



NACC
National Association
of Counsel for Children

Evaluation of the Guardian Ad Litem System in Nebraska

Conducted by the National Association of Counsel for Children

Erik S. Pitchal

Madelyn D. Freundlich

Corene Kendrick

Table 3. Response Rate by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group	Number of Surveys Provided/Population with Which Outreach was Conducted	Number of Surveys Received	Response Rate
GALs	292	71	24%
County Attorneys	35	4	11%
Parents' Attorneys	5	0	0
CASAs	141	89	63%
DHHS Caseworkers	443	70	16%
Foster Parents	130	6	5%
Parents	21	4	19%
Foster Care Review Board Members	156	19	12%

Table 5. Focus Group Participants

Locations	Youth Participants in Foster Care	Youth Participants Formerly in Foster Care	Total Number of Youth Participating
County A	4	5	9
County B	1	3	3
County C	4	0	4

Short-Term Reforms

Recommendation 1: Because attorneys for children should have clearly defined case responsibilities, Nebraska should clearly enumerate the powers and duties of the GAL in 3(a) cases through statute or mandatory, enforceable practice standards promulgated by the Supreme Court

DO GALs DO THEIR JOBS?

Table 68. GAL Responses to Statements Regarding Their Reports and Recommendations to the Court (n=71)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	No Response
"I submit a written report to the court at each dispositional and review hearing."	56%	37%	6%	1%	--
"My written reports state any concerns that I have that need attention to protect the child's legal and best interest."	86%	11%	--	3%	--

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	No Response
"I make written recommendations to the court."	55%	35%	8%	2%	1%
"As a GAL, I make recommendations regarding the child's best interest independent of the court."	45%	52%	1%	--	--
"In making recommendations regarding the child's best interest, I defer to the preferences of the child."	--	4%	70%	25%	--
"My written recommendations to the court when a child is placed in foster care address the child's temporary and permanent placement."	68%	25%	4%	3%	--
"When my recommendations regarding the child's best interests differ from the child's preference, I make sure to nevertheless also tell the court what the child's wishes are."**	72%	13%	1%	--	--

** 20% (14 GALs) replied that it had never happened in their caseloads.

Table 70. Responses to the Statement, “GALs make written recommendations to the court.”

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
CASAs (n=89)	36%	30%	28%	6%
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	10%	44%	40%	6%
Foster Care Review Board Members (n=19)	5%	21%	74%	--

Table 71. Stakeholder Responses to Statements about GAL Reports and the Nature and Quality of GAL Recommendations

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
CASAs (n=89)				
“GALs make a determination of the child’s best interest independent of DHHS.”	10%	52%	33%	5%
“GALs make a determination of the child’s best interest notwithstanding the child’s preference.”	8%	65%	22%	4%
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)				
“GALs make recommendations regarding the child’s best interest independent of the court.”	6%	69%	24%	--
“GALs usually defer to the preferences of the child in making recommendations to the court.”	6%	39%	50%	6%
Parents (n=4)				
“The GAL makes good recommendations to the court.” (One parent stated that he/she did not know.)	--	--	--	75%
Foster Parents (n=6)				
“The GAL makes good recommendations for my foster child to the court.” (Two foster parents said that they did not know.)	16%	16%	16%	16%

DO GUARDIANS AD LITEM
INVESTIGATE THEIR CHILD
CLIENT'S EDUCATIONAL NEEDS?

Table 33. GAL Responses to Statements Regarding Children’s Educational Needs (n=71)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
“I communicate with the child’s teachers and other education staff.”	11%	31%	54%	4%
“I receive meaningful information from the child’s teachers and educational staff.”	6%	38%	54%	3%

Table 34. Foster Care Review Board Members’ Responses to GALs’ Attention to Education Issues

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“GALs have a good understanding of children’s educational needs.” (n=19)	--	21%	68%	11%

Table 35. Parent and Foster Parent Responses to Statement About The GAL's Attention to Education Issues

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does not apply to my child
Parents: "The GAL talks with me about my child's educational progress and needs." (n=4)	--	--	25%	75%	--

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does not apply to my child
Foster Parents: "The GAL is aware of my foster's child educational progress and needs." (n=6)	--	50%	16%	16%	16%

DO GALs IN 3(A)CASES REMAIN ON
AS ATTORNEY IN THEIR CHILD'S
SUBSEQUENT LAW VIOLATION
CASES?

