full Committee meeting.

Judicial Family Law Conference will be held in Plainfield, IN on June 2-4, 2026. Judge Morgan urges all judicial officers to attend.

The next meeting will be held June 5, 2026, 10:00 a.m. EST via Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned

Motion to adjourn made by K. Lonnberg. D. Dubovich seconds. Motion passes.

Notes from Subcommittee Meeting on May 1

Update on Background Check Policy for GAL

Tara Rochford, Indiana Office of Court Services, GAL/CASA office, presented a draft policy on criminal background checks with updated guidance from Safe Hire/ Safe Visitor regarding compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).

The Committee wants a policy on the review of applicants' criminal background checks that is consistent and fairly applied, even though each case will be different depending on the circumstances. Although attorneys do not have to have a criminal background check, sometimes they self-disclose or it may show up on their attorney licensing/disciplinary records. Background checks and/or reported criminal history will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis consistent with a set of factors recommended by the EEOC, including:

- Timeframe of offense (Convictions older than five (5) years that are not of a particularly serious nature or directly related to the GAL role may not present a specific concern.)
- Nature or severity of the offense
- Relationship to the work of a GAL
- Remedial steps taken or agreed to by the applicant
- Forthrightness with which applicant self-discloses criminal history

The policy also includes information from the FCRA requirements: if any adverse action is taken based on the results of the criminal background check, we are obligated to inform the applicant of that. Safe Hiring takes care of sending the applicant the paperwork required by FCRA. It is also noted that an applicant may dispute the results of a background check by contacting Safe Hiring.

Next Steps

We are working on internal policies and will have draft policies for their review at the next subcommittee meeting. Draft changes to the GAL Guidelines and draft policies will be reviewed by the subcommittee, voted on, and once approved, they will be provided to the full GAL Oversight Committee. The subcommittee will continue to meet right after the full GAL Oversight Committee.

Friday, June 5, 2026 Meeting

Roll Call

Members

Chair Hon. Lori Morgan, Mag. Rosanne Ang, Mag. Alexis Dedelow, Deb. Dubovich, Hon. Thomas Felts, Hon. Christine Haseman, Kelly Lonnberg, Mag. Ana Osan, Hon. Catherine Stafford, Mag. Daun Weliever-Simpson

Ex Officio Members Present

Leslie Dunn, Melissa Cunnyingham

Others Present

Joseph Fischer, Payton Lester, Tara Rochford

Welcome

Committee Chair, Judge Morgan, welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes from May 1, 2026, were reviewed. Upon reaching a quorum, D. Dubovich moved to approve and K. Lonnberg seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Parents' Guide to Working with a GAL

Leslie Dunn explained the changes to the Parents' Guide proposed by the subcommittee to add clarity to certain sections, including changes in the Complaints section and When You Disagree with a Report. Once Committee reviews and approves, it will not need to go back through other approval channels.

Several members indicated they frequently refer parents to this Guide, and support anything that would enhance a parents' understanding.

Consideration was given as to how best to package and distribute the Guide. Providing a printed product may be cost-prohibitive and hard to update. Leslie offered to look into this option if the Committee thought it was warranted. The Committee discussed at length the option of using a QR code to link users to the Guide online, adding it to the General Legal Help section of in.gov. This could prove cost effective and would always provide the user with updated information.

D. Dubovich moved to investigate the cost of either stickers or index cards to distribute a QR code to the Parents' Guide, and if funding is available, that this would then happen.

Mag. Osan seconded. Motion carries. Payton commented she had a similar project where the cost was approximately \$2,000.

Application Reviews

Leslie presents two applications for the Committee's consideration:

Both applications involve non-attorney applicants.

Applicant #1 has previously worked in a CASA office and reported being appointed in a few cases previously. Applicant submitted a reference from a CASA program. No judicial references were received.

Applicant #2 disclosed criminal background with little detail, that was later confirmed by Committee staff. Applicant did not provide judicial references, and did not have applicable experience. The Committee declined to refer the applicant to a volunteer CASA program.

Policy discussions took place regarding 1) procedures for following up with applicants to obtain additional information, and 2) guidelines on how to notify applicants when their applications are rejected. The Committee agreed written policies on both were warranted. During the discussion, it was noted that at the very least, a letter of rejection must include an explanation of the applicant's background check if flagged, so the applicant can exercise their right to dispute the results through the background check vendor if they desire.

A motion to reject both applications is made by D. Dubovich and seconded by Mag. Osan. Motion carries unanimously. The applicants will be notified via letter from the Committee staff.

Mag. Ang makes a separate motion not to disclose the reasons why an application is rejected, but to respond that the application was reviewed and denied. Mag. Dedelow seconded. D. Dubovich moves to amend by adding that the Committee either Approves, Approves with Conditions, Denies, or Denies with Conditions. Mag. Ang amends her original motion to Approve, Approve with Conditions, or Deny. Mag. Dedelow again Seconded. A vote is held on Mag. Ang's revised motion. Motion carries with one opposed.

