



“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.

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.

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

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.

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.