**ARE GALs CHAMPIONS FOR THEIR
CHILD CLIENT'S PERMANENCY?**

Nebraska CFSR Results: Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situation

County	Percentage of cases in compliance with federal standard	Percentage from national standard
County A	20%	-75%
County D	27%	-68%
County E	33%	-62%

Challenges:

- Inconsistency in establishing child's permanency goal in a timely manner
- Inconsistency with attaining goals of reunification, permanent relative placement or guardianship in a timely manner
- Inconsistency with achieving adoptions in a timely manner

Nebraska CFSR Results: Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children

County	Percentage of cases in compliance with federal standard	Percentage from national standard
County A	80%	-15%
County D	45%	-50%
County E	67%	-28%

Challenges:

- Inconsistency with promoting sibling visit
- Inconsistency in maintaining child's connections with extended family, culture or community or in maintaining and strengthening parent-child relationship
- Inconsistency in evaluating relatives as possible placements

Table 39. Average Length of Stay in Months for All Children Discharged from Foster Care in the Fiscal Year

	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	Difference between FY2003 and FY2008
County A	22	23	19	22	23	24	+10%
County B	24	25	24	23	22	25	+4%
County C	20	19	17	17	15	22	+10%
County D	14	14	12	15	14	15	+7.1%
County E	21	18	17	17	18	17	-14%

Table 40. Average Length of Stay in Months for Children Discharged from Foster Care to Adoption in the Fiscal Year

	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	Difference FY 2003 to FY 2008
County A	40	44	42	43	40	37	-.08%
County B	40	39	38	36	37	40	-0-
County C	52	22	37	31	37	44	-15.4%
County D	17	38	Not available	29	32	25	+47.0%
County E	42	32	30	32	24	25	-40.0%

SHOULD STATE LAW BE CHANGED
TO REQUIRE GALs MEET WITH THE
CHILD THEY REPRESENT?

Table 15. Stakeholders' Responses to "A GAL is appointed immediately after the opening of the child's case with the court."

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Do Not Know
GALS (n=71)	69%	24%	7%	--	--
CASAs (n=89)	55%	15%	6%	--	27%
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	51%	29%	16%	1%	3%

Table 46. GAL Responses to Statements Regarding Meeting with and Getting to Know their Clients (n=71)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
“I meet personally with the child within two weeks of my appointment as a GAL.”	28%	56%	14%	1%
I personally meet with the child at least every 6 months.”	48%	46%	4%	1%
“I meet with the child at the child’s home, foster home, or group home/facility.”	51%	41%	7%	1%
“I meet with the child whenever he/she requests a meeting with me.”	76%	20%	3%	1%
“I meet with the child well in advance of any hearing on substantive issues (safety, permanency, placement change or well being).”	23%	65%	11%	1%
“In between my personal meetings with a child, I maintain contact with the child by telephone.”	14%	35%	51%	--
“If a child calls me, I return his/her call in the same timely manner I would return the phone call of any paying legal client.”	83%	15%	1%	--
“As GAL, I have a good understanding of the child’s strengths and needs.”	23%	69%	8%	--

Table 45. Focus Groups Participants' Responses to Whether they Knew their GAL

	Total
Knew His/Her GAL	12 (75%): Could name the GAL by first and last name: 38% Could name the GAL by first name only: 37%
Did not know GAL	4 (25%)

Youth comments on their GAL:

“Same one since age 5. He calls me and asks me when there is a good time to review the report. Sits on the phone or comes to visit me. Visits me at least once a month.”

“He had white hair, that’s all I know.”

“He sends other people from his office to visit me.”