Committee staff will consider how to best identify and keep track of applications brought to the Committee, and keep record of determinations and discussions, especially on those who were denied. Committee staff agreed to notate the outcomes of applications discussed by the Committee in the Engagement Builder system.

Further policy discussion took place indicating the Committee really wants non-attorney GAL applicants to provide judicial references and that a non-attorney's relevant experience was also very important to consider. The Committee has been recommending

gaining relevant experience and judicial support by volunteering with a CASA program for a period of time subject to meeting CASA program qualifications for volunteers.

The Committee proposes to have a written policy that requires judicial reference from non-attorney applicants, clarifies staff's obligation to make continued attempts to connect with references provided by the applicant, and allows staff to submit a letter to the applicant advising they need to pursue a response from their listed references.

Registry Update

Leslie Dunn presented an update regarding judges on the GAL Registry

Leslie received input from OJA's General Counsel advising that city and town judges could be on the GAL Registry since their judicial duties are unrelated. It was further advised that existing magistrates and judges were ineligible to serve as GALs and should be removed. Senior judges on the Registry can serve as GAL but not in the counties he/she sits as senior judge.

Complaints

Tara Rochford reports on the complaints received in May.

A total of Six (6) complaints were received. Two (2) complaints were rejected because the target of the complaint was a CASA in a CHINS matter. Both were forwarded to the appropriate local Program Director. Two (2) complaints were rejected for lack of timeliness from the date of the final order or being prior to a final order. One (1) complaint was rejected for not including an accurate cause number. Committee staff will follow up with the complainant for clarifying information.

One complaint was reviewed by the Committee. The complaint appears in proper form and is timely. The nature of the allegations and specific Code of Ethics paragraphs cited warrant further review of the matter by the Committee. The Committee requested to table discussion on the complaint to allow members more time to review all relevant materials and consider the outcome of the upcoming hearing. Committee will call the complaint to a vote at the next meeting.

Next Steps

- Continue working on the Parent's Guide
- Add commentary to GAL Guidelines as recommended
- Continue moving forward on policy discussions, and the efficient use of Committee staff.

Next meeting: **NEW DATE and TIME: July 7, 2026, 12:00 a.m. EST via Zoom**

D. Dubovich moves to adjourn and K. Lonnberg seconds. Meeting is adjourned.

Friday, July 17, 2026 Meeting

Roll Call

Members

Chair Hon. Lori Morgan, Deb Dubovich, Kelly Lonnberg, Hon. Thomas Felts, Katie Kelsey Meger, Mag. Ana Osan, Mag. Daun Weliever-Simpson

Ex Officio Members Present

Leslie Dunn, Melissa Cunnyingham

Others Present

Joseph Fischer, Payton Lester, Tara Rochford

Welcome

Committee Chair, Judge Morgan, welcomes the Committee to the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes from June 6, 2026, were reviewed. Mag. Osan moves to approve, D. Dubovich seconds. Minutes are approved unanimously.

Registry Update

Payton reports that 469 registrants are now on the GAL Registry. Staff receive 10-12 applications a month.

Use of AI by GAL's/ Recording Interviews

Is it appropriate for a GAL to use an AI app to record interviews and allow it to summarize and download to a document? Additional questions include whether the GAL would have a duty to disclose that AI is being used, and whether the GAL must then keep the recording as part of the GAL's file.

Leslie Dunn reports that OJA is keeping on top of the AI conversation and has a policy committee and project review committee to consider these types of questions. Based on discussions with OJA, it is up to the GAL whether to use the AI recording app but there is a high risk of security problems if the GAL is not using a secure server. Information entered into the AI app can then turn up on the internet. Unless the GAL can confirm their server is secure, there could be a risk of disclosing confidential information.

CASA's involved in Child in Need of Services cases are encouraged to disclose at meetings if they are recording even though it isn't unlawful to do so. CASA programs encourage transparency to maintain trust with all parties in those cases.

Under Rules of Professional Conduct 3.4 and Trial Rule 37(b), the recording cannot be deleted. Deleting puts the GAL at risk; Rule 37(D) provides that a court may impose sanctions on a party for failing to take reasonable steps to preserve electronically stored information that is relevant material to the litigation. The recording is discoverable and must be disclosed if asked. Committee members highlight that AI is not as accurate as expected. GALs must use due diligence to ensure their reports are accurate.

More information and guidance to Judges and courts on AI will be forthcoming from OJA that will include a potential policy and proposed orders.

Application Reviews

Leslie presents:

Applicant #1. – Non-attorney with strong educational and professional background and references with many years of experience. No judicial reference provided. Reasons for serving are solid. Committee staff recommend the applicant consider having a mentor GAL. The applicant suggested someone who may be willing to serve as mentor. Allowing the applicant to proceed with a mentor would be consistent with this Committee's previous determinations. D. Dubovich moves to accept the applicant with a mentor. K. Lonnberg seconds. Motion carries unanimously

Applicant #2. – Non-attorney with strong educational and profession background with good references. No judicial reference provided. Similar to other applicants with education background. D. Dubovich moves to accept the applicant so long as he has a mentor GAL. Mag. Osan seconds. Motion carries unanimously. Committee staff will ask if he is able to find a mentor.

