



Rebecca's Story

Rebecca is a dedicated Guardian ad Litem advocating for the best interest of children in the child welfare system. Her work ensures compliance with laws, while preserving family connections and supporting cultural traditions. Rebecca collaborates with families, service providers, attorneys, and social services to protect the best interests of children and strengthen communities who face disparities in child welfare.

Despite her education, expertise and commitment, Rebecca's current wage of \$23.12/hour leaves her unable to meet her family's basic living expenses. Her financial struggles reflect the reality many Guardians ad Litem face in Minnesota. Low wages are the main reason employees leave the program.

"GALs are required by law to serve on cases, yet their compensation does not reflect the importance of their work."

Call to Action!

- Pass the GAL Board's proposed budget
- Ensure Guardians have wages that reflect their value.
- Ensure the longterm financial stability of the program.
- Strengthen advocacy for Minnesota's most vulnerable children.



The Guardian ad Litem Workforce Impact

Guardians ad Litem (GALs) are legally mandated to advocate for the best interests of children in court cases involving abuse, neglect, custody, and other critical matters. Despite the essential nature of their work, GALs are paid significantly less than jobs requiring similar qualifications and responsibilities.

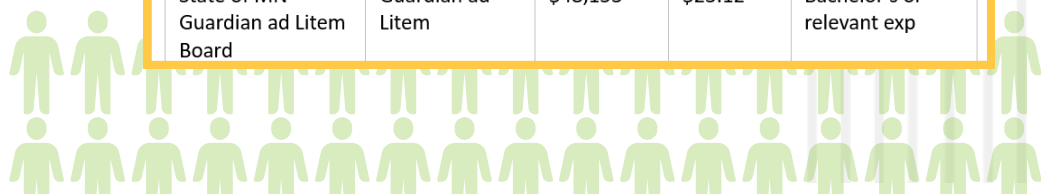
Comparative Wage Study:

A comparative wage study was completed in 2022, and an updated wage study in 2025. Both revealed inequity in pay for Guardians ad Litem compared to others in similar roles, impacting recruitment and retention of qualified and diverse hiring pools.

This Budget Increase Will

- **Ensure Financial Stability:** Help Guardians ad Litem meet basic living expenses and focus solely on their work.
- **Improve Retention:** Reduce turnover and ensure continuity of advocacy for children and families.
- **Strengthen Recruitment:** Attract and retain a skilled, culturally competent workforce to support children and families.

State of MN Board	Job Title	Starting Wage	Hourly	Qualifications
State of MN Board of Public Defense	Dispositional Advisors	\$69,576	\$33.45	Bachelor's
State of MN Competency Attainment Board	Forensic Navigator	\$58,004-\$90,013	\$27.78-\$43.11	Bachelor's or relevant experience
State of MN Guardian ad Litem Board	Guardian ad Litem	\$48,153	\$23.12	Bachelor's or relevant exp



About Us

Minnesota's Guardian ad Litem Board governs a statewide program mandated by state and federal law that employs Guardians ad Litem (GAL).

GALs are court-appointed for neglected or abused children. They advocate for the children's best interests in Juvenile & Family Court.

Last year, Guardians ad Litem advocated for 12,000 Children in 6,700 court cases. 1,600 children in Family Court cases and 1,500 children in ICWA cases.



12,000 Children



6,700 Court cases

What We Do

Guardians ad Litem advocate for the best interest of children. Some of their duties include:

- Conduct independent investigations of court cases involved in child protection and family court.
- Visit children monthly at family homes, foster homes, schools, and other settings.
- Meet with parents, foster providers, relatives, social workers, tribal representatives, therapists, psychiatrists, doctors, teachers, and other service providers.
- Provide the court with best interest recommendations through written and oral reports.

What We Need

To help our state's most vulnerable children, the Guardian ad Litem Board asks you to approve our proposed budget:

- Increase wages to be competitive and equitable to other professionals in similar roles.
- Help meet state and federal mandates and appoint a Guardian ad litem to look out for the best interests of each child in need.
- To recruit, train, and retain competent Guardians with knowledge of the legal system and cultural awareness.

GAL Specialized Training

- GALs are professionals with diverse backgrounds and extensive training and education in advocating for children.
- GALs are required to have advanced training in disciplines like child development, chemical dependency, mental health, racial equity, court procedures, state statutes, community resources and more.
- Indian Child Welfare Training, co-designed with the University of Minnesota Duluth Tribal Training and Certification Partnership.



“The Guardian ad Litem Board is mandated, state and federally, to hire and retain diverse, skilled staff to advocate for Minnesota’s vulnerable children. Guardians ad Litem safeguard children’s best interests and strengthen families and communities.”

***--Tami Baker-Olson,
GAL Program Administrator***

Guardian ad Litem Board Budget Request FY 2026/2027

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
General Fund				
Expenditures	6,770	9,119	9,119	9,119
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Other Funds				
Expenditures	0	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact = (Expenditures – Revenues)	6,770	9,119	9,119	9,119
FTEs	247.41	247.41	247.41	247.41

The Guardian ad Litem Board Seeks \$16,365,000 For FY 2026 / 27 Biennium:

1. Increase employee compensation.
2. Fund unavoidable health insurance premium increases.
3. Increase operating funds by \$1,000,000 yearly to meet increased transportation and inflation costs.
4. \$476,000 to grow and strengthen the volunteer program.

We Face These Challenges:

- High employee turnover rates.
- Inability to offer competitive wage increases.
- Low wages remain the leading cause of staff departures.
- The impending wave of retirements and inability to fill low wages positions.

The efforts to provide consistent, high-quality advocacy are undermined, amplifying the urgent need to recruit and retain a diverse pool of qualified and experienced professionals.

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Employee Exit Interviews : **Reasons for leaving**



Christina worked for six years as a Guardian ad Litem.

"I would have liked to stay on. However, I could not afford to keep working for these wages."

Lynda is leaving because she can't work two jobs anymore.

"Our pay is not commensurate with our responsibilities and duties. The low pay doesn't reflect the importance of our investigation, our dedication to our job, and the children who rely on us to uphold their best interests."



Aaron is leaving because he was offered a job with twice the pay.

"I love the work, but I could not afford to stay here with a family at home."

Letters of Support: **Former Fostered Youth**

January 14, 2025

Hello,

My name is Lucianna G., or Luci. I am a 23-year-old former foster youth and member of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate (Seven Councils). I am writing to share the profound impact of a Guardian ad Litem on my life.

I entered foster care for the first time at 18 months and was returned to my biological mother by age 4. Until I was 9, I witnessed substance abuse and suffered its many consequences. I became a caregiver to my siblings, leaving myself without protection. My mother knew about my sexual abuse and attempted to drown me. She beat me with objects like curtain rods and metal hangers.

When I re-entered foster care at 9, I was assigned multiple social workers and an attorney I never saw. My only constant was my Guardian ad Litem. She gave me hope, helped me find my voice, and provided clarity during my case. She treated me as a child who had experienced trauma, not just another file in the system.

Many children in foster care, like me, feel unheard. My Guardian ad Litem was that support. She explained what happened in court, ensured my input was considered, and helped me heal.

Today, I work in harm reduction and crisis support. I credit my Guardian ad Litem for showing me the importance of helping others. Her advocacy inspired me to overcome my past and create a positive future.

I am grateful for all I have endured because it has brought me here. I hope this message inspires you to support the Guardian ad Litem Board and make a difference for children who need to be heard.

Philámayaye,
Čhaŋtiyagleya,
Lucianna G.