“He asks me how I’ve been. [I tell him] go read the papers because obviously you don’t care – you don’t visit me.”

“See her at team meetings but we never talk.”

“I don’t see a use for GALs. I have been in so many group homes, a high school in another state, and the GAL didn’t even know. I was in foster care for 18 years and I didn’t even know that I had a GAL until the very last year. I went to court one time in 18 years and that time, the GAL was not there.”

Table 48. Stakeholder Responses to the Statement, “GALs personally meet with the child on a regular basis.”

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Do Not Know
CASAs (n=89)	8%	28%	35%	29%	--
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	3%	13%	67%	13%	4%
Foster Care Review Board Members (n=19)	--	--	95%	5%	--

GALs can improve in investigating the educational needs of their child, but ...

**DO GALs MEET AND DISCUSS CASES
WITH THE OTHER PARTIES AND
SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR THEIR CHILD?**

Table 74. GAL Responses to Questions on Communication with Key People In the Child's Life (n=71)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
DHHS Caseworkers				
"I communicate with DHHS caseworkers about the child's case."	58%	42%	4%	--
"I seek all case records from DHHS."	41%	30%	27%	3%
Caregivers				
"I talk with the child's parents about how the child is doing with consent from their lawyer when applicable."	41%	42%	15%	1%
"I talk with the child's foster parents or group home staff when the child lives with a foster family or in group care." (3% stated that the statement was not applicable)	55%	32%	10%	--
Other Child Welfare Contacts				
"When the child is in foster care, I personally communicate with members of the Foster Care Review Board about the child's case."	7%	30%	49%	14%
"I communicate with the child's CASA when one is appointed."	27%	30%	21%	4%
Service Providers				
"I seek case information from treatment providers who are providing services to the child."	41%	48%	13%	--
Other Attorneys				
"I communicate with counsel for the child's parent(s) outside of court."	34%	52%	14%	--
"I communicate with counsel with the agency outside of court."	15%	32%	49%	3%

Table 78. CASA Responses to Statements about GAL Use of CASA Information (n=89)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“GALs routinely communicate with me as the child’s CASA.”	8%	27%	38%	27%
“I routinely provide information to the child’s GAL.”	26%	57%	15%	2%
	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
“GALs read my reports about the child.”	22%	49%	26%	2%
“GALs invite or consider my information and views.”	17%	35%	35%	13%

Table 79. DHHS Caseworker Responses to Statements about GAL Use of DHHS Information (n=70)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
“I routinely provide information to the child’s GAL.”	29%	61%	9%	1%
“GALs read the DHHS reports.”	27%	46%	26%	1%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“GALs routinely contact me to discuss the child’s case.”	--	36%	53%	11%
“GALs routinely request DHHS case plans and other case records from DHHS.”	13%	50%	34%	3%
“GALs routinely request case information from treatment providers.” (14% reported that they did not know)	1%	27%	41%	16%

Table 80. Foster Care Review Board Member Responses to Statements about GAL Use of Information (n=19)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
“GALs attend meetings of the Foster Care Review Board.”	--	0	42%	58%
“GALs invite or consider information from and the views of the Foster Care Review Board.”	--	16%	74%	11%
“GALs read the Foster Care Review Board reports.”	5%	16%	74%	5%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“GALs routinely communicate with the Foster Care Review Board.”	--	16%	52%	32%
“The Foster Care Review Board routinely provides information to children’s GALs.”	53%	37%	11%	--

GALS were asked about their participation in conferences, staffings, and team meeting. As Table 50 shows, 83% of the responding GALS said that they always or usually attend these sessions.

Table 50. GALS: Participation in Conferences, Staffings, and Team Meetings for the Child (n=71)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
“As GAL, I participate in conferences, staffings, and team meetings for the child.”	13%	73%	14%	--

Table 51 shows that the three stakeholder groups most often said that GALS only “sometimes” participate in conferences, staffing, and team meetings for the child.”

