

**KANSAS
JUDICIAL
COUNCIL**

Juvenile Offender/
Child in Need of Care
Advisory Committee

Report on the Child in Need of Care Guardian ad litem System

DECEMBER 5, 2025

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Executive Summary.....	4
Key Findings	4
Strengths	5
Comparative Research	5
Recommendations	6
Conclusion	7
Beyond the Numbers – Emma & Sarah.....	8
Method of Study.....	10
Background	11
History of the Kansas GAL System.....	11
2001 Study of the GAL System	12
Current GAL System.....	14
System Evaluation	16
Strengths	18
Challenges	20
Other State Systems	24
Is the current Kansas GAL system working?	27
Caseload.....	28
Competency.....	32
Compensation	34
Additional Systemic Issues.....	38
Attorneys for Parents in CINC Cases.....	40
Beyond the Numbers – <i>Maria & Daniel</i>	40
Parent Attorney System and Practice.....	42
System Evaluation	43

Committee Recommendations	46
System Change	46
System Change for Parent Attorneys.....	51
Interim Change	52
1. Development and Implementation of Practice Standards	52
2. Amendments to Kansas Supreme Court Rule 110A and K.S.A. 38-2205	56
3. Development of a Guardian ad Litem Practice Guide.....	56
4. Creation of a Professional Organization.....	57
5. Development and Expansion of GAL Training and Resources	57
6. Development and Expansion of Judicial Education.....	58
7. Evaluation of Individual Judicial District’s GAL system.....	59
8. Legislative Funding	60
Conclusion.....	60
Appendices	62
Appendix A Example Statutory Language for Centralized Office.....	62
Appendix B Proposed Amendments to Supreme Court Rule 110A	77
Appendix C Proposed Amendments to K.S.A. 38-2205(a).....	81
Appendix D Yearly Compliance Certification Form	82
Appendix E Committee Membership.....	84

Executive Summary

In response to concerns raised by constituents and stakeholders about workload and quality of work, Representative Susan Humphries requested the Kansas Judicial Council study the guardian ad litem (GAL) system in child in need of care (CINC) cases. Over an eighteen-month period, the Judicial Council’s Juvenile Offender/Child in Need of Care Advisory Committee (Committee), joined by ad hoc members, examined how Kansas’ GAL¹ system functions, identified strengths and weaknesses, and reviewed potential reforms. (See page 10 for study scope and methodology.) The Committee also considered the system for attorneys who represent parents or guardians in CINC cases (parent attorney), recognizing its equally important role in protecting children and ensuring fairness in CINC proceedings.

Key Findings

Kansas currently operates a decentralized GAL system administered at the county level. Each county independently determines how GALs are appointed and compensated. This fragmented structure results in significant variation in practice across the state, leading to inequalities in access to high-quality legal representation and inconsistency in how children’s voices are heard. These variations reflect broader structural challenges within the current GAL system. (Detailed discussion beginning on page 20.) The Committee identified three deficient core and interrelated categories of issues in the current GAL system — caseload, competency, and compensation.

- **Caseloads:** Many Kansas GALs manage far more cases than national standards recommend, leaving insufficient time to meet with children, investigate cases, or advocate effectively. GALs often face additional challenges due to long travel distances created by the rural nature of our state, children being placed outside of their home communities, and statewide attorney shortages most critically felt in rural Kansas.

¹ Any reference to a guardian ad litem in the report is only referring to a guardian ad litem in a child in need of care case. Guardian ad litem are appointed in multiple types of cases, including divorce, parentage, and probate. This study solely reviewed guardian ad litem that are appointed in child in need of care cases.

- **Competency:** Although Kansas GALs are licensed attorneys, competency requires more than legal knowledge, it requires consistent performance of the duties necessary to represent a child’s best interests. Effective advocacy requires time to investigate, communicate with the child and stakeholders, participate in meetings, and engage in active courtroom representation. Inconsistent training, lack of statewide standards, and limited oversight hinder attorneys’ ability to fulfill these duties, resulting in wide variation in the quality of representation.
- **Compensation:** County payment structures vary significantly across Kansas, with many GALs receiving inadequate compensation that fails to reflect the demands of their caseloads. Low pay drives high turnover and limits recruitment, especially in rural areas.

The deficiencies in these three categories culminate in children rarely meeting with their GALs and their voices being muted. These issues are compounded by systemic gaps such as inconsistent appointment methods, lack of resources, lack of support infrastructure, inadequate data collection, and geographic inequities. The Committee concludes that, taken together, these deficiencies mean the current GAL system is not “working” for Kansas children and families.

Strengths

Despite serious challenges, the Kansas system has important strengths. Every child in a child in need of care case is guaranteed a GAL, all GALs are attorneys, attorneys have authority to act as officers of the court, and the statute permits appointment of direct representation attorneys when a child’s wishes diverge from the GAL’s recommendation. GALs often play a coordinating role in cases, and ongoing training is available through the Kansas Judicial Branch’s Office of Judicial Administration. (See page 18.)

Comparative Research

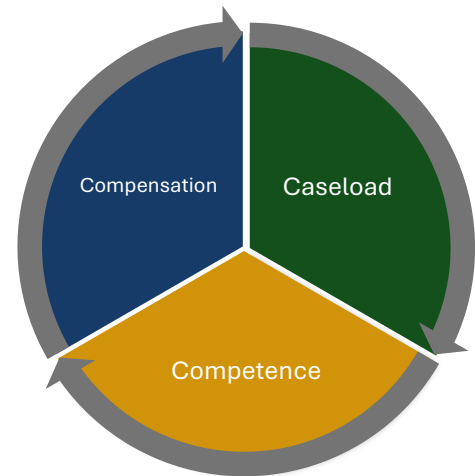
The Committee studied other states that have transitioned from county-based systems to statewide structures. States such as Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, and Wyoming report that statewide oversight improved the quality and consistency of representation, stabilized attorney workloads, and enhanced training and accountability. (See page 24.)

Recommendations

The Committee recognizes that high-quality legal representation for both children and parents is essential to achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for Kansas families. The Committee concludes that incremental adjustments alone will not resolve Kansas' systemic problems. It primarily recommends establishing a statewide office to support and oversee the GAL and parent attorney systems. (See recommendations on page 46.)

This office should:

- Administer appointments and contracts;
- Enforce caseload limits and compensation standards;
- Provide training, mentorship, and professional resources;
- Collect and analyze data to inform policy; and
- Ensure accountability and consistency statewide.

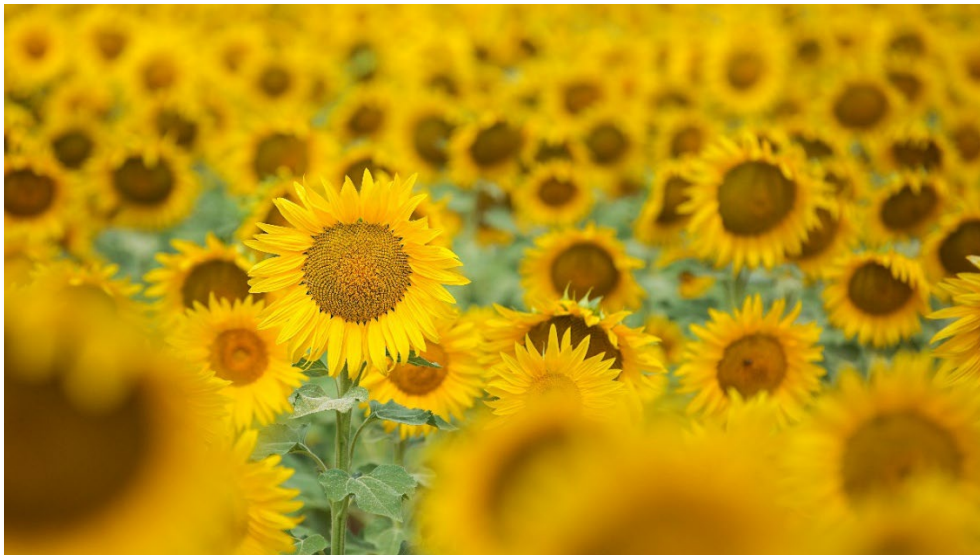


Recognizing that creating such an office will require legislative action and time to implement, the Committee also recommends interim reforms, including:

- Adopting statewide practice standards for GALs;
- Amending K.S.A. 38-2205 and Supreme Court Rule 110A to clarify duties and training;
- Developing a GAL practice guide and on-demand training;
- Creating a professional association for CINC attorneys;
- Expanding judicial education;
- Evaluating GAL systems in each judicial district; and
- Funding by the Kansas Legislature for all training and resources.

Conclusion

Kansas' children and families deserve consistent, high-quality legal representation regardless of where they live in Kansas. The current decentralized system cannot reliably provide this. Only comprehensive, statewide reform that collectively addresses caseloads, competency, and compensation will ensure that GALs and parent attorneys have the tools, resources, and support necessary to safeguard the rights and interests of children and families in CINC cases. (For a summary of proposed statutory framework, see page 46.)



Beyond the Numbers – Emma & Sarah

The numbers and findings discussed in this report reflect systemic challenges, but they also represent real people doing difficult work under immense pressure. To help illustrate how these issues play out in practice, consider the following story. It shows how the current system’s limitations, particularly high caseloads, low compensation, and inconsistent expectations, shape the daily realities of the children and attorneys tasked with advocating for those children.

Meet Emma

Emma is ten years old. She has lived in three different foster homes since being removed from her parents’ care. Her case worker tells her there’s a court date coming up soon, but Emma doesn’t really know what it’s for. She remembers meeting her guardian ad litem once, a long time ago, but can’t recall her name. The caseworker told her that the GAL “speaks for you in court,” but Emma doesn’t know what the GAL has been saying or how to reach her if she has questions.

When Emma asks her foster parent how to contact her GAL, no one seems sure. Her foster parent has never had any contact with her GAL. Emma writes a letter for her caseworker to give to her GAL, but she never finds out if it was delivered. On the day of the court hearing, Emma is in school wondering if the judge knows that she misses her little brother or that she wants to go back to her old school. No one ever asked.



Meet Sarah

Sarah is a GAL in a large Kansas county and one of her clients is Emma. On paper, Sarah is a part-time GAL. Her contract pays her a flat fee to represent the best interest of children in CINC cases, but not enough to make it her only work. So every week, she divides her time between two worlds: children like Emma in the child welfare system, and other legal clients who help keep her practice afloat.

Sarah's caseload includes about 150 children. She works hard, but the math is against her. Each week, she spends at least 8 hours in court for regularly scheduled CINC hearings. If she allots 20 hours a week for her part-time GAL work, she has about 7 hours per child a year. Sarah must decide how to visit foster placements, meet with the child, talk with caseworkers, prepare for hearings, read reports, formulate recommendations, and attend court hearings for a child all within 7 hours a year.

On top of that, Sarah is routinely asked and expected to attend important meetings, such as case planning meetings. Crucial decisions about a child's placement, adoptive parents, and future are made at these meetings. Each can last multiple hours and often requires preparation and travel. Under her flat-fee contract, this time is essentially unpaid. When she participates, it's because she knows how important her presence is for children like Emma but each meeting means hours taken from other cases, unpaid and uncredited.

Some weeks, Sarah drives for hours across county lines to see a child placed in foster care far from home. Other weeks, she's still at her desk after dark, trying to read case files she hasn't had time to open. She cares deeply about her clients, but no matter how dedicated she is, there simply aren't enough hours to give each child the attention they deserve. Sarah's story isn't unique; it's the reality for many GALs across Kansas. And in the end, it's the children who pay the price for a system stretched far beyond its limits.

This example reveals the human impact of the structural problems that will be discussed throughout this report. It demonstrates how systemic pressures rather than lack of dedication limit even the most committed GAL's ability to provide the consistent, high-quality representation that Kansas children deserve.

Method of Study

Representative Susan Humphries asked the Judicial Council to study the guardian ad litem (GAL) system for the legal representation of children in need of care (CINC) in response to concerns regarding workload and quality of work raised by constituents and stakeholders across the state. The purpose of the study was to evaluate how the GAL system in Kansas functions, identify strengths and challenges, and consider possible reforms or improvements. The scope of this study was limited to GALs appointed in CINC cases. The study excluded GALs appointed in other types of cases, such as family law, probate, and civil proceedings.

The Judicial Council's Juvenile Offender/Child in Need of Care Advisory Committee carried out the study with the addition of ad hoc members to provide a wider range of expertise and perspectives. The Committee included judges, prosecutors, GALs, and representatives from the Department for Children and Families (DCF), DCF child welfare contractors, the Kansas Legislature, the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA), the Office of the Child Advocate, the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) and the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) association.² Committee members provided experience from both rural and urban judicial districts. This diversity of membership contributed viewpoints from various stakeholders in the child in need of care system from across the state.

Over the course of 15 months, the full Committee met 12 times, and various subcommittees met 12 times to conduct more detailed research and discussions. The Committee drew upon its members' professional experience, reviewed research on the Kansas GAL systems

² See Appendix E for a list of individual committee members.

as well as the GALs systems in child welfare cases from other states, and examined common challenges faced nationally. The Committee also gathered information directly from officials and stakeholders in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Wyoming, all of which have undertaken reforms to their GAL systems. In addition, the Committee sought to gather input from practicing GALs and judicial districts throughout Kansas to better understand how the system operates on the ground.

A significant limitation of the study is due to the lack of readily available data on GALs. Counties and judicial districts are not required to collect specific data regarding GAL appointments, time spent on cases, or outcomes, nor is there any central entity that compiles this information from across the state. This limitation means that the Committee’s work relied heavily on qualitative information, informal surveys, and the professional experience of its members.

Background

To understand the current GAL system for CINC cases, it is helpful to review its historical development and prior studies of the system. This background provides context for how the existing structures, practices, and challenges emerged, shedding light on why the system functions as it does today.

History of the Kansas GAL System

The Kansas GAL system has developed alongside the state’s child welfare infrastructure and statutory reforms. Originally, counties were responsible for supervising and funding dependent children cases (now called child in need of care cases), including constructing children’s homes when local resources were unavailable. The statutory requirement to appoint a GAL to represent the best interest of the child first appeared in 1943, with compensation determined at the court’s discretion.

In 1957, the Kansas Legislature enacted a new juvenile code, authorizing courts to place children in state custody and outlining GAL duties and fee structures, payable by parents or counties.³ The 1970s brought further centralization of the child welfare system through the establishment of a unified court system in Kansas and federal requirements under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.⁴



In 1982, the Legislature adopted a new Code for Care of Children, drafted with input from the Judicial Council’s Juvenile Advisory Committee. While the Committee recommended GALs act as direct representatives of the child, the Legislature retained the best-interest model and continued to classify GAL fees as county-paid case expenses.

In 2003, based on a Judicial Council recommendation, the Legislature added the option for the court to appoint an additional attorney to represent the child’s expressed wishes if the child’s wishes conflicted with the GAL’s recommendations.⁵ The statutory provisions regarding GAL appointment, role, and compensation have remained largely unchanged since that time.

