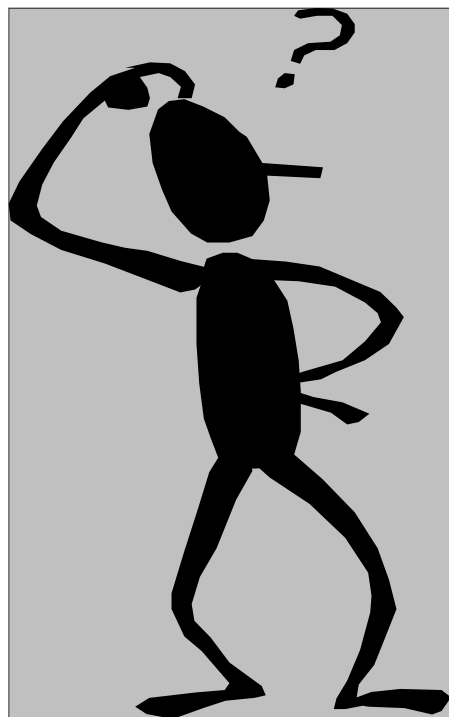# What is a GAL?

Is GAL the opposite of guy? Well, yes, but that's not the kind of GAL we are talking about. GAL stands for:

Guardian ad litem

Guardian ad litem is a fancy legal word for someone whose job is to tell the judge in court what he or she thinks is best for a child.

What's a judge got to do with me?

Sometimes families need help to make sure their home is a safe place for children. If a home is not safe the children may be either taken to a safe place or social workers may have to visit the home to make sure it is a safe place for kids to be. When this happens a GAL is assigned to figure out what is best for the children and then tell the judge. The judge has to decide things like where the children should live and what kind of help the family needs. GALs help judges decide what is best for these

How does a GAL know what is best for me?

GALs learn all about what is happening in a child's life by talking to people who know the child: teachers, doctors, family members, foster parents and counselors, for example. But most important of all, GALs talk to and visit the child. The GAL reports back to the judge what he or she has learned and what the GAL thinks should happen.

My GAL's name is

_____

I can contact my GAL at

_____

What about what I think?

Will my GAL always ask the judge to do what I want done? NO. The GAL always listens to the child, but the GAL must decide whether what the child wants is really best.

Sometimes the GAL and the child do not agree. The GAL will tell the judge what the child wants and what the GAL really thinks is best.

How can I help the GAL?

A GAL needs lots of help to do a good job of representing a child's best interests.

The child can help the GAL by trying to tell the GAL everything he or she asks about. If the child forgets to tell the GAL something important, the child should call the GAL or have someone else make the call.

A Kid's Guide to GAL

Office of Public Advocacy