Table 51. Stakeholder Responses to the Statement, “GALS participate in conferences, staffings, and team meetings for the child.”

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
CASAs (n=89)	10%	36%	47%	7%
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	3%	23%	63%	11%

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Foster Care Review Board Members (n=19)	--	--	95%	5%-

Table 52. Parent and Foster Parent Responses to a statement that the GAL attends conferences and team meetings on behalf of the child

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know
Parents (n=4)	--	--	--	50%	50%
Foster Parents (n=6)	--	17%	67%	17%	--

Table 53 provides the responses of Foster Care Review Board members to the statement, “In each case that I have reviewed, the GAL played an active role in the case.” As Table 53 shows, Foster Care Review Board members generally do not find that GALs play an active role in their child clients’ cases.

Table 53. Foster Care Review Board Members’ Responses Regarding GALs’ Active Involvement in Children’s Cases (n=19)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
“In each case I have reviewed, the GAL played an active role in the case.”	--	11%	53%	37%

Recommendation 2: Training for GALs in Nebraska must be significantly increased and enhanced, and there must be organized opportunities for GALs to network and learn from each other.

**SHOULD GALs BE REQUIRED TO
ATTEND SPECIALIZED TRAINING IN
ORDER TO SERVE AS A GAL?**

§ 4-401. Guardians ad litem; required training; appointments.

Commencing January 1, 2008, an attorney to be appointed by the courts as a guardian ad litem for a juvenile in a proceeding brought under Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-247(3)(a) of the Nebraska Juvenile Code shall have completed six (6) hours of specialized training provided by the Administrative Office of the Court (see Appendix A). Thereafter, in order to maintain eligibility to be appointed and to serve as a guardian ad litem, an attorney shall complete three (3) hours of specialized training per year as provided by the Administrative Office of the Court. Courts shall appoint attorneys trained under this rule in all § 43-247(3)(a) cases when available; provided, however, that if the judge determines that an attorney with the training required herein is unavailable within the county, he or she may appoint an attorney without such training.

**IS THE TRAINING CURRENTLY
PROVIDED GALs ADEQUATE?**

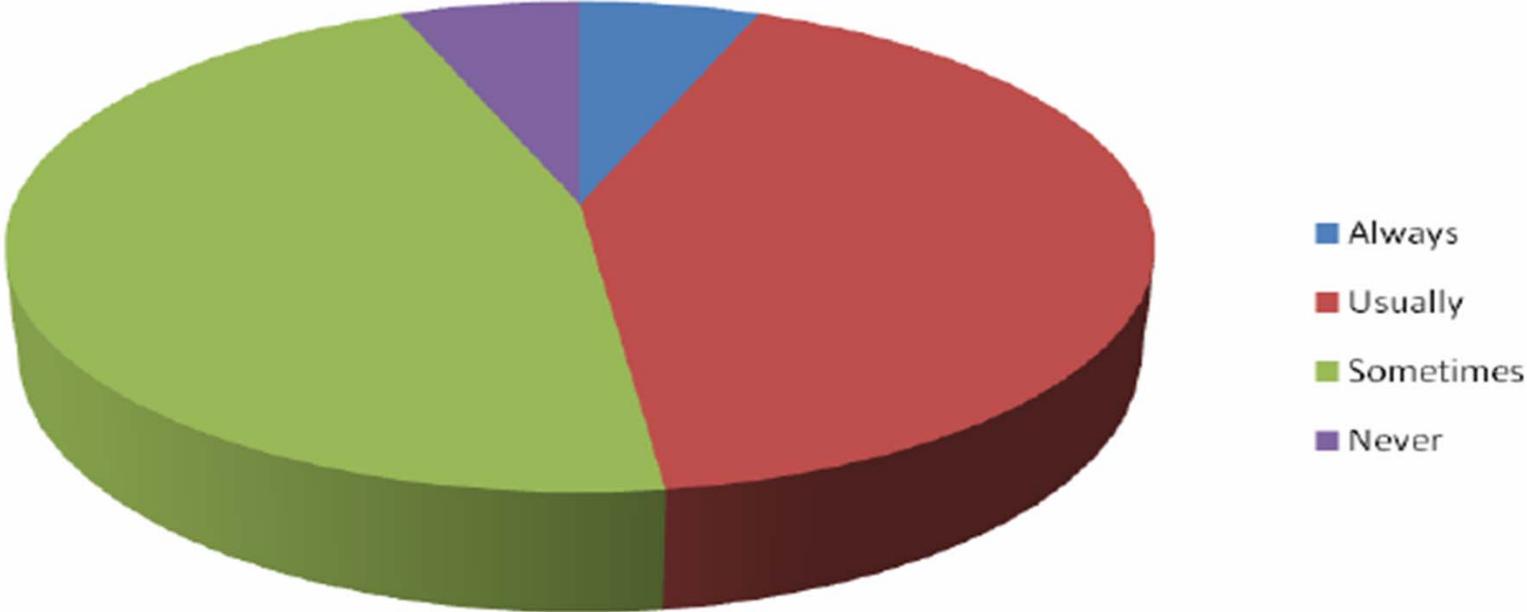
Table 26. GAL Responses Regarding GAL Training (n=71)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Have Not Had the Training
“The training provided to GALs pursuant to Rule 4-401 of the Nebraska Rules of Court gave me all the information I needed to perform my responsibilities as a GAL.”	3%	35%	38%	17%	7%