2001 Study of the GAL System

In 2001, the Legislature, through the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services Transition Oversight Committee, requested the Judicial Council conduct a study of the GAL system and recommend improvements. The Judicial Council formed an advisory committee, and the study identified key challenges to the GAL system, including:

³ K.S.A. 38-821 (1957).

⁴ Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, S. 1191, 93rd Cong. (1974), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/93rd-congress/senate-bill/1191/text>.

⁵ 2003 L. Ch. 67 § 1.

- GALs were overburdened and undercompensated;
- GALs lacked standardized training or adequate support; and
- GALs dual roles as best interest representatives and legal advocates raised ethical and practical difficulties.

The report can be downloaded from the Judicial Council website at www.kjc.ks.gov/studies-and-reports under the year 2001.

While the Committee discussed the idea of transitioning from a county-based system to a more centralized statewide system, it ultimately did not make that recommendation due to the large changes in funding and infrastructure that would have been required.

The study produced three recommendations. First, it proposed establishing Guardian Ad Litem Pilot Projects in two judicial districts to test whether enhanced legal advocacy, training, and monitoring could improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children by lowering GAL caseloads and providing stronger support. Second, it recommended amendments to Kansas Supreme Court rules to ensure judicial oversight of GAL compliance with guidelines, update training requirements, shift from “regular” to “ongoing” contact with the child, require GALs to tell the court if the child disagrees with the GAL's recommendations, and allow appointment of a separate attorney for the child’s expressed wishes. Third, it recommended legislative changes to K.S.A. 38-1505 to authorize appointment of an attorney for the child’s expressed wishes when those wishes differ from the GAL’s best-interest determination.

The Committee can find no documentation that the study's first recommendation for pilot programs to decrease caseloads and provide better support for GALs was ever implemented. The study’s second and third recommendations, amending Kansas Supreme Court rules and K.S.A. 38-1505⁶ were implemented in 2002 and 2003.⁷

⁶ The amendments to the provisions of K.S.A. 38-1505 can now be found in K.S.A. 38-2205.

⁷ KS Supreme Court Administrative Order 2002 AD 100; 2003 L. Ch. 67 § 1.

Current GAL System

The appointment and role of GALs in CINC proceedings are governed by K.S.A. 38-2205 and Kansas Supreme Court Rule 110A. K.S.A. 38-2205 requires “[u]pon the filing of a petition, the court shall appoint an attorney to serve as guardian ad litem for a child” in a CINC case. The GAL serves as an independent advocate for the child’s best interests, with access to all relevant information, including medical, psychological, and educational records. The GAL’s duties continue until the court’s jurisdiction ends or the GAL is discharged. While the GAL is not the child’s attorney in the traditional sense, the GAL must inform the court if the child’s expressed wishes differ from the GAL’s best-interest recommendations, and the court may appoint a separate attorney to represent the child’s position.

Kansas Supreme Court Rule 110A supplements this statutory framework by establishing mandatory qualifications, conduct standards, and performance expectations.⁸ A GAL must be a licensed Kansas attorney with knowledge of relevant law and child welfare principles. GALs are required to conduct independent investigations, maintain contact with the child, actively

advocate for what the GAL determines to be the child’s best interests, participate in court proceedings, and make evidence-supported recommendations to the court. The Rule also mandates initial and ongoing training on topics such as child development, trauma, and the child welfare system, including a minimum of six hours of approved child welfare continuing legal education every year.



⁸ 2025 Kan. S. Ct. R. at 186.

Together, K.S.A. 38-2205 and Rule 110A outlines a legal framework designed to provide children in CINC cases with trained, independent advocates representing their best interests throughout the proceedings.

Despite the framework of the statute and rule, the procedures for selecting, appointing, and monitoring GALs vary widely across Kansas. Appointment methods differ not only between judicial districts, but also among counties within the same judicial district. Some districts maintain a formal list or panel of eligible attorneys, while others rely on a smaller pool of attorneys with whom the judge has prior experience and agree to take court appointed cases.

Some GALs work full-time in child welfare cases and develop significant expertise, while others handle these appointments as only a portion of their broader legal practice. Differences in caseload volume are a main factor driving this variation. Attorneys in areas with higher numbers of CINC cases may receive enough appointments to sustain full-time GAL work, while those in lower-volume areas serve part-time or take on other types of cases to maintain their law practices. Across the state, resources and supports available to GALs, such as training opportunities, peer collaboration, and administrative infrastructure, also vary widely. As a result, children and families may receive differing levels of representation depending on location, the assigned attorney, and available community resources. This inconsistency was a central concern prompting this study.



System Evaluation

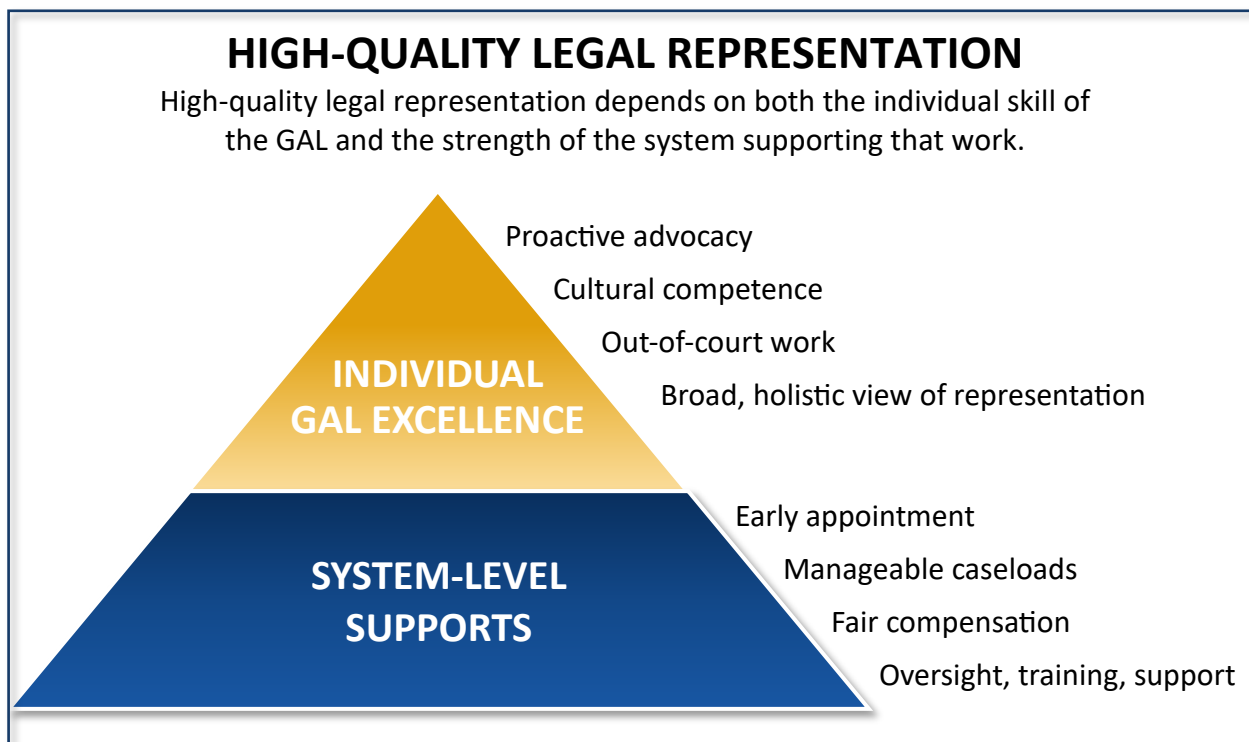
To begin its evaluation of the Kansas GAL system, the Committee first considered what it means for a GAL to provide high quality legal representation.⁹ High quality legal representation by a GAL requires both individual attorney excellence and system-level supports that ensure consistent, equitable, and effective advocacy for children. At the individual level, a GAL provides rigorous legal advocacy by proactively and persistently pursuing the child’s case goals and best interests, and by helping to expedite and promote permanency for the child. This advocacy does not stop at the courthouse door. High-quality GALs also engage in meaningful out-of-court work, such as meeting with the child, investigating facts, interviewing witnesses, consulting with experts, and working collaboratively with other professionals to better understand the child’s needs.

GALs must recognize how factors such as race, culture, social background, and economic status shape both the attorney-child relationship and the child’s experience within the child welfare system. High-quality representation requires attorneys to avoid imposing their own biases and to work effectively across cultural and social differences to advocate for the child. In addition, GALs must take a broad view of representation, identifying legal needs beyond the immediate CINC proceeding, such as issues related to education, healthcare, or housing, and either address those matters or make appropriate referrals.

High-quality representation also depends on system-level conditions that enable attorneys to do their jobs well. GALs should be appointed at the earliest indication that a child may be removed from the home, ensuring that the child’s voice and best interest are represented

⁹ See *Standards of Practice for lawyers Who Represent Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases*, American Bar Association (1996), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/repstandwhole.pdf; *How Does High-Quality Legal Representation for Parents Support Better Outcomes?*, Casey Family Programs (2019), https://www.casey.org/media/SF_Quality-parent-representation_fnl.pdf; *High-Quality Legal Representation*, Family Justice Initiative, <https://familyjusticeinitiative.org/model/high-quality-representation/>; *NACC Recommendations for Representation of Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases*, National Association of Counsel for Children (2021), <https://naccchildlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NACC-Recommendations-Final.pdf>.

from the outset. GALs need manageable caseloads, ideally no more than 60 active clients for full-time attorneys,¹⁰ and compensation that is comparable to that of attorneys working in other types of cases. They should have access to an interdisciplinary team, which may include social workers, interpreters, and healthcare professionals, so they can work to advocate for the child’s needs holistically. Diversity and cultural humility must be incorporated not only in a GAL’s individual practice but also in the broader system, supported by ongoing training and opportunities for professional growth.



To maintain and strengthen quality over time, systems must also provide oversight, performance evaluation, and constructive feedback for GALs. Finally, accountability and continuous improvement require data collection and analysis, which can help identify effective strategies and promote better outcomes for children. This context served as the foundation for the Committee’s analysis of the existing system and its consideration of potential reforms.

¹⁰ *High-Quality Legal Representation*, Family Justice Initiative, <https://familyjusticeinitiative.org/model/high-quality-representation/>; *NACC Recommendations for Representation of Children in Abuse and Neglect Cases*, National Association of Counsel for Children (2021), <https://nacccchildlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NACC-Recommendations-Final.pdf>.

Strengths

The Committee noted the following strengths of the current Kansas GAL system.

Strengths	
GAL for Every Child	Kansas requires the appointment of a GAL for every child, ensuring that each child has a legal advocate who is empowered to express the child's wishes and advocate for the child's best interests.
Professional Legal Representation	GALs in Kansas are licensed attorneys subject to ethical rules and continuing legal education requirements. As officers of the court, GALs are equipped to file motions, participate in hearings, and take other legal actions to advance the child's best interest.
Access to Direct Representation	Statute allows for the appointment of a separate attorney to provide client directed representation when the GAL's best interest position diverges from the child's expressed wishes.
Collaborative Case Progress	GALs often serve a critical coordinating role, assisting with the exchange of information between parties and agencies, helping to move cases forward efficiently, and maintaining lines of communication between stakeholders.
Judicial Clarity and Accountability	The role of GALs as attorneys simplifies courtroom procedure and accountability, as judges can directly require the GAL to provide a report about the child and address any concerns directly with the GAL.

Strengths

Flexibility in Standards

The statutes and Supreme Court Rule 110A governing GALs establish a baseline of required duties, but also provide flexibility in implementation, allowing GALs to exercise professional discretion based on the specific needs of each case.

Training and Education

The Office of Judicial Administration in the Kansas Judicial Branch provides ongoing training and resources to GALs, contributing to their foundational understanding of legal and procedural requirements.

Broader Legal Perspective

In some areas, attorneys serve as both GALs and parent attorneys. Some practitioners and judges find that having attorneys experienced in both roles contributes to a more balanced understanding of case dynamics.

Challenges

Despite these strengths, the Committee identified numerous systemic concerns that inhibit the GAL system’s ability to function uniformly and effectively for all Kansans in all areas of the state. These challenges include structural, operational, and ethical issues.

Challenges	
Child-GAL Contact	The Office of the Child Advocate in the Kansas Executive Branch receives regular complaints that children do not know or have sufficient contact with their GAL. Several factors contribute to this problem, including high caseloads, geographic distance between where the child and GAL are living, resistance from agencies to facilitate transportation of the child to meet with the GAL, and lack of specific contact requirements in standards or contracts.
Caseload and Time Constraints	A GAL may carry an overwhelming caseload that limits a GAL’s ability to conduct timely and thorough investigations, maintain regular contact with the child and the child’s caregiver, and advocate effectively in court. The number of attorneys with whom a county or judicial district contracts often does not adjust in response to increased filings, particularly in high-volume districts. Additionally, contracts do not include a maximum number of cases in which a GAL may be appointed. A contract may require the GAL to take any and all cases assigned to a GAL without consideration of ethical issues or whether the attorney's workload would prevent the attorney from providing high-quality legal representation.

Challenges

Variable Standards of Practice

There are no clear statewide requirements for investigatory work, nor are there forms or documentation tools to show or track what work a GAL has completed. This contributes to significant variability in how GALs communicate with clients, conduct investigations, attend meetings, and provide representation.

Inconsistencies Across Judicial Districts

Judicial districts vary widely in expectations of GAL responsibilities, procedural practices, and compensation models. These variations can result in unequal services for similarly situated children and contribute to perceptions of inequity in the justice system.

Lack of Contract Standards

There are no uniform standards for what must be included in GAL contracts with a county or judicial district, nor for monitoring GAL compliance with statutory- and rule-defined duties. Some contracts require attorneys to handle multiple case types (CINC, juvenile offender, traffic, care and treatment), further diluting their ability to focus on child advocacy.

Limited Availability of Qualified Attorneys

The state of Kansas is facing attorney shortages, which are most severely felt in our rural communities. With limited attorneys, it is even more difficult to find qualified or willing GALs. When legal conflicts of interest arise or when a direct representation attorney is needed, lack of available attorneys can prevent timely appointments and advocacy.

Challenges

Insufficient Compensation

GAL compensation varies not only between judicial districts but also among counties within the same judicial district. Some GALs are paid through flat-fee contracts that do not adjust for caseload or complexity, often resulting in hourly rates well below market standards. Others operate on hourly contracts, but even these contracts may not compensate for extensive travel time or complex litigation preparation. Compensation disparities contribute to difficulties in recruitment and retention of GALs, particularly in rural and underserved areas. It may also contribute to GALs being unable to provide high-quality legal services.

Oversight & Evaluation

There is no mechanism to systematically monitor, evaluate, or provide oversight of GAL performance. Judicial districts vary widely in how, or whether, they track whether GALs are meeting their duties under Supreme Court Rule 110A, and there is a lack of any structured process for reviewing the quality or consistency of representation. As a result, concerns about inadequate performance may go unreported, unaddressed, or unnoticed entirely, leaving no reliable way to ensure that children across Kansas receive the level of advocacy the law requires.