Applicant #3. – Non-attorney with a background in education and good references. Committee staff recommend the applicant be approved with a mentor in the same fashion as the two previous applicants. Committee staff will reach out to see if she knows anyone who can serve as mentor. Mag. Osan moves to approve with mentor. K. Lonnberg seconds. Motion carries unanimously.

Applicant # 4. – Applicant is an attorney with his own law firm. Criminal background check revealed a pending felony for theft, set for trial Dec 2026. He disclosed the matter and was transparent on his application. It was asked whether the applicant had a disciplinary case pending, but OJAR would not confirm or deny. Committee staff recommend denying the application.

The question of how to notify the applicant is presented. T. Felts moves to deny without explanation given to the applicant. Discussion on how much information should be provided in an applicant denial email. Committee's concern is when applicants become aggressive with Committee staff when wanting to know why their application was declined. Consensus of the Committee is that denials will provide no explanation other than they do not meet the qualifications per the guidelines. If further inquiry is made, Committee staff can bring the matter to the Committee for further consideration. If an applicant becomes or continues to be hostile after more than one response from the Committee as to why the application was denied, Committee staff will consult with OJA General Counsel. Committee agrees they have no duty to answer questions and should not provide applicant information to outside inquiries from GAL/CASA programs. The motion is then seconded by K. Kelsey and carries unanimously. L. Morgan abstains from the vote.

Applicant #5. Judicial Officer – a sitting judge has applied to the GAL Registry. Upon investigation, the judge did not win re-election and wanted to prepare for her future job prospects. After consulting OJAR, a sitting judge cannot serve as GAL and can't be on registry. This applicant will be advised she can apply and undergo training but cannot serve and be on the registry until her judicial term has expired. She also plans to be a senior judge, so she will not be able to serve as a GAL in the county where she serves as a senior judge.

In contrast, City and Town court judges can serve in the county where they are a judge because their docket is so different from family law cases. OJAR and General Counsel agree this is the case.

Proposed Applicant Review Policy

Leslie Dunn and Payton Lester present the proposed Applicant Review Policy. Upon review by Committee, and per earlier discussions, the Denial of Applicant section needs revised. Recommended language includes denying outright without explanation. But if asked why, staff can give a response that committee will review and answer on a case-by-case basis. No other recommendations to the Policy are made.

Committee Chair gives complements to all those involved in putting the policy document together.

Complaint Reviews

Tara Rochford presents:

Complaint #1.– Complaint ineligible for review because the GALs and GAL attorney named in the complaints were all appointed prior to 1/1/2025. Motion to deny is made by D. Dubovich. K. Lonnberg seconds. Motion carries unanimously.

Complaint #2.– Continued discussion from the previous meeting. Upon review of case documents and GAL report, Committee staff recommends denial of complaint. Issues presented were GAL bias toward the other party and concern for breach of confidentiality by having others in the GAL's office when the child was brought there for an interview. Discussion: Issues presented in the complaint could have been brought before the judge, confidentiality is not as strict in family law cases as it is in CHINS cases, nothing here rises to the level of a rule violation. D. Dubovich moves to Deny the complaint. Mag. Osan seconds. Motion carries unanimously.

Complaint #3. – Complaint includes GAL bias, GAL switched child's school, details of a stressful phone call between Mother and GAL, and GAL did not take past matters into enough consideration when making recommendations. A hearing is set involving GAL matters. OJAR advises it would be best not to consider anything that could be brought up in an upcoming hearing. Committee discusses making this part of a policy recommendation. D. Dubovich moves to deny complaint. K. Lonnberg seconds. Further discussion notes that the trial court weighed the evidence and supported GAL's recommendations. The Committee will not go further into individual cases or second-guess the court's findings. Motion unanimously carries.

Committee staff advises the Committee that the number of complaints is increasing, and they are working on a complaint policy. Staff will continue to use the summary form to get information about the complaints to the Committee members timely. Staff expect to have complaints summarized and distributed for the next meeting.

Parent Guide Distribution Method

Leslie Dunn reports that a QR code to access the Guide has been created. There would be a significant cost to distributing hard copies of the QR code and it is recommended to distribute digitally to courts. Options for digital distribution include a one-pager or just the code emailed out, including in the Wednesday Weekly newsletter, or other digital method. Updates to the Guide will not require a new QR code.

Next Steps

Committee Staff is recognized and appreciated for their efforts in the complaint and application review processes.

Committee will continue looking at potential updates to the Guidelines.

Next meeting: **NEW DATE and TIME: August 7, 2026 @ 10:00am**

Meeting is adjourned.