DO GUARDIANS AD LITEM HAVE
ACCESS TO EXPERTS?

GALs' Responses to "I have access to experts to help me in making assessments of the child's needs."

Figure 1. Percentage of GALs' Responses to Statement about Access to Experts (n=71)



In contrast, GALs reported less access to social workers independent of DHHS to assist them. In response to the statement, "I have access to social workers independent of DHHS to assist me in my GAL work": 1% strongly agreed; 18% agreed; 46% disagreed; 32% strongly disagreed; and 1% did not respond.

...but do we use them?

Study Conclusions about GAL Use of Experts:

- GALs reported rarely using experts, and some were perplexed that an expert would ever be needed
- GALs reported the court ordering psychological/psychiatric evaluations only if DHHS has not done so or the evaluation has not been conducted
- Nine judges said that GALs never use investigators and experts, three judges commenting that with contract attorneys doing so would “come out of payment to the firm” or “they are restrained by the contract”
- Two judges said non-contract GALs have used experts and three judges said GALs “on occasion” or “rarely” use experts

HOW MANY OF YOU USE
LISTSERV?

Recommendation 3: The relationship between the GAL and the child must be changed to become client-focused, not adult-focused.

SHOULD NEBRASKA KEEP ITS CURRENT “DUAL ROLE” FOR GAL REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN?

GALs advocating both “Best Interests”
and serving as “Legal Counsel”
advocating for the child client’s desires?

Figure 6. "I find it easy to balance my dual role as advocate for the child's best interests and legal counsel."