Role Confusion and Communication Barriers

When attorneys serve as a GAL in some CINC cases and as a parent or guardian's attorney in other CINC cases, child welfare and other service providers can be confused regarding which capacity the attorney is acting in at any given time. This dual role also has the potential to exacerbate workload issues and affect public perception of fairness and consistency.

Challenges

Insufficient Training and Mentorship

While the Office of Judicial Administration offers training, many GALs, especially newer attorneys, lack access to experienced mentors or specialized education in legal advocacy for children, child development, trauma, and cultural awareness. In areas with a low volume of cases, opportunities to build expertise are limited.

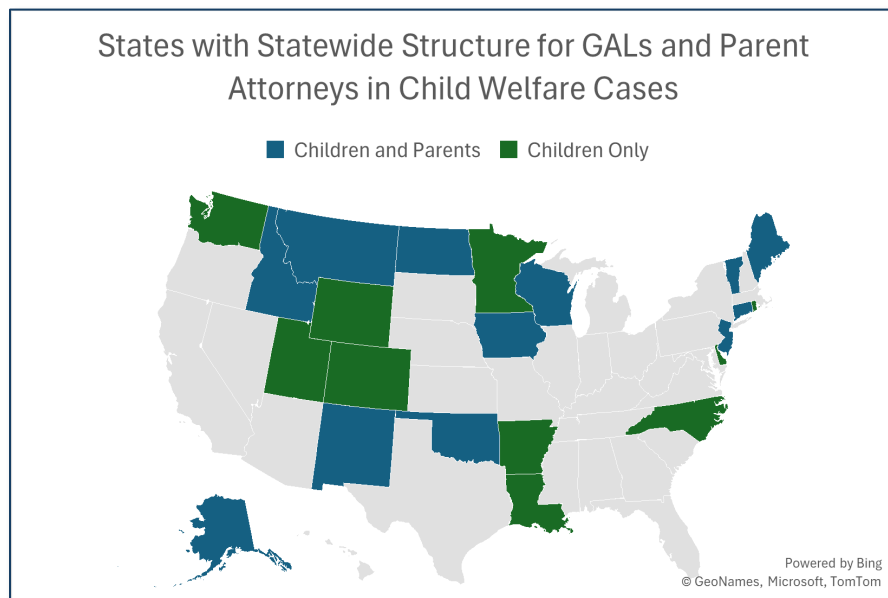
Equity and Public Perception

The variability in GAL performance across the state, particularly in communication practices and depth of advocacy, can lead to disparate outcomes for children across Kansas and undermine public confidence in the child welfare system.

Quality of representation varies based on system capacity and support structures.

Other State Systems

In reviewing how other states structure representation for children and parents in their CINC cases, the Committee found many states have moved from county or individual judicial district models to statewide systems. Common weaknesses in systems administered by county or judicial district include a variation in quality and practices across jurisdictions, limited or inconsistent training, little performance oversight, variable compensation and caseloads, and weak data systems. These gaps have led several states to create statewide systems to set standards, fund and supervise counsel, manage conflicts, collect outcomes data, and stabilize workloads and training statewide.¹¹



According to the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC), 22 states have established some form of statewide structure to provide legal representation for children in child

¹¹ Mimi Laver & Cathy Krebs, *The Case for a Centralized Office for Legal Representation in Child Welfare Cases*, Child Law Practice Today, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/january---december-2020/the-case-for-a-centralized-office-for-legal-representation-in-ch/.

welfare cases¹² and 12 states have a statewide structure for legal representation for parents and guardians in child welfare cases.¹³ Most of these offices rely on a hybrid model that utilizes both staff and contract attorneys, while a smaller number rely exclusively on one or the other. States reported employing several common strategies to promote high-quality representation, including maximum caseload caps, mandatory training requirements, adoption of uniform standards of practice, and implementation of performance review processes.¹⁴ These approaches reflect a recognition that consistent oversight and systemic support are critical to ensuring children receive meaningful advocacy.

The Committee took a close look at Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming. These states have implemented statewide or regional structures with centralized oversight, but the details of how those systems operate vary significantly. For example, the Arkansas and Colorado programs are within the administrative arm of the courts, while the Wyoming and Iowa programs are within the executive branch public defender's office. Oklahoma operates its GAL and parent representation programs through Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma.

These states all previously operated under decentralized, county or judicial district based systems and reported problems similar to those currently experienced in Kansas. These included poor compensation, lack of consistent access to high-quality legal representation, lack of supervision and support, and high caseloads. Arkansas and Colorado established their statewide programs more than 20 years ago, after recognizing the shortcomings of the decentralized approach. The Committee received feedback from the Arkansas, Colorado, and Wyoming programs which all said statewide oversight has improved the quality of representation and helped improve access to legal advocacy regardless of where a child lives in the state. Arkansas

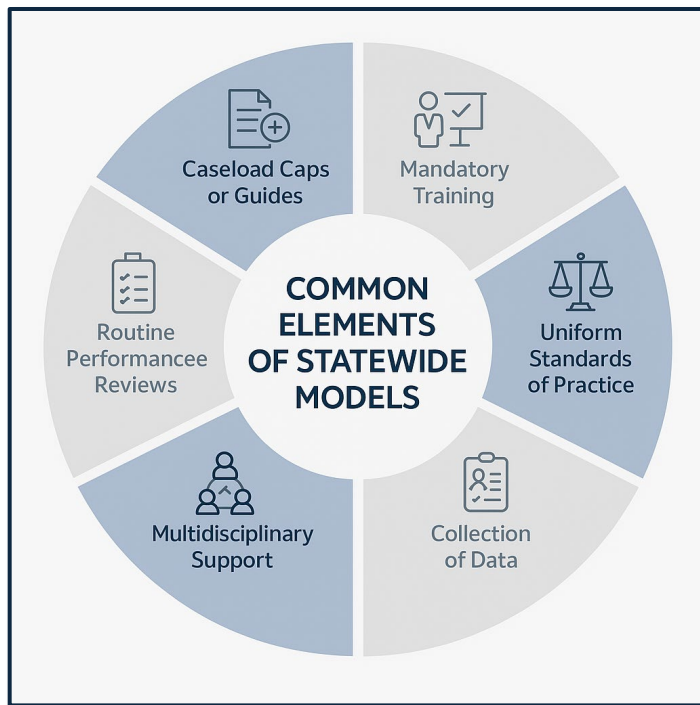
¹² National Association of Counsel for Children, *Statewide Centralized Law Offices in Child Welfare Law* (2025), [Statewide-Centralized-Law-Offices-in-Child-Welfare-Law.pdf](#) (states with a version of a statewide structure for child representation include Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming).

¹³ *Id.* (states include Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Wisconsin).

¹⁴ *Id.*

and Wyoming noted that, like Kansas, they face challenges with declining numbers of attorneys and legal deserts, but their statewide programs have helped reduce the impact of these shortages even if they cannot eliminate the issue entirely.

A one-size-fits-all approach does not exist. Instead, states have adopted systems that fit their governmental framework, resources, and local needs. Similarly, funding streams vary. Some states fund programs entirely with state appropriations, while others use multiple types of funding, including county reimbursements and federal IV-E funding. These examples demonstrate that a range of options are available to policymakers.

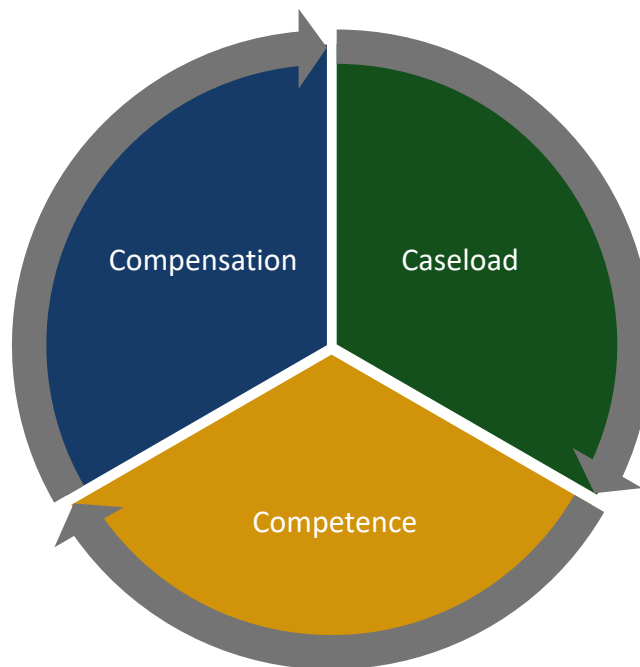


Despite these variations, the Committee identified several common elements across statewide models that it considered for Kansas. States with statewide programs typically establish clear caseload caps or guidelines to prevent GALs and parent attorneys from being overburdened, ensuring that children and families receive adequate time and attention. These programs require mandatory training, adoption of uniform standards of practice, and routine performance reviews to monitor quality of representation. Several states also incorporate multidisciplinary support by pairing attorneys with social workers or other case consultants to strengthen advocacy. Finally, statewide programs routinely collect data to evaluate performance and inform policy decisions. These shared features reflect a broad recognition that quality representation requires both accountability and resources, regardless of the specific structure a state adopts.

Is the current Kansas GAL system working?

The Committee identified a “working” system as one that meets a minimum standard for the legal representation of a child in a manner that allows the child’s voice to be heard and the best interest of the child to be met. GALs must possess competency in legal practice, familiarity with the social and developmental needs of children, and the ability to engage meaningfully with young people and the child welfare system. In addition, a “working” system must provide adequate financial compensation and ensure caseloads are maintained at a level that permits high-quality legal representation.

Evaluating the existing Kansas GAL system against the standards for high quality legal representation and the characteristics of a “working” system, the Committee concludes the current system is not “working” and fails in these specific three core areas: caseload, competency, and compensation.



Caseload

The Committee finds that overwhelming and unregulated caseloads are a significant barrier to ensuring high-quality legal representation for children in CINC proceedings. While the current system ensures that every child in a proceeding is appointed a GAL, the lack of meaningful limits on caseloads undermines the quality of that representation.

High caseloads directly reduce GALs ability to perform essential duties, including meeting and building trust with the child, conducting thorough investigations, communicating effectively with service providers and placements, and pursuing necessary legal action in court. GALs with unmanageable caseloads must triage their work, limiting their ability to respond to urgent developments or proactively advocate for the child's best interest. In some areas, attorneys carry caseloads that are so large it is simply not possible to provide individualized and thorough representation to every child.

Kansas does not impose any statewide cap or standard on GAL caseloads. Contracts for GAL services are often static, failing to adjust to reflect changes in the number of CINC petitions filed in a given jurisdiction. This mismatch between staffing and demand contributes to attorney burnout and limits the system's ability to recruit and retain qualified attorneys. It also creates geographic inequities. For example, rural districts may have only a handful of attorneys available to accept GAL appointments. When those attorneys must decline an appointment due to conflicts of interest or excessive workload, courts may struggle to find any qualified replacement, delaying the appointment of counsel or compromising the quality of representation.

Additionally, rural GALs often must travel significant distances to attend hearings or visit a child at the child's placement, further reducing the time they can devote to each child, particularly when travel is not adequately compensated. The number of hours a GAL must spend on a case can significantly increase depending on the distance a GAL must travel to meet with the child. The Committee collected and reviewed data from all Department for Children and Families child placement agency contractors on the location of a child's home county verses

where the child is placed.¹⁵ Only 10 counties had more than half of its children living within the child's home county.¹⁶ In the majority of cases, when a GAL visits the child at the child's placement, the GAL must travel to a different county. The data also showed that GALs serving in western counties and counties with smaller populations have longer distances to travel to visit a child at the child's placement.¹⁷

Without adequate compensation for travel and systemic solutions to adjust caseload maximums with travel requirements in mind, these geographic challenges further undermine a GAL's ability to provide high quality legal services. As a result, children in rural areas face inequities in the quality of representation compared to children in more densely populated parts of the state.

Because statewide data on GAL caseloads is not readily available, the Committee partnered with the Office of Judicial Administration to conduct a survey of active Kansas attorneys who serve as GALs or parent attorneys in CINC cases. A total of 243 attorneys responded to the survey, including 37 who serve only as GALs, 123 who serve only as parent attorneys, and 83 who serve in both roles. Responses were received from across the state, including both urban and rural areas,¹⁸ and represented attorneys serving 79 of Kansas' 105 counties. While informative, the survey



¹⁵ This means the child is not living with the child's parent or guardian. The child's placement could be a variety of different types of placements including with a foster family, relatives, or in a group home.

¹⁶ A child's home county is the county in which the child entered the CINC system. The 10 counties included Cloud, Coffee, Crawford, Finney, Linn, Mitchell, Montgomery, Neosho, Republic, and Sedgwick. Over 90% of Sedgwick county's children live in a placement within Sedgwick County.

¹⁷ In 63 counties with a population under 10,000, the average distance between the child's home county and placement county for children placed outside their home county was 109 miles. The 31 most western counties had an average distance 118 miles between the child's home county and placement county for children placed outside their home county.

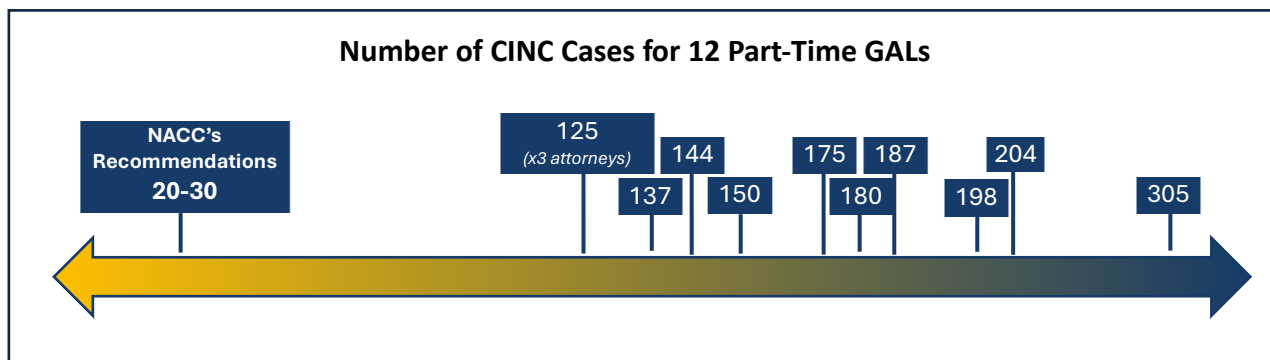
¹⁸ In this report, urban counties are Douglas, Johnson, Shawnee, Sedgwick, and Wyandotte. All other counties are classified as rural.

results are not comprehensive, as not all attorneys who serve as GALs or parent attorneys participated. The total number of Kansas attorneys serving as a GAL or parent attorney is unknown.

