

**Florida's Guardian ad Litem Program**

**Presentation to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet**

- Guardian ad Litem Program Overview
- The Role of a Volunteer Guardian ad Litem
- Guardian ad Litem Partnerships
- "Operationalizing" the Vision and Mission
- Interfacing with other Agencies
- Eliminating Barriers



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**Guardian ad Litem Program Overview**

Presented by: Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director

**MISSION:**  
Advocating for the child's best interest is our only interest.

**VISION:**  
The Florida Guardian ad Litem Program will provide a powerful and effective voice on behalf of Florida's abused, abandoned, and neglected children and be recognized and respected as a partnership of community advocates and professional staff.

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**CORE VALUES:**

1. Commitment to Children
2. Communications Built on Trust
3. Circuit Empowerment
4. Collaboration
5. Courtesy

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**LONG RANGE GOALS:**

1. To assure that every child has a voice in court.
2. To use quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate that GAL advocacy correlates with improved case outcomes for children in the dependency system.
3. To implement a consistent core program of evidence-based training for staff and volunteers which strengthens their ability to address the needs of the children we represent.
4. To advance the mission alignment and operational relationships among and between the Office of the Executive Director, the Circuits, the local non-profit support agencies, and the Statewide GAL Foundation.

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**The Role of a Volunteer Guardian ad Litem**

Presented by: Kay Rynear, Volunteer Guardian ad Litem

1. The GAL Difference
2. The Role of a Volunteer and their value to the Program.

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**Guardian ad Litem Partnerships**

Presented by: Susan Khoury, Attorney at Law

**BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS – Different ways of delivering best interest representation to abused, abandoned, and neglected children:**

1. Volunteers are not "one size fit all"
2. Making the most of strengths in your community
3. In-kind value added by volunteers
4. Collaborating with the legal community to address specific legal needs of our children

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## "Operationalizing" the Vision and Mission

Presented by: Calvin Martin, Regional Director

**GUARDIAN AD LITEM OPERATIONAL INITIATIVES:**

1. 10,000 Voices – Expanding the role of the Guardian ad Litem Volunteer.
2. Focus on strategic communications and capacity development through the installation of volunteer growth initiatives
3. The non-profit factor – aligning our state and local level non-profit organizations through program development, marketing strategies, statewide training initiatives and meeting child normalcy needs.
4. Creating collaboration by utilizing natural community partnerships to reach our goals.

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## Interfacing with other Agencies

Presented by: Lesley Scott, Circuit Director

**WORKING TOGETHER – MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

1. Working with the Courts
2. Working with the Department of Children and Families
3. Working with our Community Based Care Agencies
4. Working through Community Alliances

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## Eliminating Barriers: A Collaborative Approach

Presented by: Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director

1. Share training opportunities on key child-welfare issues such as effective child interviewing techniques, bonding, substance abuse, and domestic violence among the various child-welfare providers including Department of Health, Department of Children and Families, Guardian ad Litem, Child Protection Teams, and others.
2. Sharing data among the various agencies working with children and families. This will facilitate real-time information flow to ensure that the best decisions are being made based on the most comprehensive and current information available.
3. Flexible funding is essential so that services can be offered without a child coming into care.
4. Guardian ad Litem remains committed to removing obstacles and working towards the integration of collaborative systems aimed at improving outcomes for children and families.

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## Looking into the Future

Presented by: Alan Abramowitz, Executive Director

1. Our goal and our mission is to provide quality legal and best interest representation for every child in our dependency system.
2. For Fiscal Year 2012-2013, our goal is to increase the number of children represented by the Program from 20,710 to 23,793 (+14.9%).
3. Effective volunteer recruitment and management will continue to play a critical role in our ability to achieve our goals. In order to reach our goals for the upcoming Fiscal Year, we will need an additional 1,511 volunteers.
4. Our strategic plan is based on a five year incremental strategy that will result in Guardian ad Litem Program representation for 100% of our State's dependent children.

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