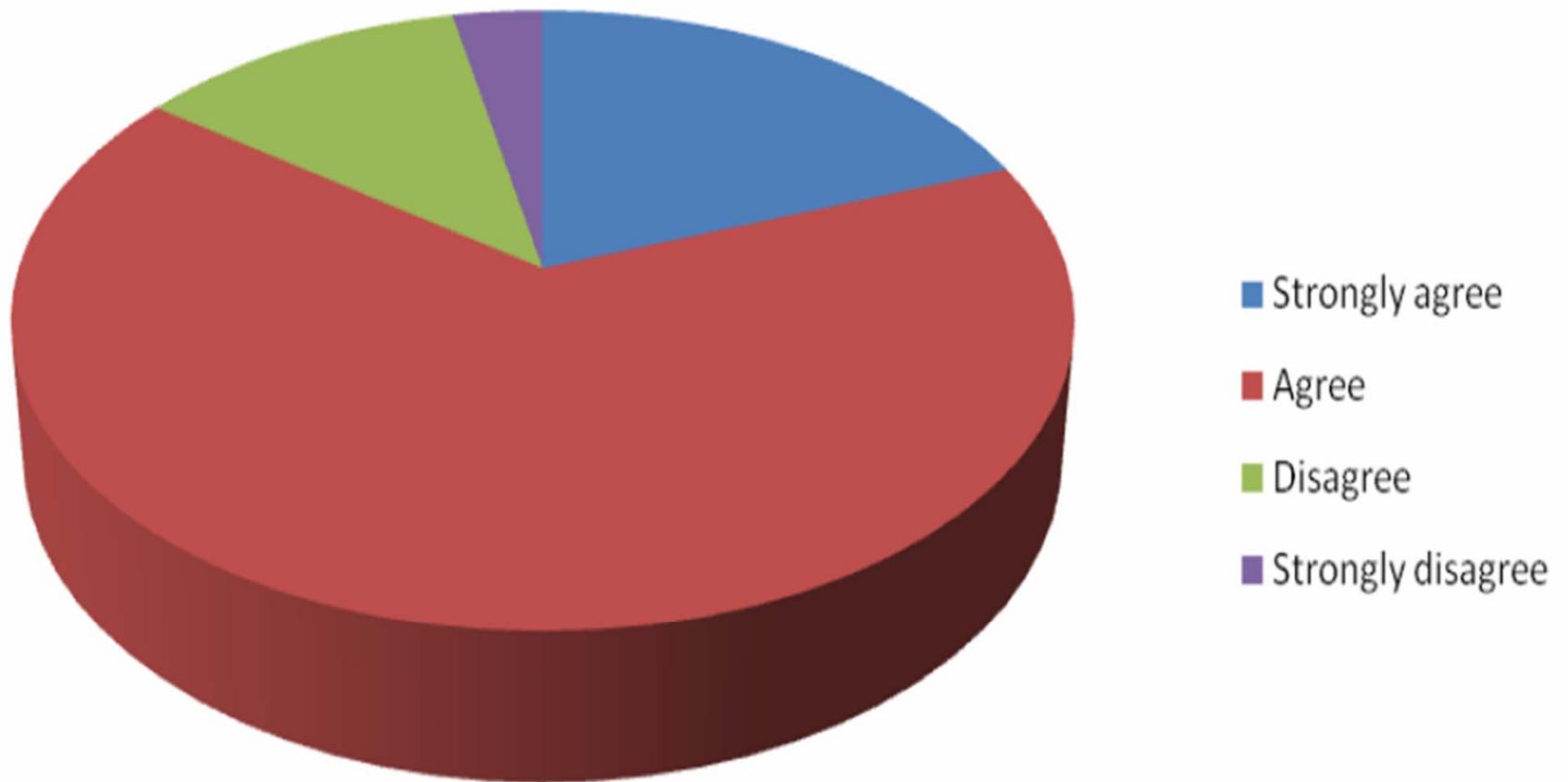


Table 60. Stakeholder Responses to the Statement, “GALs appropriately balance their dual roles as advocates for the child’s best interest and legal attorneys”.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
CASAs (n=89)	11%	56%	24%	9%
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	6%	76%	19%	--

The Study recommends that:

- The role of GAL be amended to that of a traditional attorney for the child
- GALs comply with the Nebraska Rules of Professional Conduct on clients with diminished capacity, namely:

§ 3-501.14. Client with diminished capacity.

- (a) When a client's capacity to make adequately considered decisions in connection with a representation is diminished, whether because of minority, mental impairment or for some other reason, the lawyer shall, as far as reasonably possible, maintain a normal client-lawyer relationship with the client.**
- (b) When the lawyer reasonably believes that the client has diminished capacity, is at risk of substantial physical, financial or other harm unless action is taken and cannot adequately act in the client's own interest, the lawyer may take reasonably necessary protective action, including consulting with individuals or entities that have the ability to take action to protect the client and, in appropriate cases, seeking the appointment of a guardian ad litem, conservator or guardian.**

Recommendation 4: Nebraska should establish mandatory caseload standards for GALs in 3(a) cases.