The National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) recommends a full-time GAL maintain a caseload of no more than 40–60 children, while a part-time GAL who devotes half of their law practice to CINC cases should carry no more than 20–30 cases.¹⁹ The Committee’s survey confirmed that many Kansas GALs exceed these recommended limits. Only four GALs reported that GAL cases make up their entire law practice. For most, GAL work is combined with other legal matters, reducing the time available to devote to each child.

Of the 56 GALs who reported both their CINC caseload and the percentage of their practice those cases represent, 70% had caseloads above the NACC standard. Survey responses also highlighted structural differences between urban and rural areas. In rural counties, GALs often carry appointments across multiple counties, while urban GALs typically practice in one county with a much higher case volume.

Twelve GALs reported carrying between 125 and 305 total CINC cases, far above the recommended limits. These attorneys reported handling cases in Brown, Butler, Johnson, Marshall, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte counties, though it is likely that attorneys practicing in other counties also have similarly high caseloads. At such high volumes, it is not possible for a GAL to build consistent relationships with children, thoroughly investigate each case, or monitor each child’s needs.



¹⁹ NACC Recommendations for Legal Representation of Children and Youth in Neglect and Abuse Proceedings (2022), <https://nacchildlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NACC-Recommendations-Final.pdf>.

Compensation structures make the problem worse. The 12 attorneys with the heaviest caseloads reported being paid an average of \$290 per case per year to cover all investigation, child contact, coordination with service providers, court appearances, preparation, and travel. At this rate, attorneys must take on additional non-GAL work to sustain their law practices.

The impact is especially stark in Sedgwick and Shawnee counties. From 2022 to 2024, Sedgwick County averaged 585 open CINC cases per year. It currently contracts with eight part-time GALs, each paid \$44,400 annually while managing more than five times the recommended part-time caseload.²⁰ Meeting the 30-case caseload limit would require Sedgwick County to hire at least 20 part-time GALs. Similarly, Shawnee County averaged 380 open cases per year in the same period. To meet the 30-case limit, the county would need at least 13 part-time GALs. It currently contracts with five part-time GALs, each paid \$50,400 annually while handling more than six times the recommended maximum.²¹

The Committee's review makes clear that caseloads are a critical barrier to quality GAL representation. Excessive caseloads reduce the time attorneys can dedicate to each child, undermining the competency and quality of advocacy. Without meaningful caseload limits, the state cannot ensure that GALs have the time, capacity, and resources to meet their statutory and ethical duties.

The caseload issue cannot be addressed in isolation; it is inseparable from both competency and compensation. Without reform in all three areas, the GAL system will continue to fall short of providing consistent, high-quality representation for Kansas children and families in CINC cases.

²⁰ Three survey participants reported having 137, 150, and 180 CINC GAL cases in Sedgwick County.

²¹ Five survey participants reported having 144, 175, 187, 198, and 305 CINC GAL cases in Shawnee county.

Competency

The Committee defines competency in GAL representation as more than just legal knowledge or familiarity with child welfare principles. Competency also requires the capacity to devote adequate time and effort to each case, meeting with the child, conducting an independent investigation, attending team meetings, building relationships with service providers and families, and engaging in meaningful courtroom advocacy. Without both the knowledge and the practical skill to perform their responsibilities, a GAL cannot provide the level of representation children need and deserve.

The Committee finds the competency of GALs across Kansas varies and is compromised by a lack of consistent standards, specialized training, and performance oversight. Kansas requires GALs to be licensed attorneys and outlines the GAL's role in statute and rules, but the statute and rules only provide the minimum responsibilities required. This allows for significant variation in how GAL responsibilities are interpreted and fulfilled. As a result, the quality of representation a child receives depends more on the individual GAL's background, training, caseload, and resources than on any standardized expectation of practice.

There are several strengths in the current system. GALs are attorneys who understand legal processes and are empowered to file motions, advocate in court, and act as officers of the court. Statutes and Supreme Court rules emphasize the GAL's responsibility to advocate for the child's best interest while also taking the child's wishes into account. Training is available through the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA), and GALs often collaborate effectively with agency staff and other stakeholders to help cases move forward. Attorneys who serve in both

Barriers to Consistent GAL Competency

- No uniform standards or forms
- Limited specialized training
- Lack of mentorship for new GALs
- No performance review process
- Caseload and compensation pressures

GAL and parent attorney roles report that this dual perspective can enhance their advocacy skills.

In addition, there are no statewide standards detailing the investigatory work a GAL must perform or uniform forms to document efforts made to meet those responsibilities. The lack of clear expectations makes it difficult for courts or other stakeholders to assess whether GALs are fulfilling their duties adequately. Some GALs lack specialized knowledge in critical areas such as child development, trauma-informed care, cultural awareness, and appropriate methods for interviewing children and engaging with families. These deficiencies are particularly acute for new attorneys, who often begin GAL work without sufficient orientation or access to experienced mentors.

Some GALs conduct regular in-person visits, attend team meetings, and maintain contact with placements and service providers. Others have minimal contact with the child, do not fully investigate the case, or do not seek the child's input on important decisions. In some cases, GALs may not know whether the child agrees with their recommendation and fail to inform the court when the appointment of a direct representation attorney for the child may be necessary. This inconsistent performance raises concerns about fairness and equity, as children in different counties may receive markedly different levels of representation.

The Committee recognizes that not all attorneys are well-suited for GAL work. Without adequate training, manageable caseloads, and reasonable compensation, even attorneys who want to do the work well cannot meet expectations. Moreover, the lack of performance evaluations and feedback mechanisms means that courts may have little ability to identify or respond to inadequate representation. Public perception of justice is harmed when GAL performance is visibly inconsistent across the state.

Compensation

Adequate compensation is a cornerstone of a functional GAL system. At present, compensation for GALs in Kansas varies widely across judicial districts and even between counties within the same district, creating unacceptable inequities in the quality of representation available to children. A child in one county may have access to a GAL who is reasonably compensated, carries a sustainable caseload, and can devote the time required to understand the child's needs, communicate regularly, and pursue necessary legal action. In contrast, a child in another county may be assigned to a GAL with an overwhelming caseload and inadequate pay,

GAL compensation models vary widely across Kansas, leading to significant inequities in representation quality.

limiting the attorney's capacity to provide individualized, thorough advocacy. Children should not receive different levels of legal protection simply because of their county of residence.

Counties establish GAL compensation rates in a variety of ways. The Committee requested information regarding GAL and parent attorney compensation from all counties²² and reviewed the results of a 2024 survey by the Office of Judicial Administration regarding court appointed attorney fees.

The five urban counties all contract with attorneys for either a flat monthly or yearly rate.²³ Under these contracts, attorneys may serve as a GAL, a parent attorney, or in some cases,

²² The following counties did not respond to the Committee's request for information: Atchison, Barber, Chautauqua, Finney, Grant, Greeley, Hamilton, Harper, Haskell, Jefferson, Kearney, Kingman, Morris, Morton, Pottawatomie, Scott, Seward, Sherman, Stanton, Stevens, Wabaunsee, and Wichita.

²³ Douglas - \$30,000 per year, Johnson - \$47,500 per year, Sedgwick - \$44,400 per year, Shawnee - \$50,400 per year, and Wyandotte - \$36,000 per year.

both roles within the county. In contrast, the 100 rural counties use a variety of approaches to compensate GALs. Common models for compensation include payment of:

- an **hourly rate** for attorneys who sign up for a court appointment list or enter a contract covering multiple types of cases, including cases such as misdemeanors, care and treatment, juvenile offender, traffic, CINC GAL, and CINC parent attorney cases;²⁴
- a **flat monthly or yearly fee** for attorneys who contract with the county to represent individuals in multiple case types, including CINC;²⁵
- a **flat monthly or yearly fee** for attorneys who contract with the county specifically for serving as a GAL or parent attorney in CINC cases,²⁶ and
- a set **amount based on the number of individual cases** assigned to the attorney.²⁷

Although many rural counties compensate GALs on an hourly basis, the far greater volume of CINC cases filed in urban counties means that most children in Kansas are likely represented by GALs working under flat-fee contracts rather than those paid hourly.

Flat-fee contracts, while providing predictability for county budgets, pose structural challenges. They often fail to account for workload fluctuations, the complexity of cases, or ancillary work such as appeals, travel, or extensive meetings with children and service providers.

²⁴ Allen - \$100 per hour, Barber - \$120 per hour, Butler - \$100 per hour, Cheyenne - \$110 per hour, Clark - \$95 per hour, Decatur - \$120 per hour, Doniphan - \$100 per hour, Edwards, Elk - \$100 per hour, Geary, Gove - \$80 per hour, Graham - \$120 per hour, Grant - \$70 per hour, Gray - \$95 per hour, Greeley - \$85 per hour, Greenwood - \$100 per hour, Harper - \$120 per hour, Haskell - \$120 per hour, Hamilton - \$75 per hour, Hodgeman - \$80-120 per hour, Jackson - \$100 per hour, Kearny - \$100 per hour, Kingman - \$120 per hour, Lane - \$120 per hour, Lincoln - \$120 per hour, Logan - \$120 per hour, Marion - \$75 per hour, Mitchell - \$120 per hour, Morton - \$75 per hour, Nemaha - \$120 per hour, Neosho - \$100 per hour, Norton - \$120 per hour, Osborne - \$120 per hour, Pawnee - \$120 per hour, Phillips - \$120 per hour, Rawlins - \$90 per hour, Riley - \$120 per hour, Sheridan - \$120 per hour, Sherman - \$110 per hour, Stevens - \$70 per hour, Thomas - \$120 per hour, Wallace - \$110-120 per hour, Washington - \$120 per hour, and Woodson - \$100 per hour.

²⁵ Anderson, Barton, Bourbon, Brown, Cherokee, Chase, Clay, Cloud, Crawford, Dickinson, Ellis, Ellsworth, Franklin, Harvey, Labette, Leavenworth, Linn, Lyon, Marshall, McPherson, Montgomery, Osage, Pottawatomie, Rice, Rooks, Russell, Scott, Stafford, Trego, Wabaunsee, and Wilson.

²⁶ Miami, Reno, Saline, and Seward.

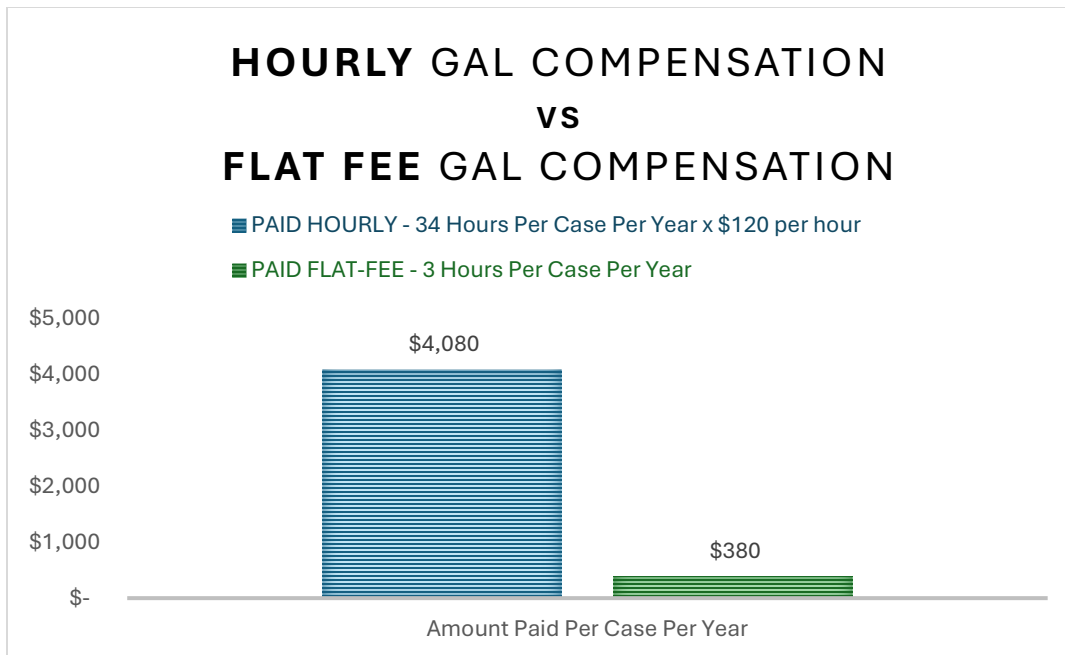
²⁷ Jefferson, Smith, and Stanton.

In many rural areas, GALs must travel long distances to meet with children or attend hearings, yet some counties do not reimburse travel time or costs.²⁸

The financial structure of GAL appointments directly undermines competency and the quality of advocacy. Payment amounts are expected to cover all aspects of the case, including investigation, communication, court preparation, appearances, and ongoing case management. The Committee reviewed a contract for GAL work that states the GAL, “will be expected to prepare cases for trial, review, stipulation, etc, in a timely manner without additional compensation for out of court time.” The contract sets a flat fee for services and requires the GAL to “accept all cases assigned (with the exception of conflict of interest cases) without regard to the total number of new cases assigned per month, or number of cases currently pending, for the above fee.”

Depending on how many CINC cases are filed in a county, these flat fee amounts may be adequate compensation for a GAL; however, in districts with high caseloads, having a fixed compensation amount and no case load limits results in very low per-case compensation. For example, a GAL in Johnson County being paid \$47,500 with a caseload of 125 is being paid \$380 per case per year. This compensates the attorney for about 3 hours of work per case per year, assuming the \$120 per hour pay rate used in many other counties. A GAL is unable to provide high quality legal representation to a child in 3 hours of work a year. In contrast, a GAL would be able to spend 34 hours on each case per year if the GAL was a part-time GAL working 20 hours a week on GAL cases with the NACC’s recommended maximum caseload of 30 cases.

²⁸ Based on the child placement county data obtained by the Committee, and the assumption that a GAL’s office is located in the child’s home county, the following are examples of the length of a trip to meet with a child. A GAL with all cases in Sedgwick County may travel an average of 78 miles round trip (a little over an hour) to meet with a child. A GAL with cases from Ellis County may travel an average of 298 miles round trip (around 5 hours) to see a child. A GAL with cases from Sherman County may travel an average of 424 miles round trip (around 7 hours) to see a child.



Low compensation and high caseloads are inseparable problems that undermine competency. When attorneys cannot earn a living on GAL work alone, they must allocate time to other cases, undermining their ability to meet competency standards due to reduced time available for each child. The Committee’s survey confirmed this reality; only four GALs reported that GAL cases made up 100% of their practice, meaning most GALs must split attention across multiple roles.

The Committee concludes that compensation reform must go hand in hand with caseload reduction and increased competency (performance) expectations. Raising pay rates without reducing caseloads will not meaningfully improve representation, and lowering caseloads without increasing compensation will leave counties unable to attract enough attorneys to meet the need. Sustainable reform requires addressing all three factors together, lowering caseloads to manageable levels, compensating GALs fairly for the work required, and increasing the competency expectations by holding them accountable to clear, enforceable performance standards.

