



CIRCUIT COURT OF JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI  
FAMILY COURT DIVISION  
625 EAST 26<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64108-2719

**POLICY & PROCEDURE**

Issued by: Director of Office of the Guardian ad Litem – Family Court

Topic: **Policy No. 1030-20 --Volunteers**

Effective Date: July 1, 2013

New:                      Revised: 7/07/2015                      Rescinds:                      Reviewed: June 1, 2018

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Office of the Guardian ad Litem (OGAL) through its volunteer coordinator to seek out and utilize volunteers to help with its duties and responsibilities in representing clients, increasing personal contacts with clients and for increasing public awareness of the OGAL program. OGAL volunteers must comply with certain restrictions and requirements.

DEFINITIONS:

Volunteer Program- A program of volunteers and interns that provide services to the program for no monetary or material gain.

Volunteer- Any person who, of his/her own free will, provides services to a facility/program with no monetary or material gain, regularly or occasionally.

Intern- An advanced student or recent graduate with an accredited college and/or university undergoing supervised, practical training.

Character- A variety of personal attributes including the existence of (or lack thereof) virtues such as honesty, integrity, fortitude, or of positive behaviors or habits.

Candidate- Any person, through expression or written application, who expresses interest in a particular role or function.

PROCEDURES:

The Director will have final authority, responsibility and accountability for maintaining a volunteer services program. The Director will select a Volunteer Coordinator who will plan, coordinate, and manage the volunteer program.

1. The Volunteer Coordinator will be qualified to coordinate the volunteer program through skills, knowledge, and abilities.
  2. The Volunteer Coordinator will be a staff attorney who has been given the volunteer services program.
- A. The Volunteer Coordinator will recruit, screen and select volunteers for the program.
1. Staff will be encouraged to participate in active recruitment in active recruitment efforts.
  2. Recruitment efforts will be directed to all genders, cultural and socio-economic segments of the community and will include, but not be limited to, civic organizations, faith based organizations, educational institutions and individuals.
- B. Volunteer Eligibility
1. Any person who is at least 21 years of age, with the exception of college/university interns, and of good character will be eligible to apply as a volunteer or intern. Persons who are under 21 years of age may be eligible to apply if authorization is obtained from the Director.
  2. Ex-offenders may be accepted may be accepted as volunteers/interns subject to the same criteria that would be required if they were seeking Family Court employment. Ex-offenders will only be considered eligible after they have successfully completed the terms of their sentence or received an official pardon (See Family Court Policy 120-15, Selection, Retention, and Promotion of Ex-Offenders) and receive a positive recommendation from the Director.
  3. If determined ineligible, there is no appeal process available to the volunteer candidate, however, the volunteer candidate will be informed about the reason they were not selected.
- C. Application
1. Volunteer and intern candidates will be referred to the Volunteer Coordinator to make a formal application for service by submitting a Volunteer/Intern Application Form, Criminal Record Check, Request for Child Abuse and Neglect Record, and Sex Offender registry clearance.
  2. Each volunteer/intern candidate shall compete a screening process prior to interaction with youth and families. At minimum, each candidate shall consent to and comply with a background check, including but not limited to, a criminal history and child abuse or neglect investigation,
  3. Volunteer candidates who seek to provide a service on a one-time basis may be required to consent and comply with a criminal history and a child abuse/neglect inquiry. The Director may grant an exception on a case-by-case basis.

D. Orientation

1. Upon satisfactory completion of the application process, volunteer/intern candidates become volunteer/interns.
2. Prior to assignment and, as a condition of service, each volunteer/intern will successfully complete and orientation/training appropriate to the nature of the assignment and so each volunteer is familiar with the policies and responsibilities associated with guardians ad litem. The Volunteer Coordinator will maintain documentation of training provided to volunteers/interns in the individual's file.
3. The Volunteer Coordinator will assure that volunteers and interns of all the rules, policies and procedures relevant to their functions.
4. The Volunteer Coordinator will assure that volunteers and interns understand the term of their service and their specific tasks, responsibilities and authority.
5. Each volunteer shall abide by the confidentiality policy of the Office of the Guardian ad Litem and Circuit Court and the Missouri Guardian ad Litem Standards. Each volunteer shall sign an acknowledgement of the policy and standards.
6. All volunteers and interns, including those service assignments occurring on a regular basis and those who provide a service on a one-time basis, will agree, in writing, to abide by all facility/program policies, particularly those relating to security, prior to entry into the volunteer services program.

E. Services Provided

1. Volunteers/interns may not provide mental health professional services. Specifically, mental health services are obtained through qualified mental health professionals.