- a. A “case” should be defined as being an individual child’s matter, as distinct from one family or one sibling group.
- b. Caseload standards should be written into contracts with individual GALs and law firms.
- c. The caseload standards should take into account the possibility that attorneys will do non-3(a) work.

**DO GALs HAVE UNMANAGEABLE
CASELOADS?**

Table 10. GAL Responses to Questions about Their Caseloads (n=71)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Response
“I have a reasonable caseload given my overall workload.”	18%	65%	11%	3%	3%
“I have had concerns that my GAL caseload is too high.”	3%	11%	44%	30%	4%
	YES	NO	Not Applicable		
“When I have had concerns that my GAL caseload is too high, I have brought these concerns to my supervisor or to the court.”	20%	14%	66%		

HOW MANY HOURS, PER YEAR,
SHOULD A GAL DEVOTE TO ONE
CASE?

The general consensus in the child welfare field is that, at most, an attorney representing children in dependency matters should have no more than 100 child clients (NACC, 2001.) The concept of a maximum number of clients is distinct from the concept of “cases” in that a case may involve multiple siblings and thus substantially more work than a family with only one child. The NACC issued this 100 client caseload recommendation in 2001, basing it on a rough calculation that the average

attorney has 2,000 work hours available, and the average dependency client would require about 20 hours of attention, in the course of a year. It also assumes that the attorney devotes her entire practice to the representation of children in dependency cases.

Recommendation 5: All counties that still use the law firm/ flat-fee system should phase this system out, given the evidence that attorneys working on an hourly basis have more reasonable caseloads and adequate compensation.

If all were paid by the hour, should GALs receive the same fee as the other attorneys involved in a juvenile case?
(CA; Public Defender; Parent's attorney)

Table 20. GAL Responses Regarding their Compensation Mechanisms (n=71)

Type of Payment Mechanism	Percentage of GALs
On an hourly rate	70%
Pursuant to a contract in which the GAL is paid a set amount to take a specified number of cases	20%
Pursuant to a contract in which the GAL is paid a set amount to take an unlimited number of cases	1%
Based on a flat per-case fee, no matter how many hours the GAL works on the case	--
Other	8%

More than half of GALs believed that the compensation that they receive as GALs is inadequate. In response to the statement, “The compensation that I receive as a GAL is adequate”:

- 1% strongly agreed
- 38% agreed
- 39% disagreed
- 20% strongly disagreed
- 1% did not respond

Recommendation 6: *Youth should participate in 3(a) proceedings in court.*

- a. There should be a presumption that all children over a certain age (such as 10) should be present in court. The burden should be on the child's attorney to demonstrate good cause for why the child should not participate; the attorney should be required to present a written motion to excuse the child at least a week before the court hearing is scheduled.
- b. Nebraska should contract with the ABA Bar-Youth Empowerment Project to receive technical assistance on improving practice in this area.

DO YOU AGREE THAT CHILDREN
TEN AND OVER SHOULD ATTEND
THEIR COURT HEARINGS?

Table 84. GAL Responses to Statements about Child and Youth Participation in Court Proceedings (n=71)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
"I advocate for the child's presence at all court hearing for the child when appropriate based on the child's age and development."	41%	35%	21%	3%
"I promote the child's opportunity to speak to the judge."	39%	45%	11%	4%

In contrast to the GALs' mixed views, youth consistently expressed the desire to be at their own court hearings:

"I'd rather go to court so I know what's going on. If I didn't go to court, I would not know what they were saying about me. Not going to court hurts me; it doesn't help me."

"When I started going to court, things started happening."

If you have a voice and know what's going on, you should be able to go [to court]."

"It's my life in someone else's hands and I don't like that."

Table 92. Stakeholders' Responses to the Statement, "GALs advocate for the child's presence at and participation in all court hearings for the child."