Additional Systemic Issues

In addition to concerns about caseload, competency, and compensation, the Committee identified several systemic issues that limit the effectiveness and equity of the GAL system in Kansas.

First, the significant variation of how counties appoint or contract with GALs and the lack of readily available information leads to a lack of transparency. Appointment or contract terms, pay structures, and criteria for attorney selection can be informal, with little public visibility into how decisions are made. Without transparency, there is no consistent way to ensure that GALs are selected and compensated according to fair, uniform standards. This allows significant variation to persist across the state, where children in one county may have access to well-compensated, highly engaged attorneys while children in another may be assigned to overextended attorneys working under poorly defined contracts. The lack of transparency reinforces geographic inequities and leaves the quality of a child’s representation dependent on local practices rather than statewide standards.

Second, GALs frequently lack access to shared resources or supports that could improve their effectiveness. Unlike public defenders or prosecutors, who often benefit from institutional



infrastructure, GALs in Kansas typically practice independently. They do not have consistent access to investigators, social workers, or support staff, and must manage travel, document preparation, and case follow-up on their own. This isolates GALs and forces them to duplicate efforts that could be streamlined with shared tools, training, or professional networks.

Third, the appointment of direct representation attorneys for children is inconsistent. In some cases, GALs do not adequately determine or report when a child's wishes differ from the GAL's recommendation, and courts do not always ask. As a result, children are sometimes denied the opportunity for direct representation even when it may be required to ensure their voice is heard. This inconsistency undermines both fairness and compliance with best practices.

Fourth, geographic inequities also remain a significant challenge. Children in urban areas are more likely to be represented by attorneys with specialized child welfare expertise and access to community resources, while children in rural areas often face attorneys who must cover large territories, drive long distances, and operate with fewer support systems. Addressing caseloads, competency, and compensation will not, on its own, solve the shortage of attorneys available to take GAL appointments in rural areas of Kansas. Without additional strategies to recruit, train, and retain attorneys in underserved areas, inequities in service delivery will persist.

Together, these systemic gaps reveal that reform must extend beyond improving individual attorney workloads and skills. Transparency, infrastructure, and equitable access are equally essential to building a GAL system that provides consistent, high-quality advocacy for every child in Kansas.



Attorneys for Parents in CINC Cases

During the study it became clear that high-quality legal representation for *both* children and parents is critical to the overall success and efficiency of CINC cases. While the primary focus of this study is the GAL system, the Committee recognizes that the system for appointing attorneys to represent parents and guardians in CINC cases (parent attorney) plays an equally important role in ensuring fair and effective proceedings. Accordingly, this report includes information about the parent attorney system to provide a more complete understanding of the legal representation landscape in CINC cases.

Beyond the Numbers – *Maria & Daniel*

Meet Maria & Daniel

Maria's children were removed from her home nine months ago, after a series of difficult events she's been working to make right. She's completed parenting classes, found a steady job, and started counseling. Every week, she checks another requirement off her case plan. She wants her children home.

Daniel is Maria's court-appointed parent attorney. He's experienced and cares deeply about his clients, but his caseload is overwhelming. He's paid a part-time flat monthly rate to represent parents in CINC cases, no matter how many cases he has or how complex they become. Right now, he represents more than 180 parents. He spends much of his week rushing between hearings, often with only minutes to review the file before walking into court. The flat-fee contract doesn't pay for travel, meeting time, or case preparation. Every extra hour Daniel spends helping one client means less time for another.

Meet Maria & Daniel *continued*

Maria sees the results of that imbalance every day. She met with Daniel once before the first hearing. Since then, their conversations have been quick phone calls or brief moments in the courthouse hallway. She doesn't always know what's happening in her case or what she should do next. When she tries to reach him, he's often in another courtroom or meeting with clients.

Daniel feels the same frustration. He knows that each case represents a parent like Maria, a family trying to heal, and children waiting to go home. He wants to be the strong advocate they deserve, but with nearly two hundred open cases, there simply aren't enough hours in the week. Some cases demand multiple court appearances each month; others require long meetings with social workers or travel to visit clients in rural counties. None of that time is fully compensated.

At the next hearing, Maria sits alone at the table, her heart pounding. Daniel slips into the room just as the judge calls her name. He's calm and professional, but she can see he hasn't had time to read the most recent reports. The hearing lasts ten minutes. The case is continued. Another month passes before she'll have a chance to speak again.

For Maria, it feels like the system has forgotten her. For Daniel, it feels like he's being asked to do the impossible. Both care deeply, both are doing their best but neither has the time, resources, or support needed to make the process work as it should. For parents like Maria, representation can make the difference between reunifying with their children and losing them forever. Yet under the current system, even the most dedicated attorneys struggle to provide guidance, communication, and advocacy parents need to navigate one of the most critical moments of their lives.

Parent Attorney System and Practice

K.S.A. 38-2205 provides for the appointment of attorneys for a child’s parent.²⁹ A parent can decide whether to hire an attorney, but if the parent wants an attorney and is financially unable to hire an attorney, the court must appoint an attorney. Unlike GALs who represent the best interest of a child, the parent’s attorney has a traditional client directed attorney-client relationship with the parent.

Similarly to the GAL system, appointment methods differ across the state, with some courts appointing from a list or panel of parent attorneys, while others rely on a smaller pool of attorneys with whom the judge has prior experience. Some attorneys may specialize in representing parents in CINC cases in certain judicial districts, whereas in others, parent attorney work is just one aspect of the attorney’s broader legal practice.

The standard attorney-client ethics and rules of professional responsibility apply to parent



attorneys. There are no additional requirements or standards specific to parent attorneys regarding training, performance requirements, or workload expectations. This means that parents’ access to effective legal advocacy can be inconsistent, depending on the judicial district, county, or even the individual attorney assigned the case. As with GALs, these inconsistencies can directly affect children and families.

²⁹ The right of a parent to have a court-appointed attorney in a child welfare case was added to the Kansas statutes in 1957. See K.S.A. 38-820 (1957).

System Evaluation

While the parent attorney and GAL systems share similar structural challenges, they differ in the nature of the attorney-client relationship and the legal remedies available when representation falls short. Because a parent and a parent attorney have a traditional attorney-client relationship, parents can file complaints with the Office of the Disciplinary Administrator, appeal adverse rulings, and raise claims of ineffective assistance of counsel if they believe their attorney failed to provide adequate representation. However, despite these procedural

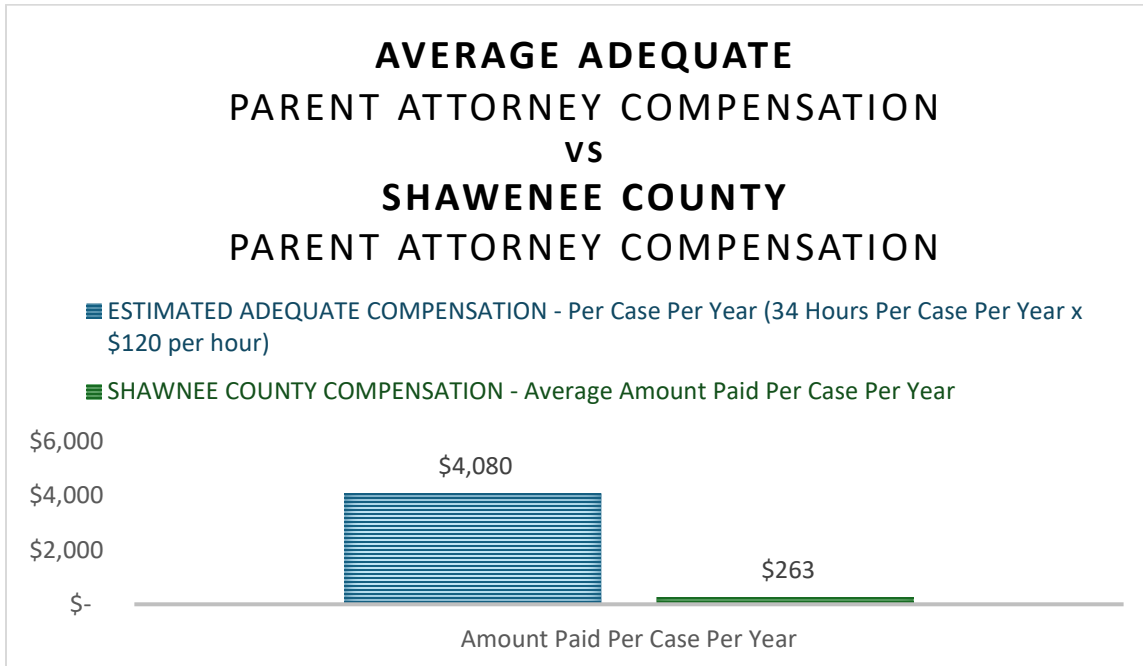
The structure supporting parent attorneys mirrors many of the same deficiencies found in the GAL system.

safeguards, the structure supporting parent attorneys mirrors many of the same deficiencies found in the GAL system. There are no statewide caseload limits, compensation standards, or oversight mechanisms to ensure consistency, quality, or accountability. Each county independently determines how attorneys are appointed, how contracts are structured, and what rates are paid, resulting in significant variation across judicial districts.

The Committee worked with the Office of Judicial Administration to gather data on the parent attorney system through a statewide survey. Two hundred and six attorneys indicated that they serve as parent attorneys in CINC cases. About 60% of the parent attorneys accept court appointments for CINC parent attorney cases. Fourteen parent attorneys stated parent representation made up more than half of their law practice, and for two attorneys, it comprised 100% of their work.

Caseload data revealed troubling patterns. Thirteen parent attorneys reported handling 60 or more active CINC cases, with eleven of those managing between 80 and 227 cases at once.

Among those with high caseloads, the average annual compensation was approximately \$647 per case per year (or about 7 hours of work). However, in Shawnee County, 5 attorneys reported their caseloads between 176 and 227 cases while being paid a flat rate of \$50,400 per year. This equates to those 5 attorneys being paid an average of \$263 per case per year.



As with GALs, these figures reveal a system that compensates far below the level required to sustain meaningful, individualized representation. Parent attorneys who manage hundreds of open cases cannot feasibly maintain regular client contact, attend all relevant meetings, or prepare for hearings at the level necessary to ensure robust advocacy. Many must take on additional work outside their CINC caseloads to make their practices financially viable, further dividing their time and attention.

The Committee finds that the same structural problems, caseload, competency and compensation, limit the effectiveness of the parent attorney system just as they do with the GAL system. Without reform, these deficiencies will continue to result in a variation in quality of representation across Kansas, placing parents at a disadvantage and, in turn, affecting the outcomes for children and families in CINC proceedings.

While the Committee’s primary focus was the GAL system, it emphasizes that high-quality representation for parents is equally critical to achieving fairness, efficiency, and permanency for children. The Committee therefore recommends that future efforts to improve the CINC system include reforms to the parent attorney system, ideally through the same statewide structure that would oversee both GAL and parent attorney representation.



Committee Recommendations

System Change

After a year and a half of study, the Committee concludes that incremental adjustments to the existing GAL system for children in need of care cases have not resolved the systemic challenges that have persisted in Kansas for decades. Many of the same deficiencies identified in the Judicial Council's 2001 report on the GAL system,



including lack of consistency in attorney appointment processes, variation in quality of representation, insufficient accountability, and significant variation in resources across judicial districts, remain concerns today, nearly twenty-five years later. Despite the dedication of many individual GALs and local courts, the absence of a coordinated statewide structure results in inconsistent representation for children and families. Kansas' children and families deserve high-quality legal representation regardless of in which county in Kansas they live. The current structure does not guarantee this.

In a decentralized system, reforms made in one area often fail to achieve meaningful results because the issues are deeply interconnected. Improving compensation without reducing caseloads will not increase the quality of representation, while reducing caseloads without increasing compensation leaves counties unable to attract enough attorneys. Likewise, raising performance expectations without providing adequate resources sets attorneys up for failure. Compounding these challenges, there is no statewide authority to mandate and coordinate changes to systems in individual counties, judicial districts, or through other stakeholders, meaning that even well-designed reforms may be implemented unevenly. Without a coordinated approach that addresses compensation, caseloads, and competency (performance standards and accountability) together, changes in a single area risk being ineffective or even counterproductive.

The Committee therefore recommends Kansas pursue a system change to ensure that all children receive high quality legal representation in CINC cases. A range of structural models could achieve this goal. Options include:

Model	Key Features	Level of Local Control	Statewide Consistency
Centralized Statewide Office	State entity contracts with and oversees all GALs; provides uniform training, standards, oversight, and data collection.	Low	Very High
Regional Contracting System	Neighboring judicial districts pool resources under regional oversight while maintaining statewide standards.	Moderate	High
Hybrid Model	Local courts select GALs; statewide entity sets and oversees qualifications and reviews performance.	High	Moderate-High
Local Administration with Uniform Standards	Local courts manage contracts; must comply with statewide rules on qualifications, training, caseloads, and pay.	High	Moderate

While each model presents advantages and challenges, based on its evaluation of Kansas’s needs and the practices of other states, the Committee believes that the creation of a statewide centralized office to oversee GAL services is the option most likely to meet Kansas’s needs. Such an entity could provide uniform training and oversight, manage contracts and conflicts of interest, and establish consistent standards of practice statewide. While further study and legislative input

will be needed to determine the precise structure, the Committee drafted an example of how such a system might look in Kansas.

A centralized office would be an independent state agency governed by a board and managed by an executive director. The primary duties and responsibilities of the Office would include:



The Office's work spans three domains:



1. **Administration and Oversight** – The Office would oversee the provision of GAL services in child in need of care cases throughout Kansas, ensuring consistency, accountability, and compliance with applicable law and the Kansas Rules of Professional Conduct.
2. **Appointment and Assignment of Attorneys** – The Office would manage the appointment system for GALs, ensuring coverage across the state, including in rural or underserved areas, while minimizing conflicts of interest.
3. **Utilization of Staff and Contract Attorneys** – The Office would deliver GAL services using a combination of staff attorneys employed directly by the Office and private attorneys under contract, allowing flexibility to meet the needs of different judicial districts while maintaining statewide consistency.
4. **Recruitment and Retention** – The Office would recruit attorneys to serve as GALs particularly in rural judicial districts and provide mentorship and professional support to strengthen the attorney workforce.
5. **Training and Professional Development** – The Office would develop and deliver training programs consistent with Supreme Court Rule 110A and national best practices and promote continuous professional development to ensure high-quality representation.
6. **Standards and Accountability** – The Office would establish performance expectations for GALs including measures of competency, caseload, and compensation, and would have authority to monitor compliance with statewide standards.
7. **Support and Resources** – The Office would provide legal, administrative, and technological support to GALs including access to expert resources, and practice tools.
8. **Data Collection and Reporting** – The Office would collect and analyze statewide data on GAL appointments, caseloads, outcomes, and costs, and would report regularly to the Legislature and Supreme Court to promote transparency and continuous system improvement.
9. **Funding and Fiscal Management** – The Office would manage state funds appropriated for GAL services and would seek federal reimbursement through Title IV-E or other available funding sources to maximize state resources.

