

Volunteer G.A.L. Initial Interview

Applicant's name _____ Date _____

Interviewer _____

Introduce yourself and welcome the applicant; express our appreciation for meeting with us.

- *Becoming part of this program is a process.*
- *Goal today is to decide if this is the right volunteer opportunity for you—if this is a good fit for your interests and skills.*
- *Feel free to ask questions—time at the end for other questions you may have.*
- *Feel free to take notes- I am required to do so. If you are selected for our program, this will go to your staff supervisor for matching you with cases*
- *Because of the requirements of working as a Guardian ad Litem, some of the questions I need to ask you are very personal in nature. The answers that you give me are confidential, and will only be considered in light of your application to the program.*
- *Anything I can do to make you more comfortable before we begin- water, and make sure their parking ticket was stamped, and if they parked at a meter, give them option of moving to lot if they did not put at least 90 minutes on meter?*

1. Based on the information you've received so far, do you have any questions about the Guardian ad Litem program? Y/N

2. Do you have any comments or reactions to the 10 case scenarios you read before this interview? Y/N

3. What is it about this volunteer opportunity that appeals to you the most?

4. Tell me about your experience with children? Include both personal and professional experiences- if they are parents/foster parents etc. note this and ages of children. If they have young children consider inquiring about their plans for child care arrangements for training and court

Provide a brief description of the job:

- *independent assessment of the facts in the case by reading case documents, meeting with key individuals including the children, parents and professionals*
 - *follow-up until the children are permanently placed (returned home, placed with relatives or in a new adoptive family)*
 - *an objective, factual recommendation to the court regarding the best interest of the children*
- 5. Based on what you know about the role, what qualities or attributes do you have that would make you a good advocate for abused and neglected children?**

- 6. From what you know about the role as a volunteer advocate, how much interaction with children are you expecting? Make sure they understand required regular/monthly visits & indirect support- facilitation & advocacy which is not mentorship or tutoring**

The GAL will be visiting children in foster homes and schools, but most of the time will be spent working on behalf of the children by advocating for them in court and at meetings, making phone calls, collecting information, and ensuring that the children receive the services they need.

- *Talk about boundary issues, and why the child's best interest needs to come first.*
- *Explain that when the court case ends, so does the involvement of the GAL, and it's important not to create another 'loss' for that child.*
- *Sometimes, after consultation with the coordinator, on-going contact such as a birthday card might be appropriate, but should not be the norm.*
- *GALs should think carefully at the beginning of the case about the relationship, and work with the child, parents, foster parents, and social service professionals to maintain appropriate boundaries.*
- *Appropriate boundaries are critical to a GALs objectivity regarding the child's case.*

- 7. Much of the work you will be doing as a volunteer advocate is self directed on your own—you won't be working with a group of volunteers. Are you comfortable working independently? Y/N**

Can you give me an example of a time you had to carry out a personal project or work activity independently? Y/N

- *The average lifespan of a Guardian ad Litem case is 18 months; many cases last longer-- some are shorter (Judges file plans for children still in system at 12 months).*
- *The GAL may be the only consistent person in a child's life throughout this process (as the SW may change 2-4 times)*
- *We ask that our volunteers make at least an 18 month commitment following the completion of training*

8. Are you able to make this minimum 18 month commitment to the program? Y/N

Do you anticipate making any changes in your personal or professional life in the next 2 years that would prevent you from fulfilling this commitment? Y/N

9. GAL's are required to attend 40 hours of pre-service training. Attendance is mandatory at all sessions. Have you received a copy of the training schedule? Y/N? GO OVER YELLOW SCHEDULE & HAVE THEM FILL OUT TRAINING SESSION AVAILABILITY CHECK SHEET- if there are conflicts, please notify Jo/Aubrey, Michelle or Susanne

Will you be able to attend all of the scheduled sessions? Y/N?

- *Use your best judgment if the applicant has schedule issues.*
- *Emphasize the importance of the training and the state requirement.*
- *Staff can conduct a limited number of make-up sessions.*
- *If s/he is going to miss 3 or more sessions, strongly encourage waiting for a nother training class*
- *In rare cases, exceptions can be made – talk with the office staff.*

10. Can you make a commitment to 5-7 hours per month? Y/N?

Will this fit into your monthly schedule? Y/N?

