

What is a Child Representative?

A child representative is an attorney for the parties' child(ren) that advocates what the child representative finds to be in the best interests of the child(ren) after reviewing the facts and circumstances of the case. The child representative is required to meet with the child(ren) and the parties, investigate the facts of the case, and encourage settlement and the use of alternative forms of dispute resolution. Unlike a guardian ad litem, the child representative cannot be called as a witness to testify. For more information about child representatives, please see Section 506 of the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act (750 ILCS 5/506).

What is a Guardian Ad Litem?

A guardian ad litem (also known as a "GAL") is an attorney for the parties' child(ren). The guardian ad litem is required to investigate the facts of the case, interview the child(ren) and the parties, and testify or submit a written report to the court regarding his or her recommendations in accordance with the best interest of the child. Unlike a child representative, the guardian ad litem may be called as a witness for purposes of cross-examination regarding the guardian ad litem's report or recommendations. For more information about GALs, please see Section 506 of the [Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act](#) (750 ILCS 5/506).

What is an Attorney for the Child?

An attorney for the child is an attorney who represents the parties' child(ren). The attorney for the child provides independent legal counsel for the child(ren) and owes the same duties of undivided loyalty, confidentiality, and competent representation as are due an adult client.

Who Pays the Fees for an Attorney for the Child / Child Representative / Guardian Ad Litem?

The court has the discretion to order fees paid to the child's attorney, GAL or child representative, which may include a retainer fee. The court will order that these fees be paid by either or both parents, by the marital/civil union estate, if applicable, or by the child's separate estate, if applicable.

If you cannot afford to pay for a child's attorney, child representative or guardian ad litem, the court may appoint the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian which has sliding scale fees. Court appointments of the Public Guardian in a Domestic Relations case may be made if all parties and children live in Cook County, if at least one of the parties is represented by an attorney, and if the parties have attempted mediation of their dispute prior to the appointment.

How is a Child Representative / Guardian Ad Litem Appointed?

In any proceeding involving the allocation of parental responsibilities, parentage, support, relocation, property interest, abuse, or general welfare of a minor or dependent child, the court may appoint an attorney to represent the parties' child(ren). The court may do so on its own motion or by motion of a party. For more information about the appointment of an attorney for the child(ren), please see Section 506 of the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act (750 ILCS 5/506).

Who Has Been Approved as a Domestic Relations Child Representative/Guardian Ad Litem?

The current list of attorneys who have been approved as Child Representatives/Guardians Ad Litem can be found [here](#).

How do I Become a Domestic Relations Child Representative / Guardian Ad Litem?

To become a Domestic Relations child representative / guardian ad litem, you must submit an [application](#) to the Presiding Judge of Domestic Relations. The minimum requirements for becoming a child representative/guardian ad litem are included in the application packet. If you meet the minimum requirements, you will be interviewed by the Presiding Judge of Domestic Relations and members of the Child Representative Screening Committee. If you are accepted by the Presiding Judge and the Committee, you will then be required to watch a training video and meet with two active child representatives/GALs for training. After all of your training is complete, you will be placed on the active Domestic Relations child representative/guardian ad litem roster, which will be distributed to the Domestic Relations judges. For more information on this process, you can contact the law clerks for the Domestic Relations Division at (312) 603-3025.

Requirements to Remain on Domestic Relations Active Child Representative / Guardian Ad Litem Roster?

Once you are placed on the active child representative/guardian ad litem roster, you will need to complete a minimum of three (3) seminar credit hours and do one pro bono case per year. You can acquire seminar credit hours by either attending child representative seminars, which are hosted by the Domestic Relations Division or by training new child representatives/guardian ad litem. Attending or participating in seminars outside of the Domestic Relations Division may count towards your credit hours, but are subject to the approval of the Presiding Judge of Domestic Relations. If you fail to complete your required hours in a given year, you will be removed from the active Domestic Relations child representative/guardian ad litem roster and will not be assigned to any more cases.

THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION

CHILD REPRESENTATIVE CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION SEMINARS

All **2019** seminars are held in Courtroom 1905 of the Richard J. Daley Center and run from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., unless otherwise indicated. Seminars are generally held on the third **Wednesday** of every month.

In order to maintain eligibility on the approved Child Representative list, three (3) seminar credits must be acquired each year. In addition, we are an accredited Illinois MCLE provider.

February 20, 2019 - Drugs and Alcohol Addiction: Remedies, Resources and Insights

Seminar Materials: [Click here](#)

Speakers:

- Judge Karen J. Bowes
- Dr. Kerry Smith, PHD
- Kathryn Ciesla, Attorney-at-Law

March 20, 2019 - ACE—Effects, Treatment and How to Speak to Parents

Speaker:

- Dr. Nancy Zarse, The Chicago School
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April 17, 2019 - Judges' Perspective

Seminar Materials: [Click here](#)

Speakers:

- *Hon. Edward Arce*
 - *Hon. Robert Johnson*
 - *Hon. Jeanne Reynolds*
 - *Howard Rosenberg, Moderator*
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May 28, 2019- Impact on Children of a Nonrecovering Parent & Interventions for Parents

Materials: [Click here.](#)

Speaker:

- Dr. Bennett L. Leventhal, MD

****Please note this seminar is being held on the 4th Tuesday of the month**

June 19, 2019 - DACA-Client & Immigration Issues Affecting Undocumented Children and Parents

Materials: [Click here](#)

Speaker:

- Karolyn Talbert, Heartland Alliance
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July 17, 2019 –Implicit Bias and Assessing Parenting Amid Cultural Differences. Once Identified, What to Do?

Speakers:

- *Laura Josephson-Bernat, Mediator, Arbitrator*
 - *Lynn Weisberg, Attorney-at-Law*
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**September 18, 2019 - Gangs-Their Culture, Slang, Tatoos, Hand Signs, Colors;
Parents as Gang Members-How Do We Access Risks**

Speakers:

- Investigator Franco Domma, Sheriff's Police
 - Zachary Williams, Attorney-at-Law
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October 16, 2019 - Child Voice and Participation in High Conflict Cases

Speakers:

- Hon. David Haracz
- Lisa Nelson, Office of Cook County Public Guardian
- Stacey Platt, Civitas ChildLaw Center,
Loyola University Chicago School of Law

Office of the Cook County Public Guardian

In some cases, the court will appoint the Office of the Public Guardian to represent minors in cases involving issues of allocation of parental responsibilities, parentage, support, relocation, property interest, abuse, or general welfare of the minor or dependent child. For more information about the Public Guardian, please visit the [Office of the Public Guardian's](#) website.