An example of legislation to enact an office to carry out these duties and responsibilities is included in Appendix A.

The Committee recommends any centralized office be established as an independent state agency to ensure accountability, consistency, and neutrality across Kansas. Locating the office outside of both the courts and existing agencies avoids conflicts of interest and allows for clear oversight, uniform standards, and statewide enforcement of training, performance, and caseload requirements. The Committee also recognizes Kansas' geography and attorney availability require flexibility in staffing. A model that employs both state staff attorneys and contract attorneys is best suited to meet these needs.

Staff attorneys can provide stability, institutional knowledge, consistent high-quality representation, and coverage in legal deserts or due to fluctuations in caseloads. Contract attorneys can maintain access to practitioners across the state who may not practice as GALs full time, allow the office to tap into local and community expertise, and provide flexibility to respond to shifting caseloads and geographic challenges. This combined approach balances quality and flexibility, ensuring all Kansas children and families in CINC cases have meaningful access to competent legal advocacy regardless of where they live.

The Committee urges Kansas to pursue comprehensive, systemwide reform, recognizing that piecemeal improvements alone cannot resolve the deep, structural problems undermining the current system.



System Change for Parent Attorneys

While the Committee’s primary charge was to review the GAL system, its work also revealed that the parent attorney system faces many of the same challenges, including inconsistent standards, inadequate compensation, high caseloads, and variations in access to qualified attorneys across the state. The Committee concluded that high-quality legal representation for parents is essential to protecting Kansas children, as parents’ rights and children’s safety and permanency are deeply interconnected.

For that reason, although most of the Committee’s analysis and recommendations focus on GALs, the Committee recommends the parent attorney system also transition to a centralized statewide structure to ensure consistency, fairness, and strong advocacy for children and families in every part of Kansas. The Committee’s example legislation (Appendix A) includes an office that would house two distinct divisions, one for GALs and another for parent attorneys.



Interim Change

The Committee acknowledges that changing the GAL and parent attorney system structure and possibly creating a statewide system may take years to implement. In the interim, the Committee recommends several steps to strengthen the quality and consistency of representation provided by GALs and parent attorneys in the current system. These interim measures are not sufficient on their own to resolve the systemic problems identified in this study. Rather, these steps represent incremental improvements that a larger system change, such as a statewide office, would ultimately be expected to provide.

The Committee recommends the following.

1. Development and Implementation of Practice Standards

During the study, the Committee identified ideal GAL standards and more realistic GAL standards. Note that these standards are solely for GALs serving in child in need of care cases, not GALs in other types of cases.

Ideal Standards

The Committee agreed that in an ideal system, GALs would establish communication with the child immediately upon appointment and maintain ongoing communication that parallels the review hearings in the case. GALs would also participate in non-courtroom events, such as case plan meetings, best interest staffings, and educational or treatment-related meetings when appropriate. They would maintain consistent contact with non-party resources, including schools, daycare providers, placements, CASAs, and service providers.

Additional ideal standards included maintaining up-to-date training, providing annual documentation of compliance to the judicial districts, and ensuring the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) monitors compliance. GALs would also engage in proactive litigation practices, including filing pleadings, issuing subpoenas, and presenting evidence as necessary.

Each child would receive a developmentally appropriate Child Court Report form, and GALs would facilitate or participate in professional stakeholder meetings to coordinate care.

In addition to these ideal standards, the Committee identified some best practices that, while not mandatory, should be strongly encouraged. These include conducting the initial meeting with the child as soon as possible, but no later than thirty days after appointment, and observing parent-child interactions when necessary to fully evaluate the child's best interests.



Realistic Standards

Recognizing the limitations of the current system, the Committee developed a list of “realistic” standards that it recommends be required of all GALs in Kansas’ current GAL system, while balancing its vision of ideal standards against what can reasonably be implemented at this time.

The GAL shall:

- Have initial communication with the child as early as possible following the appointment or assignment of the GAL.
- Have ongoing communication with each child, and this communication shall occur as the needs of the child/case require and no less than at least every six months as access to the child allows. Communication does not have to be in person and is dependent on the age and development of the child.

- Participate in obligations that occur outside the courtroom as appropriate. This participation shall include participation in every best interest staffing. The participation should be in any appropriate form, including written input, by telephone, electronically (i.e. Zoom), or in person.
- Conduct ongoing independent investigation of the factors for the child’s best interests. Review of the foster care agency’s court report alone is not sufficient to meet this requirement. Only reviewing the court report does not meet the standard of conducting an independent investigation.
- Ensure compliance with all training requirements and provide verification/documentation of said compliance to the judicial districts in which the attorney practices by August 1 of every year.
- File appropriate pleadings when necessary to ensure the case moves efficiently through the court system including stipulations, motions, objections, and appellate briefs.
- Update the court regarding the best interests of the child at every permanency hearing.
- Provide each child (as appropriate for age and development) with the Child Court Report form and ensure the completed document is provided to the parties and court.
- Facilitate or participate in meetings with professional stakeholders as necessary to coordinate care for the child. These meetings do not need to include parents, family members, placement, or the child.
- Submit the Yearly Compliance Checklist verification form to OJA and any relevant judicial districts by July 1 every year.

Implementation of Standards

Setting specific standards is only effective if accompanied by mechanisms for accountability and enforcement. While ideas such as performance reviews and stakeholder surveys were discussed, practical and ethical concerns arose regarding who within the current system would conduct performance reviews or develop and review stakeholder surveys. Ultimately, the Committee recommends implementation relying on two mechanisms: (1) appointment and contractual requirements, and (2) certification and oversight.

Contractual and Appointment Requirements

First, the Committee recommends the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) develop model provisions for GAL contracts or appointments that require the following:

- A specific caseload maximum;
- Certification the GAL has completed the minimum number of CLE hours to maintain the attorney's standing as a GAL;
- Certification the GAL has complied with the standards of practice and has provided the annual compliance checklist to the OJA, as well as the judicial districts in which the attorney practices as a GAL;
- Certification the GAL agrees to maintain a caseload that allows the GAL to fulfill the obligations of a GAL; and
- Provisions allowing for the termination of the contract if the GAL is found to not be in compliance with any provision of the contract.

Certification and Oversight

Second, the Committee recommends each GAL submit an annual compliance checklist to the relevant judicial districts. An example of a compliance checklist is included in Appendix D.



Chief judges, in consultation with contracting counties, should use this documentation to evaluate whether an attorney remains eligible to serve as a GAL. Because the legal profession is self-policing, additional accountability may come through contract nonrenewal or attorney disciplinary complaints when warranted.

2. Amendments to Kansas Supreme Court Rule 110A and K.S.A. 38-2205

To better align the legal framework with the standards, the Committee recommends amending K.S.A. 38-2205(a) and Supreme Court Rule 110A to (1) clarify that a GAL's report may be delivered orally rather than in writing, (2) expressly require ongoing independent investigation throughout the case, and (3) require GALs to provide children with age and developmentally adapted explanations of the legal process when appropriate. The Committee also recommends adding trauma-informed practice as a required area of GAL training. See Appendices B & C for proposed amendments to K.S.A. 38-2205(a) and Supreme Court Rule 110A.

3. Development of a Guardian ad Litem Practice Guide

The Committee recommends the Kansas Bar Association develop a comprehensive *Child in Need of Care Guardian ad Litem Practice Guide* that is updated annually to reflect changes in law, procedure, and best practices. The guide should include, at a minimum:

- the role of the GAL;
- definitions of key terms;
- core obligations and duties of the GAL;
- guidance on initial case development;
- standards for report writing;
- expectations regarding participation in court hearings;
- certification requirements;
- model forms; and
- a curated reference section including relevant case law, statutes, and rules.

This guide would help create uniformity across judicial districts and serve as both a reference for experienced GALs and an instructional tool for new GALs.

4. Creation of a Professional Organization

The Committee recommends the creation of a professional organization dedicated to attorneys practicing in CINC cases, including both guardians ad litem and parent attorneys. Such an organization could be developed under the Kansas Bar Association or as an independent association. A statewide professional body would provide essential opportunities for training, peer networking, mentorship, and the development of shared resources specific to CINC practice. It could also serve as a unified voice for CINC attorneys in policy discussions, promote adherence to practice standards, and support recruitment and retention of attorneys in this challenging field.



5. Development and Expansion of GAL Training and Resources

The Committee recommends the Office of Judicial Administration consider creating or improving training and resources in the following areas.

On-Demand Training to Accompany the Practice Guide

The Committee recommends the development of an on-demand training program to accompany the practice guide. This training would provide a practical orientation to the guide's contents and allow GALs to access instruction as needed. On-demand availability would ensure flexibility and promote compliance with training requirements statewide.

Quarterly Best Practice Training Courses



In addition to on-demand resources, the Committee recommends the provision of quarterly best practice training courses specifically for GALs. These training courses should be designed to address emerging issues in child welfare, reinforce the standards of practice, and provide opportunities for GALs to engage in peer learning and professional development.

Online Access to Resources

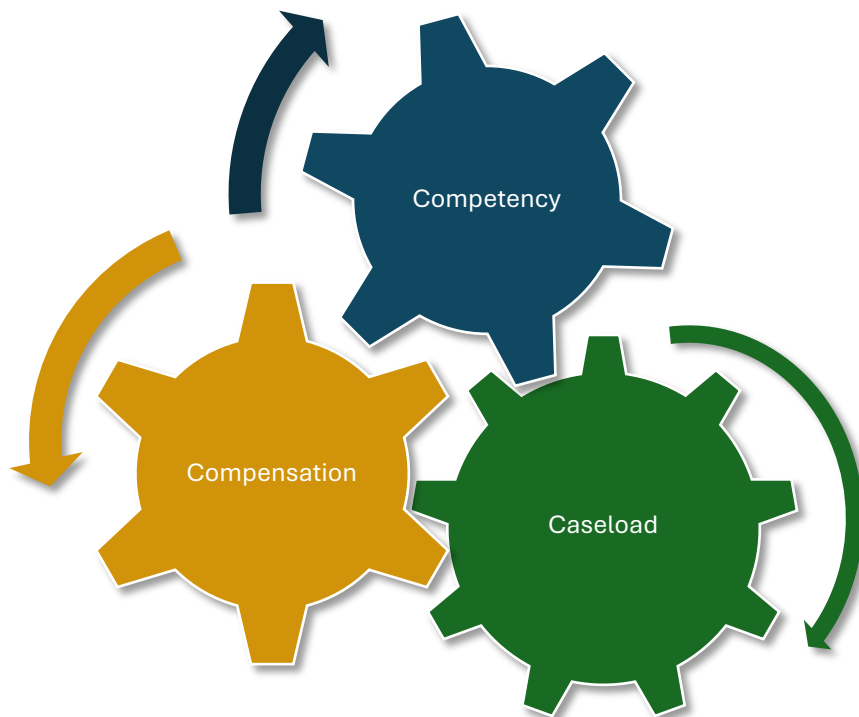
The Committee recommends the establishment of an online portal where GALs can access resources, including the practice guide, recorded trainings, and a regularly updated list of upcoming training opportunities. Centralized online access would promote uniformity, efficiency, and broader participation in training programs.

6. Development and Expansion of Judicial Education

The Committee recommends that the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) continue to develop and expand educational resources for members of the judiciary regarding CINC cases. Specifically, OJA should develop a robust ongoing training series and accompanying materials tailored to judges, addressing the topics identified in Rule 110A and providing timely access to information about relevant external training and resources. The Committee recommends all new judges, including magistrate judges, complete specialized Kansas-specific CINC training in addition to the general new judge training. While individual judges bring valuable experience to the bench, a common foundation would promote greater uniformity and consistency in the management of CINC cases statewide.

7. Evaluation of Individual Judicial District’s GAL system

The Committee recommends encouraging all judicial districts to undertake an evaluation of their GAL system, including the structure of contracts and the performance expectations for attorneys. In conducting these evaluations, districts should apply the “three Cs” framework—competency, caseload, and compensation. This framework provides a structured lens to assess whether attorneys are adequately trained and supported, whether caseloads are manageable to allow for meaningful representation, and whether compensation levels are sufficient to attract and retain qualified counsel. Applying the three Cs can help judicial districts identify areas for improvement and promote more consistent, high-quality representation across Kansas.



8. Legislative Funding

Finally, the Committee recommends the Legislature fully fund all training efforts described above. Without adequate funding, the improvements to GAL practice and judicial education cannot be effectively implemented. Legislative support is therefore essential to ensuring GALs and judges have the tools, training, and resources necessary to fulfill their statutory and ethical obligations to Kansas children and families.

While these eight steps may help foster preliminary progress toward more consistent, high-quality legal representation for children and families, the Committee strongly cautions against treating them as a replacement for comprehensive system reform. In the Committee's view, only statewide system change can provide a permanent and effective solution to ensure high quality representation for all children and families in Kansas.

Conclusion

The Judicial Council's JO/CINC Advisory Committee finds the current Kansas GAL and parent attorney systems for children in need of care cases are not working as intended. Despite the dedication of many individual attorneys and courts, the system as a whole fails to consistently deliver the high-quality representation that Kansas children and families deserve. Decades after earlier studies identified the same concerns, the problems of excessive caseloads, inadequate compensation, inconsistent practice standards, and limited oversight remain unresolved. These structural deficiencies result in inequities across the state, undermine public confidence, and compromise the fair and effective administration of justice.

The Committee concludes that piecemeal adjustments cannot address these systemic shortcomings. To ensure all children and parents in Kansas receive meaningful legal representation, comprehensive statewide reform is necessary. The Committee therefore recommends the creation of a centralized statewide office to oversee GAL and parent attorney

services. Such an office would provide oversight, uniform standards, training, and accountability required to ensure consistency across counties and judicial districts, while also addressing recruitment, retention, and support for attorneys.

At the same time, the Committee recognizes legislative and structural reform will take time to design and implement. In the interim, Kansas can and should adopt interim improvements, including uniform practice standards, expanded training and resources, judicial education, and contractual reforms. These steps will not, on their own, resolve the deep challenges facing the system, but they represent meaningful progress toward more consistent and effective representation.

Ultimately, high-quality legal advocacy for both children and parents is fundamental to the fairness, efficiency, and integrity of the child welfare system. By pursuing the reforms recommended in this report, Kansas has the opportunity to create a system that ensures every child's voice is heard, every parent's rights are respected, and every family is served with fairness and consistency, regardless of where they live.



Appendices

Appendix A

Example Statutory Language for Centralized Office

Office for Child and Family Representation and Advocacy

Purpose

Section 1.

