

Minutes
Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and
Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters
January 9, 2023

The Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters met on January 9, 2023. The meeting was convened by the chair in Courtroom 2 at 95 Washington Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Those in attendance: Judge Michael Albis (chair); Judge Jennifer Macierowski; Attorney Bryan Cafferelli; Attorney Nisa J. Khan; Attorney Susan Hamilton (designated by the Chief Public Defender); Ms. Liza Andrews, Policy Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Absent: Mr. Stephen B. Carragher, Public Health Services Manager, Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section, Department of Public Health; Attorney Danielle S. Rado; Attorney Justine Rakich-Kelly

Also in attendance were Attorney Jennifer Gagosz, Assistant Bar Counsel, Attorney Grace Pelo, Assistant Bar Counsel, and Nicole Collins and Attorney Damon Goldstein from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 PM by Judge Albis.

I. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Bryan Cafferelli and seconded by Susan Hamilton to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 15, 2022. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0 with Nisa Khan abstaining.

II. Possible Removal of Individuals from List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

At 2:07 PM, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(6)(a), Judge Macierowski moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, to enter executive session to discuss complaints for removal of guardians ad litem. The Committee approved going into executive session by a 6-0 vote. Jennifer Gagosz, Grace Pelo, Nicole Collins, and Damon Goldstein were asked by the Committee to remain present for the executive session. The executive session concluded, and the Committee reconvened in open session at 2:11 PM.

a. Complaint #22-0008

A motion was made by Bryan Cafferelli and seconded by Judge Macierowski to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote. The complaint was dismissed.

b. Complaint #22-0009

A motion was made by Liza Andrews and seconded by Susan Hamilton to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing

the complaint. The motion passed by an 6-0 vote. The complaint was dismissed.

III. Changes to the Active List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

a. Attorney Kathy Coppola

Attorney Kathy Coppola was removed from the active list in January 2019 because the Committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Coppola emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on December 2, 2022. Attorney Coppola meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Susan Hamilton moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, that Attorney Coppola be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

b. Attorney Jackie Conlon

Attorney Jackie Conlon was removed from the active list in January 2019 because the Committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Conlon emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on December 5, 2022. Attorney Conlon meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Liza Andrews moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, that Attorney Conlon be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 5-0 vote with Judge Macierowski abstaining and three members absent.

c. Attorney Lauren McCann

Attorney Lauren McCann was removed from the active list in September 2015 because there was no reply to a request for updated information. Attorney McCann emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on December 5, 2022. Attorney McCann meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Susan Hamilton moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, that Attorney McCann be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

d. Attorney Rich Rochlin

Attorney Rich Rochlin was removed from the active list in January 2021 because the Committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Rochlin emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on December 14, 2022. Attorney Rochlin meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Bryan Cafferelli

moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, that Attorney Rochlin be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

e. Attorney Erica Wikstrom

Attorney Erica Wikstrom was removed from the active list in January 2020 because the Committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Wikstrom emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on December 20, 2022. Attorney Wikstrom meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Susan Hamilton moved, and Judge Macierowski seconded, that Attorney Wikstrom be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

f. Attorney Lauren Healy

Attorney Lauren Healy was removed from the active list in September 2015 because there was no reply to a request for updated information. Attorney Healy emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on January 1, 2023. Attorney Healy meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Liza Andrews moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, that Attorney Healy be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

IV. GAL Pre-Service Training Update

Susan Hamilton reported that 57 individuals have registered for the self-administered version of the pre-service training to GALs. Of the 57 registered individuals, 10 have completed the training, 19 are in the process working through the training modules, and 28 have created a log in but have not yet begun the training.

Susan Hamilton also indicated that a post-test is being worked on that will be administered either at the end of the entire training or at the end of each module.

The Committee discussed whether it would be prudent to put a reasonable limit on the length of time an individual had to complete the pre-service training after they registered. Data will be gathered to determine how long it is currently taking for individuals to complete the self-administered training.

Susan Hamilton also inquired if there was a desire among the judges for more GALs who have contracts with the Division of Public Defender Services to be paid at state rates by the State of Connecticut. Both Judge Albis and Judge Macierowski indicated that having more contract attorneys in their locations would be beneficial. While every individual who completes the pre-service training is asked if they are interested in contracting with the Division of Public Defender Services, only a small number indicate that they are.

V. Approval of the List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC for 2023

Damon Goldstein reported that approximately 25 individuals on the active list of persons qualified to serve as a GAL/AMC did not respond to the Committee's annual request for updated information. Two individuals requested to have their name removed from the list.

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Liza Andrews moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, that the active list of persons qualified to serve as a GAL/AMC be approved by the Committee for 2023 pursuant to Practice Book Section 25-61A(b)(4). The Committee approved the active list of persons qualified to serve as a GAL/AMC by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

VI. Review and Possible Revisions to the Procedures by Which an Individual May be Removed from the List of Those Deemed Eligible for Appointment as a Guardian Ad Litem or Attorney for the Minor Child in Family Matters

The procedures by which an individual may be removed from the active GAL/AMC list were first enacted on September 3, 2019. Judge Albis asked the Committee members present if there were any changes to the procedures that they would like to consider. Three items were identified for further discussion.

First, should there be any disclosure, under certain circumstances, of a complaint to Branch staff and/or judges regardless of whether there has been a finding of probable cause?

Second, does there need to be a formal procedure for when a complainant wants to amend their complaint and, if so, what should that procedure be?

Third, should there be a way to process complaints that are clearly outside the period of limitations without having to refer them to a probable cause panel?

These 3 items will be discussed in greater detail at the next Committee meeting along with any other suggestions that Committee members think of in the interim.

VII. Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters will be held March 6, 2023 at 2:00 PM.

VIII. Such Other Matters as may Properly Come Before the Standing Committee

No other matters were brought before the Committee.

Judge Macierowski moved, and Susan Hamilton seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee approved the motion by a 6-0 vote. Judge Albis adjourned the meeting at 3:43 PM.