FAMILY COURT
OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY

PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF GUARDIAN AD LITEM STANDARDS

October 15, 2026

In recognizing that Missouri children have the right to adequate and effective representation in domestic and child welfare cases, the Family Court of St. Louis County ("Family Court" or "Court") modifies the Court's plan for implementation of The Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Standards. The original plan for implementation went into effect on July 1, 2011.

DISSEMINATION OF STANDARDS

The Family Court shall disseminate the Standards on its court website and keep a copy available for reference in the circuit clerk's offices.

APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIANS AD LITEM

The Family Court maintains lists of approved guardians ad litem which are kept by the Family Court Administrator or his/her designee. Guardians ad litem are selected from these lists for appointment to represent parties in appropriate cases by the judicial officer of the applicable family court division. Two separate lists are maintained. The first contains the names of a fixed number of guardians ad litem (most of whom specialize in proceedings governed by chapters 210, 211 and 453, RSMo) whose services may be paid for from public funds ("Juvenile Guardians ad litem"). The second is a more inclusive list, including all attorneys deemed eligible for guardian ad litem practice in any case before the Family Court (General Guardians ad litem").

QUALIFICATIONS AND SELECTION OF JUVENILE GUARDIANS AD LITEM

The Family Court Administrator maintains an ongoing file of attorneys who wish to be added to the list of approved Juvenile guardians ad litem. The minimum qualifications to be placed and retained on this list are as follows:

1. Graduation from an accredited law school.

2. Possession of a current license to practice law in the State of Missouri.

3. Police and family care safety registry.

4. Evidence of completion of 8 hours of specialized guardian ad litem training accredited by the judicial education committee of the Supreme Court (or, with the approval of the Administrative Judge of the Family Court, an equivalent number of hours of experience as a guardian ad litem gained prior to September 17, 1996).

5. Agreement to comply with the Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Standards.

Interested and qualified candidates are required to send a cover letter and a resume to the Court's Human Resources Office, 105 S. Central, Clayton, MO, 63105, phone (314) 615-4471, fax (314) 615-4454. The Human Resources Office will keep the application materials active for one year, and if a vacancy occurs, will contact the most qualified applicants regarding possible interviews.

At the time of a vacancy on the list, the Family Court Administrator, with consultation of the Administrative Judge of the Family Court, shall formally announce the opening through various recruitment sources (e.g., newspapers, legal journals, professional organizations, etc.) in the interest of broadening the depth and/or diversity of the candidate pool. The Family Court Administrator, with consultation of the Administrative Judge, however, reserves the right to determine what type of recruitment/selection action is necessary to ensure that the best qualified candidates are considered for the guardian ad litem openings.

The Family Court Administrator, with consultation of the Administrative Judge, shall determine the criteria to be used to identify the most appropriate candidates to receive further consideration in the selection process. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

Examination and ranking of resumes based on education, training, and experience.

Formal oral interviews with the Family Court Administrator and/or interviews with the division judicial officer. The Family Court Administrator may instruct the Human Resources office to conduct preliminary oral interviews prior to the judicial interview.

A review and evaluation of prior performance as an attorney before the Court.

In all instances, the Family Court Administrator reserves ultimate authority for adding attorneys to this list of guardians ad litem and for assigning them to particular family court divisions.

PAYMENT OF JUVENILE GUARDIANS AD LITEM

Guardians ad litem who serve on List #1 must commit to serve in various Family Court cases on an as needed basis for a flat fee retainer to be established by the Court. Payment for time expended in adoption, guardianship of minor, and termination of parental rights matters may be made over and above the flat retainer fee. The Court reserves the right to renegotiate the terms of payment as necessary in order to control costs to St. Louis County, to achieve efficiency, and to maintain equitable workloads among its guardians ad litem. Guardians ad litem may be required to submit case accountings documenting hours served in a particular case and/or periodic time sheets documenting the actual number of hours served on the Court's behalf.

RETENTION OF JUVENILE GUARDIANS AD LITEM

Juvenile guardians ad litem serve pursuant to the terms of a professional services agreement with the Family Court Administrator and may be removed from the list if the guardian ad litem does not fulfill his/her objectives set forth in the professional services agreement. The Family Court Administrator reserves the right to periodically review the list of guardians ad litem to ensure that clients are receiving effective representation and that their best interests are being served.