There is hereby established the Office for Child and Family Representation and Advocacy as an independent office within the judicial branch of government. The office shall partner with county commissions, judicial districts, attorneys, the office of judicial administration, and others to provide uniform and high-quality representation and advocacy for children and parents involved in, or at risk of involvement in, proceedings under the revised Kansas code for care of children, and amendments thereto.

Comment

This section establishes the Office for Child and Family Representation and Advocacy as an independent office within the judicial branch. It sets the foundation by identifying the office's role: ensuring uniform, high-quality representation for children and parents in child in need of care cases. The office of judicial administration will provide the Office the necessary foundational infrastructure for the Office to operate as a new and independent state agency.

Definitions

Section 2.

(a) Except as provided in this section, the definitions set forth in the revised Kansas code for care of children, K.S.A. 38-2201 et seq., and amendments thereto, shall apply to this act.

(b) “At risk of involvement in proceedings under the revised Kansas code for care of children” means a situation in which a child or parent:

(1) Is at imminent risk of a child being alleged to be a child in need of care and the child being placed in out-of-home placement; or

(2) Has been referred to the district or county attorney for consideration of a child in need of care proceeding.

(c) “Child” means a person less than 18 years of age at the time representation is commenced.

Comment

The section incorporates existing definitions from the Kansas Revised Code for Care of Children with the following additions.

- *“At risk of involvement” expands eligibility for legal representation to preventive stages, reflecting the committee’s concern with early intervention.*
- *“Child” is tied to age at the start of representation .*

This section narrows ambiguity and ensures consistent application across the act.

Governing Board

Section 3.

(a) Nothing in this act shall be construed to permit any governmental agency to exercise control or supervision over the board, executive director, or the office. The board and office have complete autonomy, control, and authority over operations, budget, and personnel decisions related to the office, board, and executive director.

(b) There is hereby established the Office for Child and Family Representation and Advocacy Board, referred to in this act as the “board,” as an independent and nonpartisan body within the judicial branch.

(c) The board shall consist of not more than 17 members. To the extent practicable, the membership shall reflect a cross section of people from throughout the state. All members shall have expertise or experience in child welfare system practice or policy.

- (d) The appointing authorities shall appoint members to the board as follows:
- (1) The chief justice of the Kansas supreme court shall appoint:
 - (i) One licensed attorney with at least 2 years experience representing parents in child in need of care proceedings in a rural area;
 - (ii) One licensed attorney with at least 2 years experience representing parents in child in need of care proceedings in an urban area;
 - (iii) One licensed attorney with at least 2 years experience serving as a guardian ad litem in child in need of care proceedings in a rural area;
 - (iv) One licensed attorney with at least 2 years experience serving as a guardian ad litem in child in need of care proceedings in an urban area;
 - (v) One licensed attorney with at least 2 years experience representing juveniles in proceedings under the revised Kansas Juvenile Justice Code and amendments thereto or in concurrent proceedings under the Revised Kansas child in need of care code and revised Kansas juvenile justice code.
 - (vi) One judge with at least 2 years experience in child in need of care proceedings in a rural area; and
 - (vii) One judge with at least 2 years experience in child in need of care proceedings in an urban area.
 - (2) The Governor shall appoint:
 - (i) One licensed child welfare professional with at least 2 years present or prior professional experience with a department for children and families private foster care case management contractor providing family support services in a rural area;
 - (3) One licensed child welfare professional with at least 2 years present or prior professional experience with a department for children and families private foster care case management contractor providing family support services in an urban area;
 - (4) One individual with at least 2 years previous professional experience with the department for children and families child prevention and protection services or permanency; and
 - (5) One professor or dean from a Kansas university or college who focuses on child welfare law or social work;

- (e) The president and minority leader of the senate shall appoint:
 - (1) One individual who was formerly a child in the Kansas foster care system;
 - (2) One substance use disorder treatment professional with at least 2 years experience working with families involved child in need of care proceedings; and
 - (3) One licensed attorney currently employed in a rural area county or district attorney office with at least 2 years experience in child in need of care proceedings.
- (f) The speaker and the minority leader of the house shall appoint:
 - (1) One current or former foster parent;
 - (2) One licensed mental health or behavioral health care professional with at least 2 years experience working with families involved in child in need of care proceedings; and
 - (3) One licensed attorney currently employed in an urban county or district attorney office with at least 2 years child in need of care proceedings.
- (g) Board members shall serve for terms of four years. Of the members first appointed, three appointees of the chief justice of the Kansas supreme court, two appointees of the president and minority leader of the senate, and two appointees of the speaker and minority leader of the house, as designated by the appointing officials, shall serve initial terms of two years.
- (h) The board members first appointed shall be appointed on or before 90 days following the effective date of this act.
- (i) A board member's term shall expire at the end of the appointed term unless reappointed, upon resignation, or upon cessation of eligibility for appointment.
- (j) Within 60 days of any vacancy, the original appointing authority shall appoint a person to serve for a new term or the remainder of any unexpired term.
- (k) The board shall select one of its members as chairperson for such period as the board determines.
- (l) The board shall meet at least twice a year at the call of the chairperson. At least one meeting per year must be held outside of the Topeka metropolitan area.
- (m) The board shall comply with the Kansas open meetings act, K.S.A. 75-4317 et seq., and amendments thereto, and the Kansas open records act, K.S.A. 45-215 et seq., and amendments

thereto, except nothing in this provision shall be construed to allow public access to client meetings or client records.

- (n) Board members shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.
- (o) Expenses incurred by the board or reimbursement of board members shall be paid from the general operating budget of the office.
- (p) The board shall have the power and authority to sue or be sued.

Comment

The establishment of the governing board emphasizes autonomy from other governmental bodies and bipartisan collaboration. The detailed appointment scheme ensures broad representation from all stakeholder groups to include judges, attorneys, social workers, foster parents, and individuals with lived expertise. The requirement of geographic diversity (rural/urban) reflects recognition of Kansas's varied local needs. Open meetings and records provisions ensure accountability, while limits on compensation keep the board service oriented.

Section 4. Board Duties relating to Executive Director

- (a) The board has the following duties and responsibilities relating to the executive director:
 - (1) Appoint a person to serve as executive director of the office. The executive director shall assume the position after taking the oath required for public officers and employees pursuant to K.S.A. 75-4308, and amendments thereto.
 - (2) The executive director shall be selected without regard to political affiliation and on the basis of integrity and demonstrate capacity to effectively carry out the duties of the office.
 - (3) The board may discharge the executive director for cause. A two-thirds majority vote shall be required to appoint or discharge the executive director.
 - (4) Fill any vacancy in the position of executive director.
 - (5) Evaluate the performance of the executive director as determined necessary, based on feedback received.

- (6) Develop and maintain a public complaint process related to the executive director's performance.
- (7) Develop a process to resolve contract grievance issues in compliance with the Kansas judicial review act, K.S.A. 77-601 et seq., and amendments thereto.
- (8) Oversee and advise the executive director on the strategic direction of the office and its mission, and to help promote the use, engagement, and access to office services.
- (9) Work with the executive director to provide fiscal oversight of the office's general operating budget, ensure compliance with this act, any memoranda of understanding, and applicable state and federal laws.
- (10) Promote the mission of the office to the public.
- (11) Provide assistance, as practicable and as requested by the executive director, to facilitate the statutory intent of this act.

Comment

This section defines the board's oversight role over the executive director. It balances independence with accountability: the board hires, evaluates, and may remove the executive director for cause, but only by supermajority vote. Complaint and grievance processes reflect the focus on transparency. The board is also tasked with promoting the office's mission and fiscal oversight, showing the intent for the board to act as both overseer and advocate of the office.

Executive Director

Section 5.

- (a) The executive director shall be appointed by the board and shall report directly to the board.
- (b) The executive director may be discharged for cause upon a two-thirds vote of the board.
- (c) The executive director shall be licensed to practice law for at least five years prior to appointment and shall be a Kansas-licensed attorney in good standing throughout the term of appointment. The executive director shall have a minimum of five years of experience, which includes significant participation in child dependency proceedings in Kansas or in any other state.
- (d) The executive director shall devote full time to the duties of the office and shall not engage in the private practice of law or represent clients in office-assigned cases.
- (e) The executive director shall be in the unclassified service and receive an annual salary equal to that paid by the state to a district court judge. Such compensation shall not be reduced during the term of appointment.

Comment

This section makes the executive director the central figure in office operations. Requirements of five years' of being licensed to practice law and child welfare experience ensure expertise. The prohibition on private practice avoids conflicts of interest. Salary parity with district court judges signals the importance of the role and is designed to attract highly qualified candidates. Independence from politics is emphasized again through the merit-based appointment process.

Section 6. Executive Director Duties and Powers

- (a) The executive director shall be responsible to the board for the management and operation of the office. The executive director shall:
 - (1) Administer and carry out the provisions of this act;
 - (2) Exercise general managerial control over the office, including establishing its organizational structure

- (3) Propose statutory amendments to implement the office and its purpose, including the process for appointment of an attorney and the payment of expenses.
- (4) Supervise all staff and contractors;
- (5) Employ, contract with, and determine compensation for such employees and licensed professionals as necessary to carry out office functions;
- (6) Oversee all budgeting, purchasing, personnel, and related administrative functions of the office;
- (7) Oversee office funding, including preparation and submission of the annual budget;
- (8) Supervise and manage contracts for the provision of representation and advocacy services under this act;
- (9) Enter into an agreement with the office of judicial administration for the provision of personnel, facility management, information technology services, and budget and financial management.
- (10) Enter into agreements to facilitate the operation and administration of the office;
- (11) Establish policies, procedures, and standards necessary to fulfill the office's purpose, including but not limited to:
 - (i) Minimum qualifications, experience, and training standards;
 - (ii) Caseload and workload management systems;
 - (iii) Conflict appointment procedures;
 - (iv) Monitoring and quality assurance processes;
 - (v) Client grievance procedures; and
 - (vi) Conduct research and studies;
- (12) Provide instruction and training for attorneys, social workers, and staff;
- (13) Maintain records and statistical data reflecting the operation and administration of the office, including and not limited to systems to:
 - (i) Collect and analyze data on outcomes for children and families;
 - (ii) Maintain client confidentiality;

- (iii) Evaluate the effectiveness of the office’s programs and practices; and
- (iv) Inform and guide continuous quality improvement;
- (14) Represent and advocate for the office and its purpose;
- (15) Perform other duties as agreed to by the executive director and the board.

Comment

This section gives the executive director broad authority to structure and run the office, including contracting, staffing, budgeting, and policy-setting. Specific responsibilities (caseload standards, conflict procedures, quality assurance, grievance systems, training) reflect lessons learned from inconsistent GAL and parent attorney systems. Requirements for research and data collection show a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability. It is intended for the director to have strong autonomy but remain answerable to the board. To help avoid conflicts of representation arising within the office, the executive director will not be directly involved in cases or the supervision of specific cases.

Section 7. Annual Report

(a) On or before the 30th day of each regular session of the legislature, the office shall prepare and submit a report to the governor, the chief justice of the supreme court and the office of judicial administration, the president of the senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, the joint committee on child welfare system oversight, the house of representatives standing committee on child welfare and foster care, the senate standing committee on judiciary, or their successor committees, and any other relevant legislative committee.

- (1) Such report shall cover the previous calendar year and include:
 - (i) The number of cases per judicial district assigned to the office;
 - (ii) The number of open and closed cases, including the outcome of closed cases;
 - (iii) The average caseload for full-time, part-time, and contract attorneys;
 - (iv) Compensation ranges for each position type;
 - (v) Competency requirements for each position type;

- (vi) Any recommendations for changes in statute, policies, procedures or rules and regulations;
 - (vii) The office’s proposed annual budget; and
 - (viii) Any other information the executive director deems appropriate to carry out the powers, duties and functions provided by the act.
- (b) The executive director shall post the annual report on the office website.
- (c) The executive director shall present or provide quarterly written updates to the board regarding the activities of the office in preparation of the annual report. The annual report shall be submitted to the board for approval prior to public dissemination.

Comment

Transparency and legislative oversight are reinforced here. The report must include caseload, outcomes, compensation, and recommendations, ensuring policymakers have data to evaluate the system. Quarterly updates to the board keep the governing body informed. Posting online reflects the intent for public accountability.

Funding

Section 8.

- (a) The office shall submit its budget separately and may adopt its own pay plan and personnel rules. The executive director shall make funding recommendations to the appropriate budget committees. The legislature shall make annual appropriations from the state general funds, in such amount and form as the legislature determines appropriate, for the operation of the office to fulfill its purpose, operate within ethical legal boundaries, including but not limited to caseload, competency, and compensation guidelines adopted by the executive director.
- (b) Counties shall begin making payments under this section in the county’s fiscal year following the conclusion of the start-up phase as determined by the board.
- (c) Each calendar year, each county shall pay the office twenty-five percent of the county’s gross proportional share as determined as follows:

- (1) The county's gross proportional share shall be calculated by multiplying the county's population percentage by the office's total budget for the upcoming fiscal year.
 - (2) The county's population percentage shall be calculated by dividing the county's population by the total population of the state of Kansas. The office shall determine the county's share of the state's total population using the most recent population estimates published by the Kansas secretary of state.
- (d) By July 1 of each year, the office shall notify each county of the amount of its required payment that shall be paid in the following calendar year. The required contribution shall be paid to the office in accordance with the schedule and procedures established by the office.
- (e) All payments made by counties under this section shall be the property of the state of Kansas, and when collected shall be turned over to the general-revenue fund of the state.
- (f) Nothing in this act shall prohibit the office from pursuing grant opportunities. However, the office shall not use or apply grant funding for its primary operational budget.

Comment

Funding is intended as a state-county partnership. The state provides appropriations, while counties contribute based on population share, beginning only after the start-up phase. This formula is meant to distribute costs equitably while avoiding immediate strain on counties. The prohibition on using grants for core operations ensures stability, though the office may pursue grants for supplemental programs.

Initial Implementation and Start-Up Phase

Section 9.

- (a) There is hereby established a start-up phase for the Office for Child and Family Representation and Advocacy. The purpose of this phase is to allow the office to become operational prior to the full provision of services described in this act.
- (b) During the start-up phase, the office shall be funded solely through appropriations from the state general fund. Counties shall not be required to contribute to the cost of the office during this phase.
- (c) The start-up phase shall include, but not be limited to, the following activities:

- (1) Appointment and organization of the board;
 - (2) Selection and appointment of the executive director;
 - (3) Hiring of staff, including attorneys and administrative personnel;
 - (4) Contracting with attorneys, social workers, and other professionals to provide services under this act;
 - (5) Determination and establishment of the office's organizational structure;
 - (6) Proposal of statutory amendments to implement the office;
 - (7) Development of standards for experience, training, caseload limits, and monitoring for staff and contract attorneys and social workers;
 - (8) Creation and delivery of training programs for staff and contracted providers;
 - (9) Securing office space, furnishings, and necessary equipment;
 - (10) Selection and implementation of a case management system and other information technology necessary for office operations;
 - (11) Establishment of financial management systems;
 - (12) Development of policies, procedures, and manuals necessary for office operation, including compensation plans;
 - (13) Conducting outreach and engagement with counties, judicial districts, and other stakeholders to prepare for full implementation; and
 - (14) Preparation and submission of a proposed budget for the second phase of implementation during which the office will fully provide services under this act.
- (d) During the start-up phase, and until such time as the board has hired an executive director and sufficient staff to carry out the duties of this act, the office of judicial administration shall provide reasonable administrative support to facilitate the meetings and operations of the board. Such support may include scheduling and noticing board meetings, maintaining records of board actions, providing budget and accounting services, and providing general administrative assistance as requested by the board. The responsibility of the office of judicial administration to provide such support shall terminate upon certification by the board that the office has sufficient staff to assume its own administrative functions.
- (e) (1) The board shall hold its first meeting within 150 days after the effective date of this act.

