



Access to Justice Grant  
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## Guardian Ad Litem Pro Bono Project

Submitted By:  
Kansas Alliance for Nonprofits and My Child Advocate, PA

Contact:  
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## **2. Project Narrative:**

Kansas Alliance for Non-Profits (KAN) is a 501(c)(3). Its mission is to strengthen nonprofits & support collaborative solutions in Kansas. KAN is the fiscal sponsor for My Child Advocate, PA (MCA). This project aligns with KAN's mission by assisting with grassroots initiatives and addressing community challenges.

MCA's mission is safeguarding childhoods through giving children a voice in court. Child abuse allegations are rampant in familial custody disputes. In all Child in Need of Care (CINC) cases the Court appoints a Guardian ad Litem (GAL). Yet in the domestic/civil court, children are only appointed a GAL if the parents can afford one. With no GAL, the child's voice is missing in court proceedings. As a result, court proceedings linger, families become entrenched in conflict and are more traumatized, the likelihood of future abuse, neglect, and unsavory generational patterns skyrocket, and the court system becomes overly burdened and children's voices are not heard and considered.

MCA proposes the creation of a GAL Pro Bono Project. The purpose would be to establish a revered group of seasoned attorneys throughout the state of Kansas who commit to serve as GAL (on a pro bono basis) in one or more domestic court cases a year for a limited term. This esteemed group of GALs will commit to serving at least thirty (30) hours a year, approximately 2.5 hours a month, as a pro bono GAL in a domestic case. GAL's would be part of a revered group of state-wide GALs who have access to twice a month GAL consultation groups, resource referrals, and six hours of free domestic court focused GAL CLEs per year.



From July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, the GAL network will be established, spanning state-wide with at least fifty pro bono participating attorneys, twice a month consultation groups, a statewide resource referral list created, and one executed domestic GAL specific six (6) hour CLE.

*Last year in Kansas, 46% of families with children struggled with paying basic household expenses. Separation and divorce place further financial strain on families, and many children who would benefit from a GAL in the domestic court, simply do not have parents who have the financial means to afford it.* Most families going through divorce and custody proceedings cannot afford it, let alone, afford a *Guardian ad Litem* for their children in these proceedings. Without a child's voice being a part of proceedings, children are denied true access to justice, and resolution of civil cases where child custody is at issue, are delayed.

The GAL Pro Bono Project will ultimately provide a means for children to be appointed a GAL in a domestic case despite a parent's financial means. In addition, through offering regular consultation, a regular GAL training specifically focused on GAL work in domestic court cases, and a list of resources available to serve this specific population, children will have greater opportunity for true access to justice in Kansas by skilled and trained representation being their voice in the domestic/civil proceedings, the duration of domestic/civil court proceedings will be reduced as the GAL can help return the focus to the children involved, and families will be spared from the unintended trauma caused by litigation.

In the mental health arena, regular consultations are the norm, yet in the attorney sector,



they are an anomaly. GALs and Judges regular participation in consultation groups, will bolster resiliency, detour confirmation basis, result in more trauma informed practices, expand participants knowledge base, and increase creative problem solving, ultimately lead to supporting best practice.

Trina A. Nudson has run KALAP's Resiliency Group for attorneys since 2019. Unfortunately, there is a stigma associated with participating in the group as most of the participants are involved due to a pending disciplinary action. On the other hand, Trina A. Nudson, in the field of coaching and therapy, it is honorable to be a member of consultation group. Trina A. Nudson is an active member of three regular consultation groups that meet one to two times per month, Bill Eddy's Consultation Group, Court Involved Therapists Consultation Group, and Divorce Coach Academy Consultation groups, and the benefits are great. Through rewriting the narrative of consultation groups in the domestic court arena, we can improve the field of the domestic court, while providing children access to justice in the domestic courts.

A. Project Design

Kansas is divided into thirty-one judicial districts with one hundred and sixty-three (163) district court judges, not all of these take domestic cases. The GAL Pro Bono Project will be an established resource center for the district court judges presiding over domestic court matters and practicing Kansas attorneys within those jurisdictions who are willing to accept pro bono guardian ad litem appointments specifically in the domestic court arena. The resource center will offer bi-monthly scheduled group consultation facilitated by Trina A. Nudson, LBSW, JD,



CDC, serve as a clearinghouse for resources specific to domestic custody disputes, and offer continuing legal and multi-disciplinary education and collaborative opportunities.

