

I am Going to Meet With the Guardian Ad Litem in My Divorce Case; Is There Anything I Need to Know?

AUTHOR: ERIN RATHJEN-DECKER

A guardian ad litem (“GAL”) is an attorney who may be appointed by the court to represent the best interests of minor children in a variety of cases, including in divorce matters. After the court appoints the GAL, the GAL will usually schedule meetings with both parents before meeting with the children.

The initial interview between a parent and a GAL is extremely important. You will have limited time to create a first impression and present your custody plan. In the initial meeting, a parent or guardian should not focus all their attention on the negatives of the other parent, since the initial meeting is not the end of the GAL’s role, but the beginning. Expressing concerns about the other parent while at the same time focusing on solutions and options that can help the children through transitions, is a good option, as are solutions that can assist with co-parenting after the case is finished. The meeting with the GAL is also a time to provide the GAL with names of third parties who may have information about the children that the GAL could find helpful, such as doctors, specialists, and therapists.

Meeting with your attorney in advance of your initial meeting with the GAL can help you organize information to provide essential information during that first meeting. If there are concerns about the other parent, your attorney should work with you to strategize ways to convey that information in a way that is effective. Experienced counsel will be familiar with the guardians appointed by the local judges and be able to prepare you for the initial meeting.

For questions about family law matters, please feel free to reach out to one of the family law attorneys at Sandberg Phoenix.