Are you able to be flexible with your time? Y/N?

- *The average case takes about 5 hours per month.*
- *The time commitment could be greater or less, depending on the complexity of the case.*
- *Our expectation is that you will take on one case halfway through training*
- *You will work closely with both a supervisor and a mentor while you do this “on the job” training, and you will have a six month probation period.*
- *After probation, GALs take on cases as their schedule allows.*

The typical case has a court hearing once every 45 to 60 days.

- *Court hearings are always scheduled during week days, between 8:30 AM and 4:00 PM.*
- *Court usually doesn’t run on time. Although you may be scheduled for a 9:00 hearing, you might have to wait for 1 or even 2 hours for your hearing.*
- *Generally cases settle without a need for trial. However, you should be aware that in very rare cases, a GAL might have to attend one or more full days of court trial in the course of the case.*
- *Some cases require meetings with other professionals who are involved in your case, and these meetings are usually scheduled during the day.*
- *Some of the work of a GAL must be done during the day (talking to workers & other professionals involved in the case).*

- 11. Will your schedule and obligations—both personal and professional--allow you to make this time commitment during the day? (if not discussed before and relevant discuss childcare plans for children? Y/N?**

How much advance notice will you need?

How much flexibility do you have?

- 12. What is your current occupation?**

What do you enjoy most/least about your job?

If retired, what did you like most?

If always a home worker, what do you enjoy most about this?

If a student, what are your career goals?

Are your planning to use this as an internship? Y/N

Has this been approved by one of the G.A.L. program staff? Y/N

13. **Will your employer support your volunteer work as a guardian ad litem? Y/N Have not Asked Yet**

Will your family/friends support this volunteer work? Y/N Have not Asked Yet

- *As a volunteer Guardian ad Litem you will be making visits to children in foster homes located throughout the metropolitan area.*
- *Occasionally you may need to visit a child in a treatment program located several hours away.*
- *Discuss mileage reimbursement policy, that parking is covered during training but not mileage; once work on cases begins reimbursement of mileage and parking is provided.*

14. **Do you have a reliable means of transportation? Y/N (IF THEY DO NOT DRIVE, OR ARE ON THE BUS LINE, PLEASE MAKE GAL STAFF AWARE OF THIS ASAP)**

Are you able to perform this part of the job?

We all bring our own background, culture and family experiences to this work. The way we were raised affects how we see the world and how we interact with others.

15. **Tell me a little about your childhood** (*Where lived, number of adults and children in home, their birth order*)

What was life like growing up (*easy, difficult, etc. & explain BRIEFLY*)?

What values were important to you and your family while you were growing up (*family time, spirituality, education, etc.*)?

16. **What were your parent's expectations of you as a child** (*things you should & should not do*)?

What happened when you didn't meet those *expectations* (consequences or punishments)?

17. How do you feel about parents who physically discipline their children?

What do you think the line is between spanking and abuse?

19. The children we advocate for have been subjected to very serious cases of abuse and neglect -- physical abuse, sexual abuse, lack of food, clothing, medical care. Tell me about any experience you've had with children who have been abused or neglected (personal and professional).

20. Have you had experience with parents who have been alleged to have abused or neglected their children (personal and professional)? Y/N

Why do you think some parents abuse or neglect their children?

21. As noted earlier, the children we advocate for have been physically abused, sexually abused, and neglected. It's important to understand the dynamics surrounding these issues and our personal and professional responses.

I do need to ask, have you personally been abused or neglected? Y/N

If yes, will you tell me a little about the situation?

When did it happen?

How did you handle it?

Did you receive help or counseling?

How do you see this experience affecting your work as a volunteer guardian ad litem?

22. A common factor in the lives of children we advocate for is drug and alcohol

abuse. Do you have experience (personal and professional) with chemical dependency or addiction? Y/N

If yes, will you describe the circumstances?

How do you see this experience affecting your work as a volunteer guardian ad litem?

23. Have you had experience (personal and professional) with domestic violence? Y/N

If yes, will you tell me about the situation.