This is comprehensive project in that it encompasses Principle 9 and 10 of the Cady Justice Reform Initiative, specifically, it implements a forum for high quality judicial education and training and fosters strong partnerships with legal professionals and service providers. It will provide an environment for judges and GALs throughout the state of Kansas to connect on more complicated pressing child custody issues, provide a forum to explore innovative approaches, and the opportunity to become more informed on substantive legal issues that extend beyond traditional family law statutes and cases. A better understanding of trauma and a forum to bolster resiliency will empower judges and GALs to impact positive change within families. Understanding conditions and circumstances of trauma is imperative to the administration of justice. This approach will help all parties return to the focus to the children and offer all children, despite their parents' financial circumstances, the opportunity to have a voice in the courtroom. As such judges will be better positioned to make decisions rationally, efficiently, and knowledgeably in the best interest of the children. At least 72% of family law cases nationally involve at least one self-represented litigant, having a GAL involved in these cases will assist the judiciary to resolve cases where abuse or neglect is claimed more expeditiously.

The breadth of the project would be statewide. The judiciary will be knowledgeable of the families most in need of GAL services. The outreach will begin with the judiciary and a request for those individuals in their district who presently serve as a GAL. The GAL Pro Bono Project will then hold informational meetings and provide specific court orders and parameters to



the Pro Bono GAL appointment, ie a limited appointment to exceed no more than thirty (30) hours per appointment. Direct marketing will occur with current practicing GALs as this will be a group of experienced GALs. The idea is this group would consist of an esteemed group of professionals, and those involved would receive regular consultation and continuing education at no cost. It would serve as consortium of professionals that seek to expand their knowledge base and improve the face of domestic court.

B. Implementation Plan

PHASE ONE: July 1 – August 31 creating and formulating website, form orders, marketing material and formats of regular consultation groups and scheduling and acquiring contact information for the judiciary.

PHASE TWO: September 1 – October 15 outreach to judiciary and gathering of GALs within each jurisdiction, drafting GAL application packet, reaching out to GALs with marketing efforts, scheduling and beginning planning a CLE for January as well as gathering resources to include in resource lists.

PHASE THREE: October 15 – November 30 holding personal and group Q & As for judges and interested GALs, recording information sessions, and planning CLE, finalize resource list, formulate strategy for record keeping of GAL hours, and send out at least 50 application packets to interested GALs. Trina A. Nudson was invited to present at AFCC 16th Symposium on Child Custody November 14 – November 16. The presentation is entitled It Takes A Village- Fostering Community Partnerships, and if selected for this grant Trina A. Nudson will share the program with the participants of the conference to increase awareness.



PHASE FOUR: December 1 – December 31 reviewing and approving applications and sending out commitment letters, create and circulate the Jan 1 – June 30, 2024, consultation schedules, provide Judges and approved GALs access to resource list, and roll out the Pro Bono lists to district court judges.

PHASE FIVE: January 1 – June 30 put on first CLE, begin consultation groups, and approved GALs begin accepting GAL appointments, providing regular updates on website how many families are being served with a goal of serving at least 50 Pro Bono GAL appointments by June 30, 2025, and having at least 20% (33) of the district court Judges in the state of Kansas participating in at least one consultation group by June 30, 2024.

Project Administrator: Trina A. Nudson, LBSW, JD, CDC with the assistance of her administrative staff will be responsible for collecting data, performance measures and how this information will be used to guide and evaluate the program.

C. Management Structure

Kansas Alliance for Non-Profits (KAN) is fiscal agent of My Child Advocate, PA. My Child Advocate, PA will administer the grant. Trina A. Nudson owns My Child Advocate PA will be personally responsible for administrating the GAL Pro Bono program along with her team of administrative staff, Amy Piccini who has been employed by My Child Advocate, PA as an office manager since October 2017, and Autumn Collins who has been employed as a paralegal at My Child Advocate, PA since June of 2022. Trina Nudson regularly consults with Cindy Miles, Executive Director of KAN on a regular and ongoing basis. General content of Trina's resume follows:



## Experience

### **January 2008 – Present**

Owner/ Attorney • My Child Advocate, PA

*Reinventing the face of law by opening a one-of-a-kind boutique client centered practice law firm that primarily focuses on representing the best interest of children in high conflict custody disputes.*

*Evolving a brand and proven process that transforms the focus of child custody litigation from being right to getting it right.*

*Inspiring and educating multi-disciplinary sectors on creative and innovative ways to bring a child's voice into the courtroom.*

*Collaborating and engaging with professionals spanning over multi-disciplines to investigate and gather information to recommend and advocate for a path forward for families.*

*Managing and overseeing professional and administrative staff and collaborating with various vendors and providers to offer best in field service delivery.*

*Providing mediation, case management, parent coordination, custody evaluation, and legal services in high passed, high conflict court proceedings.*