F. Volunteer Assignment

1. The Volunteer Coordinator will assign volunteers and interns to functions based upon their interests, capabilities, qualifications, and the program's needs. Each volunteer will be assigned specific tasks by the Volunteer Coordinator or OGAL attorneys.
2. Identification cards may be issued to volunteers/interns, depending on the frequency of acceptance of service assignments.
3. When deemed necessary for security, volunteers/interns may be requested to submit to a search of their property and person using the same procedures that are in place for staff.

G. Supervision

1. The Volunteer Coordinator will directly supervise the volunteer program and will coordinate with others who are assigned responsibility for direct supervision of any volunteers.
2. The Director or designee and the Volunteer Coordinator will approve, monitor and coordinate the activities of the volunteers/interns.
3. The Volunteer Coordinator will monitor the satisfaction of the volunteer experience by observing interactions and by various survey components.
4. The Volunteer Coordinator or designee will assign volunteers/interns to a specific project and will implement the following:

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- a. Provide an orientation to his/her specific assignment.
- b. Inform the volunteer/intern of expectations.
- c. Provide appropriate training.
- d. Recognize and demonstrate and appreciation of the volunteer/intern's accomplishments.
- e. Share relevant information with the volunteer to assist in completion of the assignment.
- f. Meet with the volunteer/intern on a regular basis.
- g. Facilitate the opportunity for the volunteer/intern to make suggestions regarding the development of the volunteer services program.

### H. Records

The Volunteer Coordinator will maintain a separate record for each volunteer and intern that includes but is not limited to the Application and Volunteer Confidentiality agreement, records/screening checks, feedback, surveys and any training documents. These records will be maintained by after the volunteer/intern no longer provides a service.

### I. Inappropriate Behavior and Volunteer Dismissal

All volunteers are expected to act in a suitable manner at all times. At Jackson County Family Court Services, we provide a positive and safe work environment and expect all volunteers to uphold these standards. The safety and security of our clients is our number one priority. The Director and/or Volunteer Coordinator will curtail, postpone, or discontinue the services of a volunteer/intern when substantial reasons for doing so exist. Such reasons may include, but are not limited to:

1. Breach of Confidentiality.
2. Unlawful conduct or breach of court rules or policies.
3. Physical or emotional illness.
4. Inability or unwillingness to cooperate with staff.
5. Engaging in activities that threaten the safety, order or security of the court or the safety of the volunteer or others.
6. Erratic, unreliable attendance.
7. Unsatisfactory service.
8. Discontinuance of the program.

Volunteers are to be treated with the same respect as paid staff. However, it is important to note that volunteers, unlike paid staff, cannot use the Circuit Court's appeal process. The following procedures relate to dealing with a volunteer performance or dispute not involving misconduct that could result in the instant dismissal. The determination of what constitutes misconduct which could result in instant dismissal shall be at the sole discretion of the Director or designee.

### J. Procedure for Inappropriate Behavior and Volunteer Dismissal

#### 1. Verbal Warning

The volunteer will be told as soon as possible of any complaint concerning the performance of his/her volunteerism and will be provide with an opportunity to

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discuss the situation. If appropriate, the Volunteer Coordinator will (in consultation with the volunteer) outline how the volunteer must improve his/her performance. Any assistance needed by the volunteer to improve performance will be identified and provided where possible. A date to review the volunteer's performance will be set if required.

2. Written Warning

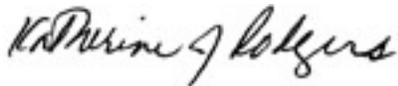
If at the date set, the volunteer's performance has not improved there will be further discussion with the volunteer. This discussion will include the volunteer, a representative of their choice and the Volunteer Coordinator. Plans for improvement will be recorded in writing and a copy given to the volunteer clearly stating that in the event of the problem recurring after this warning, the volunteer may be asked to cease volunteering with the Office of the Guardian ad Litem.

3. Termination of Volunteering

If the problem persists after the written warning, the Volunteer Coordinator will terminate the service of the volunteer concerned. In the case of a volunteer performance dispute between the Volunteer Coordinator and the volunteer, or if the volunteer wants to grieve the decision, the volunteer may request a meeting with the Director of the Office of the Guardian ad Litem. The Director's decision is final.

REVISIONS: The proponent for this policy is the Director of the Office of Guardian ad Litem. If you have recommended changes or want to report errors, send your suggestions to the Director of Guardian ad Litem, Family Justice Center, 625 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, MO 64108.

REVIEW DATE: July 1, 2019



June 1, 2018

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Kathy J. Rodgers  
Director of Office of the Guardian ad Litem-Family Court

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Date

APPLICABLE STANDARDS:

None

CC: Deputy Court Administrator – Family Court Division