How do you see this experience affecting your work as a volunteer guardian ad litem?

24. Have you had experience (personal and professional) with mental illness? Y/N

If yes, please describe.

How do you see this experience affecting your work as a volunteer guardian ad litem?

Experience with developmental disabilities?

If yes, please describe

How do you see this experience affecting your work as a volunteer guardian ad litem?

25. As a volunteer guardian ad litem you will be interacting with parents, children and a number of different professionals. Have you had any experiences with individuals/professionals that may help or hinder you in your role as a volunteer advocate? Do you have concerns about working with any of these individuals? Y/N**

*** social workers, attorneys, judges, therapists, medical professionals, school personnel; and parents, children, extended family members, foster parents, adoptive parents.*

26. The social services/juvenile court system is complex and slow. It can really try your patience! Have you had experience working in a large bureaucratic system? Y/N

If yes, how did you feel about this? How did you function?

**** Talk about “the system”-- for example: the system can be frustrating, moves too slow, some professionals may not appreciate GALs; social workers and others are really busy and may not be able to return calls as quickly as we’d like, etc. Emphasize that the GAL staff are always available to help understand “the system;” that there are also positive aspects of the child protection/juvenile court system.*

27. Can you describe a time when you took a stance that was unpopular or different from the opinion of everyone around you? What was the situation – how did you handle it – what was the result – how did you feel afterward? OR: Describe the most difficult conflict you’ve been involved in. What role did you play? How was the conflict resolved? What did you learn?

28. Volunteering in Juvenile Court can be overwhelming at times. How do you take care of yourself when you feel overwhelmed (make sure they discuss stress relief, support systems and enjoyable relaxing hobbies)?

New volunteers are assigned a mentor (an experienced volunteer) and a staff supervisor (coordinator). It is the role of the coordinator to provide direction, support and supervision. Volunteers are expected to gather information, make assessments of the child’s situation, and to prepare oral or written reports to the court in a timely and accurate manner. This requires a balance between taking initiative to get the work done, and communication with the coordinator. Written reports, when needed, are submitted to the coordinator for review, and it is the responsibility of the volunteer to periodically update their coordinator about their cases.

29. Are you comfortable with this level of supervision? Y/N

The GAL staff will go over how to gather information and make case notes, as well as how to write reports and present them in court. These procedures will be covered in training and the

GAL staff is always available to help with reports and speaking in court. Additional documentation includes monthly activity logs and mileage reimbursement forms.

- 31. Have you ever been required to keep notes of the work you have done? How about presenting written reports, or oral reports?**

Although the volunteer GAL is not the only person making recommendations to the court, part of the job of the volunteer is to assess what is going on in the child's life and home. Your recommendation will be considered by the court and will affect the child's and family's future.

- 32. Talk about a time that you had to make recommendations that affected someone's life or future (please discourage discussions about their children). How comfortable did you feel about doing this?**

- 33. Volunteer GALs must maintain privacy and confidentiality. Have you had experience keeping things private? Y/N**

Can you give me an example?

- 34. How comfortable are you working with people who are different from you racially, culturally and financially? (If people say they are not comfortable or seem uncomfortable note this and discuss with Michelle or Susanne)**

Can you give an example that shows your ability to work well with people whose values, beliefs or lifestyles are different from yours? (Please alert Michelle or Susanne if folks struggle with this question as well)

- 35. Hennepin County supports all types of foster and adoptive placements for children, including parents who are unmarried, single parents, trans-racial families, gay and lesbian parents.**

Will any of these situations present any concerns for you (if people say yes, or discuss religious values in conflict with above alert Michelle and Susanne)? Y/N *If yes, follow up by asking about their experience with populations they anticipate difficulty with.*

36. Can you use e-mail and do you have access to a computer? Y/N If not, would you be willing to gain access to e-mail and a computer? Y/N

37. Guardians ad litem are required to complete 12 hours of continuing education each year. The program offers monthly education sessions and there are other training opportunities that are available. Are you willing to fulfill this requirement? Y/N

****We're getting close to finishing up. I want to describe a couple of situations that we face as volunteers.*

38. Imagine that you have a young boy who becomes very attached to you and begs you to take him home to live with you. How would you respond to this child?