In order to review the performance of guardians ad litem in a consistent manner, as well as to generate the most meaningful feedback, the Family Court Administrator may distribute guardian ad litem evaluation forms to judicial officers and others as the Court deems appropriate. This performance assessment instrument may be used as a basis for removing a guardian ad litem from the Court's list.

In order to determine the extent of a guardian ad litem’s compliance with the Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Standards and his or her fitness to continue as a guardian ad litem on the Court's list or in a particular case, the Court may require guardians ad litem to complete a check list to be submitted to the applicable judicial officer in cases to which the guardians ad litem are appointed. This check list will, among other things, serve to document the types of activities performed by the guardian ad litem in preparing for the case, the extent of the interaction of the guardian ad litem with the client and the quality of representation of the client by the guardian ad litem at court proceedings.

QUALIFICATIONS AND SELECTION OF GENERAL GUARDIANS AD LITEM

The minimum qualifications to be placed and retained on the list of General guardians ad litem are as follows:

1. Graduation from an accredited law school.

2. Possession of a current license to practice law in the State of Missouri.

3. Evidence of completion of 8 hours of specialized guardian ad litem training accredited by the judicial education committee of the Supreme Court (or, with the approval of the Administrative Judge of the Family Court, an equivalent number of hours of experience as a guardian ad litem gained prior to September 17, 1996).

4. Agreement to comply with the Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Standards.

All attorneys who meet the minimum qualifications are eligible to be included on the list of General guardian ad litem, however the Court reserves the right to conduct record checks and require specialized experience as it deems appropriate.

PAYMENT OF GENERAL GUARDIANS AD LITEM

General guardians ad litem (when not otherwise serving in the capacity of a Juvenile guardian ad litem) shall be paid by the parties unless one or more of the parties are indigent pursuant to Section 514.040 RSMo., as determined by the court on a case by case basis. In such situations, the fees for the guardian ad litem for the indigent party shall be paid by public funds. Guardians ad litem may be required to submit case accountings documenting hours served in a particular case.

RETENTION OF GENERAL GUARDIANS AD LITEM

General guardians ad litem serve at the pleasure of the Family Court and may be removed from the list at any time if, in the judgment of the Administrative Judge, it is in the best interests of the Court. The Administrative Judge reserves the right to periodically review this list of guardians ad litem to ensure that clients are receiving effective representation and that their best interests are being served.

In order to determine the extent of a guardian ad litem's compliance with the Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Standards and his or her fitness to continue as a guardian ad litem on the Court's list or in a particular case, the Court may require guardians ad litem to complete a check list to be submitted to the applicable judicial officer in cases to which the guardians ad litem are appointed. This check list will, among other things, serve to document the types of activities performed by the guardian ad litem in preparing for the case, the extent of the interaction of the guardian ad litem with the client and the quality of representation of the client by the guardian ad litem in court proceedings.

REQUIRED ANNUAL TRAINING - ALL GUARDIANS AD LITEM

Guardians ad litem must complete 3 hours of specialized training annually to serve as a guardian ad litem and be maintained on the Court's approved lists. Training may be provided by any qualified entity approved by The Missouri Bar for providing continuing

legal education training and shall be accredited by the Supreme Court's Judicial Education Committee.

Guardians ad litem shall submit an affidavit evidencing proof of such training to the Family Court Administrator by July 31 of each year. The affidavit shall also contain an acknowledgment that the guardian ad litem is aware of the Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Standards, has reviewed the contents thereof and agrees to comply with same.

LOCAL CIRCUIT COURT RULES

The Court has reviewed the local court rules of the 21st Judicial Circuit and has determined that no modification to such rules is necessary at the present time to effectively implement the Court's plan for implementation of the Guardian ad Litem Standards.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT GUARDIANS AD LITEM

Guardians ad litem are officers of the court and, thus, fall within the jurisdiction of the court. Any complaints about criticism of the Guardian ad item's conduct shall be directed to the division wherein the Guardian ad litem was appointed.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Court shall review this implementation plan annually to determine the need for any modifications necessary to assure the continued effectiveness of the Guardian ad Litem Standards.