

Minutes
Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and
Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters
January 6, 2025

The Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters met on January 6, 2025. The meeting was convened by the Chair in Center Court at 95 Washington Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Those in attendance: Judge Leo Diana (Chair); Judge Jennifer Macierowski; Attorney Edward Bryan; Attorney Renee Cimino (designated by the Chief Public Defender); Attorney Justine Rakich-Kelly; Ms. Liza Andrews, Policy Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Absent: Attorney Bryan Cafferelli; Attorney Nisa Khan; Mr. Stephen B. Carragher, Public Health Services Manager, Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section, Department of Public Health

Also in attendance were Attorney Grace Palo, Assistant Bar Counsel; Attorney Damon Goldstein and Ms. Nicole Collins from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 PM by Judge Diana.

I. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Liza Andrews to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 4, 2024. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

II. Possible Removal of Individuals from List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

At 2:02 PM, in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(6), Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, to enter executive session to discuss complaints for removal of guardians ad litem.

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Liza Andrews to conclude the executive session. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. The Committee reconvened in open session at 2:07 PM.

a. Complaint #24-0013

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Edward Bryan to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

III. Changes to the Active List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

a. Attorney Misty Simmons

Attorney Simmons was removed from the active list in December 2019 because her prior firm did not allow for her to accept GAL appointments. Attorney Simmons emailed a request to be reinstated on the active list on November 18, 2024. Attorney Simmons meets all requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Edward Bryan moved and Liza Andrews seconded, that Attorney Simmons be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

b. Attorney Rhonda Morra

Attorney Morra was removed from the active list in January 2021 because she left private practice. Attorney Morra emailed a request to be reinstated on the active list on December 11, 2024. Attorney Morra meets all requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Judge Macierowski moved and Edward Bryan seconded, that Attorney Morra be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 5-0 vote with Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and three members absent.

IV. Approval of the List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC for 2025

Damon Goldstein reported that there are approximately 177 individuals on the active list of persons qualified to serve as a GAL/AMC. There were approximately 10 individuals who did not respond to the Committee's annual request for updated information.

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Liza Andrews moved and Justine Rakich-Kelly seconded, that the active list of persons qualified to serve as a GAL/AMC be approved by the Committee for 2025 pursuant to Practice Book Section 25-61A(b)(4). The Committee approved the active list of persons qualified to serve as a GAL/AMC for 2025 by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

V. Review and Possible Revisions to Connecticut Practice Book Rule Section 25-62(b)(1)

At the request of the Chair, Damon Goldstein distributed proposed language that would revise Connecticut Practice Book Rule Section 25-62(b)(1) to the members of the Committee for review. The proposed language was drafted in response to a request for comment from the Rules Committee of the Superior Court to a proposal that would allow behavioral analysts to serve as GALs in family matters. The proposed revision distributed would create a process for a mental health professional not already named in Section 25-62(b)(1), licensed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and in good standing to submit an application for consideration by this Committee requesting to be able to serve as a guardian ad litem in family matters. After a brief discussion among Committee members, a motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Liza Andrews to approve the proposed revisions to Connecticut Practice Book Rule

Section 25-62(b)(1) and forward them to the Rules Committee. The Committee approved the motion by a 5-0 vote with Renee Cimino abstaining and three members absent.

VI. Review and Possible Revisions to the Procedures by Which an Individual May be Removed from the List of Those Deemed Eligible for Appointment as a Guardian Ad Litem or Attorney for the Minor Child in Family Matters

Grace Palo distributed among the members of the Committee an updated draft of proposed revisions to the procedures by which an individual may be removed from the active GAL/AMC list for their review. After the members of the Committee reviewed the proposed revisions there was discussion regarding the time frame of when a complainant can request to amend their complaint. Grace Palo will incorporate the subsequent revisions based on the discussions and they will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

VII. Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters will be held on Monday March 3, 2025 at 2:00 PM.

VIII. Such Other Matters as may Properly Come Before the Standing Committee

Judge Diana reported that the 2-year terms of all GAL Committee members are set to expire on April 17, 2025. The members of the Committee are asked to let Damon Goldstein know whether they wish to be reappointed to serve on the Committee for another 2-year term.

Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee approved the motion by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. Judge Diana adjourned the meeting at 3:27 PM.