Inform men that we would not knowingly assign them a case like this, but sometimes kids disclose abuse once they are in the system, so it is something they could face.

39. Suppose you're working with a teenage girl who has been sexually abused. First she refuses to talk to you, and then she uses very abusive language to tell you she doesn't want your help or anyone else's. How would this make you feel? How would you respond to this teen?

*****CLOSURE QUESTIONS**

41. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience that you feel is relevant to your being a volunteer in this program?

42. Is there anything we should be aware of that would affect your ability to be successful as a volunteer guardian ad litem? Such as: difficulty navigating in the city, inability to use stairs, conflicts of interest—knowing a case or a judge, attorney or social worker (Assure folks conflicts can be resolved by not assigning them cases where they know other parties)? Y/N

43. What additional questions do you have?

Is there anything you hoped we would talk about that wasn't covered?

45. Given what you have heard today about the GAL program, what issues do you think will be challenging for you?

Ultimately, is this still a volunteer job you are interested in pursuing?

IF YOU COULD NOT COMPLETE IT BY YOURSELF PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, REVIEW THE PURPLE VOLUNTEER GAL EXPERIENCE TRAINING SHEET WITH THEM.

ALSO COMPLETE THE "CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWERS" (NEON GREEN SHEET) TO BE SURE YOU'VE COVERED EVERYTHING.

Thank the applicant for their time, and explain the next step as appropriate (final approval after background check comes back, whether invitation to training, second interview, or referral to other volunteer program).

***Leave the applicant with a positive impression of the program – even if the decision is that this particular role doesn't appear to be a good fit.*

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ASSIST US IN THIS PART OF OUR SCREENING PROCESS FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

POST INTERVIEW EVALUATION
(please use reverse side for any additional comments)

Name of Applicant: _____

Applicant's strengths?

Issues/concerns?

Reasons for interviewer concerns:

- CPS History
- Abuse History
- Prior Chemical Dependency
- Criminal History
- Other

Comments on Above Concerns

I have checked in with Jo/Aubrey/Michelle or Susanne About My Concerns

Your impression of the applicant in the following areas:

	Poor		Average		Excellent		Can't Assess
1. Related knowledge and experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
2. Emotional stability	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
3. Ability to be supervised	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
4. Commitment/responsibility	1	2	3	4	5	6	X
5. Aptitude for G.A.L. Work	1	2	3	4	5	6	X

Interviewer Name: _____ Date _____

Checklist for Interviewers

Name of Candidate _____ Date _____

Name of Interviewer _____

_____ I have thoroughly discussed the time commitment this volunteer position involves

_____ I have explained how often and what times of the day court hearings are held, and explained that in rare instances court trials can last for multiple days

_____ I have provided the candidate with the training schedule, and explained it

_____ I have received the completed Training Session Availability Checklist

_____ The candidate will give Jo additional the Checklist within 48 hours

_____ I have explained that training will be followed by a six month probation period

_____ I have emphasized that attendance at all training sessions is mandatory

_____ I have explained the process for case assignment during and after training

_____ I have told the candidate about the resources that will be available to them as a volunteer, such as a staff supervisor, mentor, volunteer office area, and continuing training (which is required by the program- 12 hours a year after pre-service training)

_____ I have reviewed the candidate's reference list, and it is filled out completely

_____ The candidate will give Jo additional required information within 48 hours

_____ The candidate completed the release of information form allowing the required background check, and the candidate has signed it

_____ I have invited the candidate to attend training;

Preferred: __ Day __ Evening __ Summer __ Other (explain) _____

OR

_____ I am referring the candidate to staff for a second interview, attached sheet contains my concerns and issues (**Please complete additional section on neon blue Post Interview Evaluation and check in with Jo or Aubrey after interview. If Michelle or Susanne is available, also check in with one of them**)

OR

_____ I have decided that this candidate is not suitable for the GAL program and have provided information about volunteer opportunities that might be a better fit (**In addition to filling out section above on ivory Post Interview Evaluation, also share our "Twin Cities Volunteer Opportunities" spiral notebook at front desk.**)