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Do Not Know
CASAs (n=89)	12%	36%	42%	10%	--
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	13%	41%	31%	14%	--
Foster Care Review Board Members (n=19)	--	32%	58%	--	47%

Table 86. Parent Responses to Statements About the GALs' Role in Promoting the Child's Participation in Court Hearings (n=4)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
"The GAL makes certain that my child attends my child's court hearings."	--	25%	25%	25%	25%

Table 87. Foster Parent Responses to Statements About the GALs' Role in Promoting the Child's Participation in Court Hearings (n=6)

	Yes	No	Do not know
"The GAL advocates for my child's/foster child's presence at and participation in all court hearings for the child."	33%	50%	16%
"The GAL makes certain that my child/foster child attends his/her court hearings."	--	83%	16%

Longer-term, Systemic Changes to the Delivery of Legal Services to Children in Nebraska

Recommendation 7: *Nebraska should establish a centralized system for oversight of GAL services.*

Responsibility for administering and funding the system of legal services to children in 3(a) cases should be shifted to an independent state entity, whether within the state Administrative Office of the Courts or the executive branch. This entity should be an autonomous unit responsible for this function, what we will call here an “Office of Child Advocacy,” or OCA.

Recommendation 8: *Nebraska should adopt, by statute, a client-directed model of representation.*

Building on Recommendation 3 above, the child's attorney should follow the Nebraska Rules of Professional Conduct just like all attorneys.

**SUPREME COURT GUIDELINES FOR
GUARDIANS AD LITEM FOR
JUVENILES IN JUVENILE COURT
PROCEEDINGS**

§ 3-501.14. Client with diminished capacity.

- (a) When a client's capacity to make adequately considered decisions in connection with a representation is diminished, whether because of minority, mental impairment or for some other reason, the lawyer shall, as far as reasonably possible, maintain a normal client-lawyer relationship with the client.**
- (b) When the lawyer reasonably believes that the client has diminished capacity, is at risk of substantial physical, financial or other harm unless action is taken and cannot adequately act in the client's own interest, the lawyer may take reasonably necessary protective action, including consulting with individuals or entities that have the ability to take action to protect the client and, in appropriate cases, seeking the appointment of a guardian ad litem, conservator or guardian.**
- (c) Information relating to the representation of a client with diminished capacity is protected by Rule 1.6. When taking protective action pursuant to paragraph (b), the lawyer is impliedly authorized under Rule 1.6(a) to reveal information about the client, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to protect the client's interests.**

Recommendation 9: *Nebraska should renovate court facilities to make them adequate for the needs of children and youth.*

Every courthouse where 3(a) cases are heard should alter its physical plant so that:

- a. There is a designated space for children and youth to wait for their case to be called; the space should be age appropriate and properly staffed;
- b. There is appropriate space for children and youth to meet with their attorney or CASA; this space should be child-friendly in furnishing and design; and
- c. Seating arrangements in courtrooms where 3(a) cases are heard should be adjusted so that children's attorneys have their own table separate from the other parties.

**IS THE COURTHOUSE IN YOUR
PRACTICE/SERVICE AREA
ADEQUATE TO MEET THE NEEDS
OF CHILDREN?**

Table 17. GAL Responses Regarding Court Facilities (n=71)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
"I can easily find a quiet, private place to talk with my client before court hearings."	7%	39%	41%	13%
"The court environment is a comfortable place for children and youth to be."	1%	21%	63%	14%

Table 18. Stakeholder responses to the statement that the court environment is a comfortable place for children and youth to be.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
CASAs (n=89)	7%	39%	51%	3%	--
Parents (N=4)	--	--	--	100%	--
Foster Parents (n=6)	--	33%	50%	--	16%
DHHS Caseworkers (n=70)	3%	41%	46%	10%	--
Foster Care Review Board Members (n=19)	--	22%	67%	11%	--

Table 19. CASA Responses to the Statement, "I can easily find a quiet private place to talk with the child at the courthouse." (n=89)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
CASA Responses	8%	43%	42%	8%

NACC RECOMMENDATIONS