

598.12 Attorney or guardian ad litem for minor child — investigations.

1. The court may appoint an attorney to represent the legal interests of the minor child or children of the parties. The attorney shall be empowered to make independent investigations and to cause witnesses to appear and testify before the court on matters pertinent to the legal interests of the children.

2. The court may appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the best interests of the minor child or children of the parties.

a. Unless otherwise enlarged or circumscribed by a court or juvenile court having jurisdiction over the child or by operation of law, the duties of a guardian ad litem with respect to a child shall include all of the following:

(1) Conducting general in-person interviews with the child, if the child's age is appropriate for the interview, and interviewing each parent, guardian, or other person having custody of the child, if authorized by the person's legal counsel.

(2) Conducting interviews with the child, if the child's age is appropriate for the interview, prior to any court-ordered hearing.

(3) Visiting the home, residence, or both home and residence of the child and any prospective home or residence of the child, including visiting the home or residence or prospective home or residence each time placement is changed.

(4) Interviewing any person providing medical, mental health, social, educational, or other services to the child, prior to any court-ordered hearing.

(5) Obtaining firsthand knowledge, if possible, of facts, circumstances, and parties involved in the matter in which the person is appointed guardian ad litem.

(6) Attending any hearings in the matter in which the person is appointed guardian ad litem.

b. The order appointing the guardian ad litem shall grant authorization to the guardian ad litem to interview any relevant person and inspect and copy any records relevant to the proceedings, if not prohibited by federal law. The order shall specify that the guardian ad litem may interview any person providing medical, mental health, social, educational, or other services to the child; may attend any meeting with the medical or mental health providers, service providers, organizations, or educational institutions regarding the child, if deemed necessary by the guardian ad litem; and may inspect and copy any records relevant to the proceedings.

3. The same person may serve both as the child's legal counsel and as guardian ad litem. However, the court may appoint a separate guardian ad litem, if the same person cannot properly represent the legal interests of the child as legal counsel and also represent the best interests of the child as guardian ad litem, or a separate guardian ad litem is required to fulfill the requirements of subsection 2.

4. The court may require that an appropriate agency make an investigation of both parties regarding the home conditions, parenting capabilities, and other matters pertinent to the best interests of the child or children in a dispute concerning custody of the child or children. The investigation report completed by the appropriate agency shall be submitted to the court and available to both parties. The investigation report completed by the appropriate agency shall be a part of the record unless otherwise ordered by the court.

5. The court shall enter an order in favor of the attorney, the guardian ad litem, or an appropriate agency for fees and disbursements, and the amount shall be charged against the party responsible for court costs unless the court determines that the party responsible for costs is indigent, in which event the fees shall be borne by the county.

[C71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §598.12; 82 Acts, ch 1250, §3]

83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 2000 Acts, ch 1067, §1; 2005 Acts, ch 69, §34

Referred to in §598.10, 598.16