- (2) The office of judicial administration shall provide notice of the first meeting to all appointed board members and shall assist in arranging the time and place of such meeting.
- (3) At the first meeting, the board shall elect a chairperson and such other officers as deemed necessary to carry out the duties of the board.
- (f) The start-up phase shall conclude on a date determined by the board, upon recommendation of the executive director, once the office has demonstrated its readiness to provide services as described in this act.

Comment

This transitional period ensures the office is functional before counties begin cost-sharing. The start-up is state-funded and includes building infrastructure, hiring, standards-setting, and outreach. Importantly, the Office of Judicial Administration provides temporary administrative support until the office is self-sufficient. There are specific deadlines (first board meeting within 150 days) to prevent delays. This phase ensures an orderly and supported rollout.

Pre-CINC Petition Work

Section 10.

- (a) The executive director shall determine whether the office shall provide an attorney to represent a child or parent at risk of becoming involved in a proceeding under the revised Kansas code for care of children and amendments thereto.
- (b) In making this determination, the executive director shall consider factors including, but not limited to, the best interests of the child or parent, the likelihood of formal court involvement, the availability of office resources, and the office’s mission to provide high-quality representation.
- (c) Any decision by the executive director under this section shall be final and not subject to judicial review.

Comment

This section allows the office to provide representation before a formal case is filed, at the director’s discretion. The goal is preventive intervention: offering legal help early may prevent

unnecessary involvement with the foster care system. Making the director's decision final reflects resource-consciousness, avoids litigation over eligibility, and preserves flexibility.

Payment, Assessment, and Collection of Expenses

Section 11. Expenses

- (a) Expenses related to the representation by staff attorneys or contract attorneys of the Office of Children and Family Representation and Advocacy shall be governed by K.S.A. 38-2215.
- (b) The Office of Children and Family Representation and Advocacy shall have the authority to collect expenses for staff and contract attorneys of the Office of Children and Family Representation and Advocacy from a person against whom the expenses have been assessed pursuant to K.S.A. 38-2215.

Comment

By tying expenses to existing statute (K.S.A. 38-2215), this section ensures consistency with current law while giving the new office authority to collect costs when appropriate. This preserves established practice while integrating the office into the statutory framework.

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 12. Tort Claim Act, Professional Liability Insurance

- (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, any attorney providing services for the office pursuant to this act shall, for matters arising out of such services, be considered a state employee for purposes of coverage and representation under the Kansas tort claims act, K.S.A. 75-6101 *et seq.* and the amendments thereto, and the state self-insurance program.
- (b) The office may include in any contract with an attorney a provision for reimbursement of the attorney's actual cost of professional liability insurance, prorated based on work performed for the office and other clients.

Comment

This section ensures attorneys working with the office are treated as state employees for liability coverage, protecting them from personal risk. Allowing reimbursement for professional liability insurance is designed to attract and retain qualified contract counsel by reducing their financial burden.

Section 13. Mandated Reporters

(a) Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, any individual who is a mandated reporter under K.S.A. 39-1402, and amendments thereto, employed by or under contract with the office shall not be required to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child if:

- (1) The individual is working under the supervision of an attorney who is providing legal representation in a child in need of care matter; and
- (2) The reason to suspect that a child has been harmed as a result of physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect or sexual abuse arises solely in the course of such representation or during the process of seeking such representation.

Comment

This section addresses a nuanced issue: people such as social workers are usually mandated reporters, but reporting client information could undermine representation. By exempting them when information arises in the course of representation, the attorney-client relationship is protected and aligns with professional responsibility standards. This balances professional licensing ethical duties with the needs of representation within child welfare law.

Appendix B

Proposed Amendments to Supreme Court Rule 110A

Rule 110A

STANDARDS FOR GUARDIANS AD LITEM

- (a) **Generally.** Unless the appointing judge authorizes departure from these standards for good cause, these standards shall apply when the judge appoints a guardian *ad litem* for a child to objectively advocate on behalf of the child and act as an officer of the court to investigate all matters concerning the best interest of the child in a case under the Revised Kansas Code for Care of Children, K.S.A. 38-2201 et seq.; the Revised Kansas Juvenile Justice Code, K.S.A. 38-2301 et seq.; and the Kansas Family Law Code, K.S.A. Chapter 23. The judge must:

~~(1)~~ issue an order appointing the guardian *ad litem* on a form substantially in compliance with the judicial council form; ~~and~~

~~(2) ensure compliance with this rule.~~

- (b) **Prerequisite and Continuing Education.**

(1) **Requirements.**

- (A) **Number of Hours; Timeframe.** Prior to appointment as a guardian *ad litem* and on an ongoing annual basis, an attorney must complete at least 6 hours of education as identified in (b)(1)(B), including 1 hour of professional responsibility unless temporarily suspended under (b)(2). Written documentation demonstrating completion of the educational requirement must be submitted to the Chief Judge in the district in which appointed or designee. As a prerequisite to appointment, a guardian *ad litem* must complete at least 6 hours of education, including 1 hour of professional responsibility. An appointed guardian *ad litem* also must participate in continuing education consisting of at least 6 hours per year.

- (B) **Areas of Education.** Areas of education should include; ~~but are not limited to:~~

- dynamics of abuse and neglect;
- roles and responsibilities;

- cultural awareness;
- communication skills, including communication with children;
- information gathering and investigatory techniques;
- advocacy skills;
- child development;
- mental health issues;
- domestic violence;
- disability law;
- permanency and the law;
- community resources;
- professional responsibility;
- education law including special education law;
- substance ~~abuse issues~~ use disorder;
- trauma informed practice including adverse childhood experiences; and
- school law; and
- the revised code for care of children.

(2) **Waiver Temporary Suspension of Prerequisite**. The appointing judge may ~~waive temporarily suspend~~ the prerequisite education ~~when if~~ necessary to make an emergency ~~temporary~~ appointment. The educational requirements must be completed within 6 months ~~after of the~~ appointment, and written documentation demonstrating completion of the educational requirement must be submitted to the chief judge of the district in which appointed or designee.

(3) **Continuing Education Requirements; Judicial Approval**. If approved by the Continuing Legal Education Board, the education hours required by paragraph (1) ~~also can~~ may be counted to satisfy Supreme Court Rule 804's continuing legal education requirements. These standards do not modify the minimum total hours annually required under that rule. ~~The appointing judge may approve prerequisite education and continuing education hours not otherwise approved by the Continuing Legal Education Board.~~

- (4) **Recordkeeping.** Each guardian *ad litem* must maintain a record of the guardian's participation in ~~prerequisite and continuing~~ education programs. ~~Upon request of the appointing judge, the guardian must provide evidence of compliance with this subsection.~~
- (c) **Guardian *Ad Litem* Duties and Responsibilities.** A guardian *ad litem* must comply with the following standards:
- (1) **Conducting an Independent Investigation.** A guardian *ad litem* must conduct an independent investigation and review all relevant documents and records, including those of social service agencies, police, courts, physicians, mental health practitioners, and schools. Interviews—either in person or by telephone—of the child, parents, social workers, relatives, school personnel, court-appointed special advocates (CASAs), caregivers, and others having knowledge of the facts are recommended. Reviewing only agency reports does not constitute an independent investigation. Continuing investigation and ongoing contact with the child are mandatory.
- (2) **Determining the Best Interests of the Child.** A guardian *ad litem* must determine the best interests of the child by considering such factors as:
- the child's age and sense of time;
 - the child's level of maturity;
 - the child's culture and ethnicity;
 - degree of the child's attachment to family members, including siblings;
 - continuity;
 - consistency;
 - permanency;
 - the expressed wishes of the child;
 - the child's sense of belonging and identity; and
 - results of the investigation.
- (3) **Representing in Court.** A guardian *ad litem* must:
- (A) file appropriate pleadings and other papers on the child's behalf;
- (B) represent the best interests of the child at all hearings;

- (C) present all relevant facts, including the child’s position;
 - (D) ~~submit~~ provide the results, either orally or in writing, of the guardian’s independent investigation and the guardian’s recommendations regarding the child’s best interests; and
 - (E) vigorously advocate for the child’s best interests by:
 - (i) calling, examining, and cross-examining witnesses;
 - (ii) submitting and responding to other evidence; and
 - (iii) making oral and written arguments based on the evidence that has been or is expected to be presented.
- (4) **Explaining to the Child.** A guardian *ad litem* must explain to the child the court proceedings and the guardian’s role in ~~terms the child can understand. a way that is adapted to the child’s age and development. If an explanation is not appropriate due to the child’s age or development, no explanation is required.~~
- (5) **Making Recommendations for Services.** A guardian *ad litem* must recommend appropriate services for the child and the child’s family that are in the best interests of the child.
- (6) **Monitoring.** A guardian *ad litem* must monitor implementation of service plans and court orders.
- (d) **When Recommendation Conflicts with Child’s Wishes.** If the child disagrees with the guardian *ad litem*’s recommendation, the guardian must inform the court of the disagreement. The court may, for good cause, appoint an attorney to represent the child’s expressed wishes. If the court appoints an attorney for the child, that individual serves in addition to the guardian *ad litem*. The attorney must allow the child and the guardian to communicate with one another but may require the communications to occur in the attorney’s presence.
- (e) **Participation Limited by Rules of Professional Conduct.** An attorney in a proceeding in which the attorney serves as guardian *ad litem* may submit reports and recommendations to the court and testify only as permitted by Kansas Rule of Professional Conduct 3.7(a).

Appendix C

Proposed Amendments to K.S.A. 38-2205(a)

K.S.A. 38-2205. Right to counsel; guardian ad litem.

(a) *Appointment of guardian ad litem and attorney for child; duties.* Upon the filing of a petition, the court shall appoint an attorney to serve as guardian ad litem for a child who is the subject of proceedings under this code. The guardian ad litem shall make an independent investigation of the facts upon which the petition is based and shall appear for and represent the best interests of the child. The guardian ad litem shall continue to independently investigate and shall submit a report, either orally or in writing, to the court in regard to the child's best interest at every hearing. When the child's position is not consistent with the determination of the guardian ad litem as to the child's best interests, the guardian ad litem shall inform the court of the disagreement. The guardian ad litem or the child may request the court to appoint a second attorney to serve as attorney for the child, and the court, on good cause shown, may appoint such second attorney. The attorney for the child shall allow the child and the guardian ad litem to communicate with one another but may require such communications to occur in the attorney's presence.

Appendix D

Yearly Compliance Certification Form

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge:

As Guardian ad Litem:

- Upon my appointment as *Guardian ad Litem*, I initiated contact with each child as soon as possible. If the child was non-verbal, I ensured an initial observation of the child as soon as possible.
- I maintained ongoing communication with each child as appropriate for the child's age and development. (Note: Communication must occur as the needs of the child/case require and no less than at least once every six months as access to the child allows. Such communication is not required to be in person.)
- I participated in obligations outside of court hearings including every BIS (whether in person, in writing, by telephone, or any electronic means).
- I completed an ongoing and independent investigation of the factors for the child's best interests. (Note: Review of the foster care agency's court report alone is not sufficient to meet this requirement.)
- I maintained all training requirements and provided verification/documentation to the jurisdictions in which I practice as a *Guardian ad Litem*. (Note: This verification/documentation should be provided to each judicial district in which the attorney practices by August 1st of every year.)
- I filed appropriate pleadings including stipulations/objections/motions/appellate briefs as needed and when necessary.
- I updated the court regarding the best interests of each child at every permanency hearing.
- I provided each child with the Child Court Report form as appropriate for the child's age and development, and ensured the completed document was provided to the parties and court.
- I facilitated/participated in meetings with professional stakeholders as necessary to coordinate care for the child. (Note: These meetings should not include parents/family members/placement/children.)

Or

I have not yet engaged in *Guardian ad Litem* work, but certify that I will comply with the above requirements.

Date

Signature, with bar number

Contract provisions to be included for attorneys acting as *Guardians ad Litem*

- You, the contracting attorney, certify that you have completed the minimum number of CLE hours to maintain your legal license in good standing.
- You, the contracting attorney, certify that you have complied with the standards of practice and have provided the certification/verification checklist to the State of Kansas as well as the judicial districts in which you practice as a *Guardian ad Litem*.
- You, the contracting attorney, agree to maintain a caseload that allows you to fulfill the obligations you have as a *Guardian ad Litem*.
- This contract may be terminated if you, the contracting attorney, are found to not be in compliance with any provision of this contract.

Appendix E

Committee Membership

The members of the Judicial Council Juvenile Offender/Child in Need of Care Advisory Committee are:

Standing Members

Hon. Amy Harth, Chair; Paola, Kansas
Chief District Court Judge – 6th Judicial District

Kristi Allen; Wichita, Kansas
Sedgwick County Senior Assistant District Attorney

Elizabeth Fowler; Topeka, Kansas
Staff Attorney – Kansas Department of Corrections

Deena Gage; Topeka, Kansas
State Director – Kansas CASA Association

Rep. Susan Humphries; Wichita, Kansas
State Representative, 99th District, and Adoption Attorney

Donald W. Hymer; Olathe, Kansas
Johnson County Assistant District Attorney

Hon. Greg Keith; Wichita, Kansas
District Court Judge – 18th Judicial District

Kassie McEntire; Wellington, Kansas
Staff Attorney – St. Francis Ministries

Vivien Olsen; Topeka, Kansas
Assistant General Counsel – Kansas Department for Children and Families

Amy Raymond, Non-Voting Member;
Topeka, Kansas
Chief of Trial Court Services – Kansas Judicial Branch

Ad Hoc Members

Hon. Kevin N. Berens; Colby, Kansas
Chief District Court Judge – 15th Judicial District

Grant Brazill; Wichita, Kansas
Private Practice Attorney

Eliza Kassebaum; Dodge City, Kansas
Ford County Chief Deputy Attorney

Kerrie Lonard; Topeka, Kansas
Child Advocate – Kansas Office of the Child Advocate

Carol M. Park; Hays, Kansas
Private Practice Attorney

Laurel Klein Searles; Topeka, Kansas
Chief of Attorney Services and Compliance – Kansas Judicial Branch