

County of Berks

POSITION DESCRIPTION FORM

Position Title Guardian ad Litem

Department Court Administration

Reports To
(Title)

Family Court
Administrator

Effective Date _____

Revision
Date

12.24.18

Wage Category: Exempt

Non-Exempt

EEO-1
Category _____

Union
Classification _____

Non-Union

POSITION SUMMARY:

The GAL represents dependent children in dependency and termination of parental rights cases. The GAL advocates for each child, works to ensure the safety of each child, legally represents the child and the child's best interests, and seeks the best outcome in each case.

POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Major Functions:

1. Meet with the child prior to court proceedings and thoroughly communicate with the child to gain and give information relevant to the proceeding, including counseling the child concerning the litigation, the court process, and the child's rights.
2. Inform all parties that the GAL is representing the child and make efforts to resolve the case through informal means and take steps to stay notified of all important changes or actions involving the child.
3. Participate, in negotiations, discovery, pre-trial conferences, and family group decision-making conferences.
4. Participate in all dependency proceedings including, but not limited to, shelter care, adjudication, disposition, permanency review, and motions hearings. Participate in appeals where appropriate. Additionally, participate in Termination of Parental Rights hearings in Orphans' Court.

5. Investigate the facts of each case by speaking with the child, reviewing relevant records and court files, speaking with the Children and Youth Services (CYS) caseworkers, supervisors, and solicitors, speaking with the attorneys for other parties, speaking with the court appointed special advocates, speaking with and/or meeting with the guardians or caretakers of the children, conducting site visits, interviewing other individuals involved with the children, reviewing relevant photographs, reviewing school records, reviewing reports from outside agencies and talking to the professionals if needed, reviewing drug test or mental health reports, utilize an M.S.W. intern, etc.
6. File petitions, motions, objections, or responses when appropriate to promote the best interest of the children.
7. Present testimony of witnesses and legal argument concerning the best interest of the children.
8. Help ensure that the child shall be present for every court hearing and have an opportunity to voice his or her views directly to the Court except in exceptional circumstances.
9. Help identify appropriate family and professional resources for the children.
10. Communicate all court orders and other case information to the child and discuss any questions he or she has. Remain in contact with the child.
11. Monitor the implementation of court orders and take appropriate steps where non-compliance is affecting the child's best interest. Represent the child at all proceedings while the court retains jurisdiction including administrative actions.
12. Attend bi-monthly meetings with the judge in charge of dependency.
13. Attend bi-monthly roundtable meeting with court staff and CYS staff.
14. Stay current on all relevant law, including case law.
15. Explain to older youth their options to remain Dependent where applicable, take appropriate legal action, and help prepare youths to become independent adults.
16. Remain an active attorney in good standing with the PA Supreme Court, include dependency CLEs in annual CLE requirements.
17. Other duties as requested by supervisor.

Minor Functions

Numerous minor duties including paperwork and correspondence.

MINIMUM EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

Juris Doctorate.

1. Licensed member in good standing with the PA Supreme Court.
2. Some legal experience representing parties in juvenile dependency cases preferred.
3. Some experience working with children preferred.

MINIMUM KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

Knowledge of the Juvenile Act, the PA Rules of Juvenile Procedure, current dependency case law, PA Orphans' Court Rules, the PA Rules of Professional Conduct, the PA Rules of Civility, the PA Rules of Appellate Procedure, the PA Rules of Evidence, and possession of trial advocacy skills, negotiation skills, and strong oral and written communication skills. Ability to work well with children.

Required Pre-Service Training

Upon being hired, a newly appointed GAL shall watch the AOPC GAL pre-service training DVD, read the resource material and provide the signed Affidavit certifying completion.

Working Environment:

1. Predominantly office and courtroom settings. Occasional field work possible.
2. Appropriate business attire required.
3. This is a full-time position.

This position description serves as a guideline for communicating major position functions and other information about the position to the applicant/employee. It is not intended to create a binding employment contract not to cover every detail of the position and may be changed without notice.