

# 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 23<sup>rd</sup>. 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 Cunyngnam 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 Lonngberg, Magistrate Ana Osan, Judge Catherine Stafford, Senior Judge Thomas Felts, Katie Kelsey

#### Ex Officio Members Present

Melissa Cunyngnam, 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. Lonngberg 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 Cunyningham, 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