

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

What is a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)?

A Guardian Ad Litem is a neutral person appointed by the court. They are appointed for the purpose of the court case and act on behalf of a person not able to take legal action, like the child. The Guardian Ad Litem will be involved throughout all stages of the Paternity Adjudication to advise the court about what is best for the child.

What does a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) do?

In family and juvenile court, a Guardian Ad Litem advises the court about what is in the best interest of the child regarding custody and parenting time during the case. The Guardian Ad Litem does **not** have custody. A Guardian Ad Litem should make an independent investigation about what's best for the child and write a report.

The parties may be asked to pay the costs of a Guardian Ad Litem. However, if you are low-income or represented by legal aid, you may not have to pay any Guardian Ad Litem costs.

If either parent is a minor, the court will appoint a Guardian Ad Litem for that parent. In this situation the court usually appoints a relative such as the parent of that minor.

Genetic Tests

Blood tests and swab tests are 2 types of genetic tests done to determine paternity. Some areas still use blood tests, but many are now using cheek swab tests. Genetic tests are very sophisticated. Many people refer to both types as simply “blood tests.”

Either parent may ask for genetic testing even before either party starts a court case.

Often genetic tests are the most objective and influential evidence in a paternity proceeding. The courts favor the use of genetic tests as the most accurate and efficient means of determining paternity.

The results of a genetic test can usually determine for sure that a person is NOT a biological parent of a child.

Once the court makes its final order, or after the ROP is signed, the right to a genetic test goes away. If you are unsure about paternity, ask for genetic testing either before signing an ROP, or as part of a court action. The county agency will assist with genetic testing before an ROP is signed or during a court action.