### **January 2008 – Present**

Owner/ CEO/ Director of Service Provision/ Divorce Coach • The Layne Project, Inc

*Revolutionizing Court Involved Social Services in Johnson County, KS through establishing, branding, executing, running, and growing a family friendly, trauma informed, comprehensive social service agency.*

*Envisioning, developing, authoring, branding, promoting, executing, and growing exclusive experiential curriculums to include BeH2O sixteen-week co-parenting curriculum, Pause a twelve month family cohesion curriculum, and Lokahi a sixteen week psycho-education group for children going through family transition.*

*Creating and fostering a company culture rooted in our company values of resilience, open-mindedness, competence, and keeping it real.*

*Leading, coaching, mentoring, and learning from our team*

*Evolving as a business owner and community leader*

*Providing internal and external continuing education*

**GUARDIAN AD LITEM PRO BONO PROJECT**





*Collaborating with mental health providers, the court system and other community stakeholders*

*Implementing and executing running our company on the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) throughout the agency*

*Creating, finetuning, and developing best practice and proven processes throughout each division of our agency*

**May 2019 – Present**

Kanas Supreme Court – Kanas Lawyers Assistance Program

*Promote, run, and facilitate the Kansas Resiliency Group for Attorneys*

## Education

**University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 1994 - 1998**

*Bachelor's in Social Work, Bachelor's in Human Development & Family Life*

**University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 1994 - 1998**

*Juris Doctorate*

**Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS Fall 2006**

*Domestic Mediation Certificate*

**Washburn Law School, Topeka, KS Fall 2006**

*Certificate in Domestic Case Management*

**Children Beyond Dispute, Spring 2017**

*Certificate in Child Inclusive Mediation*

**Certified Divorce Coaching Institute, Summer 2017**

*Certified Divorce Coach Certification*

**CINERGY, Fall 2017**

*Conflict Management Training*

**New Ways for Families Coach Certification Program, Fall 2023**

*New Ways for Families Coach*

## Leadership

*I have envisioned, branded, and grown two innovative, one of kind businesses that have helped solve a community problem and changed the landscape of court involved work in Johnson County, KS. I have authored and implemented family and co-parenting curriculums. My Child*

*GUARDIAN AD LITEM PRO BONO PROJECT*



*Advocate, PA won the top 25 of under 25 award through Thinking Bigger in 2019. In 2021 The Layne Project, Inc won the Emerging Business of the Year through the SBDC. I am certified divorce coach, certified mediator, conciliator, parenting coordinator, and case manager. My companies run on EOS and our company culture has been transformed through the Arbingner Institute. I am the chair of the Johnson County Bar Association Family Law Section. I have created and presented local and national workshops, as well as created a discussion guide that accompanies the Tommy film written and produced by Darren Mort and utilized within the Australian Family Court system. I thrive on creativity, high energy, face paced, and do not buckle under pressure. I grow through adversity and see challenges as an opportunity for growth. I learn from my peers, mentors, clients, and staff. I am humbled and grateful for every challenge I have faced and take time to celebrate the simple pleasures.*

**3. Funding Amount Requested:** \$79,673.00

**4. Project Alignment with Priority Areas:**

- Full or limited scope pro bono legal services for litigants involved in Kansas district court proceedings. *This project will provide full scope GAL Pro Bono Legal Services involved in Kansas District Court Proceedings Across the state of Kansas;*
- Projects that focus on addressing unmet legal needs and do not duplicate existing services or for which other funds are available. *Children who find themselves in the domestic court system, do not have true access to justice. If their parents do not have the financial means to finance a Guardian ad Litem in custody proceedings their voices are not heard. This Project focuses on addressing this need throughout the state, and there is not other program of this comprehensive nature available.*

**5. What Type Of Cases Will This Project Address:** *Specifically, this grant will address domestic cases where child custody is at issue.*

**6. Is This a New Project:** *Yes, this is a new project, itself is a new project.*

**7. Operation of Similar Project:** *This is a novel project idea and has not yet been operated by MCA, yet Trina A. Nudson has run KALAP's resiliency group for the last five (5) years, and has and is an active participant in several consultation groups.*

**8. What Eligibility Criteria Will Apply to Determine Who Will Receive Services Through Your Project:** *The District Court Judges will determine which domestic court cases would have a GAL Project Pro Bono Attorney appointed. To qualify for appointment, a parent must make 150% or below the poverty level.*



9. **How Many People Do You Expect to Serve Through This Project During the Grant Period?** *The first year, the project will serve in at least 50 domestic cases as a GAL and provide consultation and support for at least 50 GALs and 20 domestic court judges.*
10. **If There is a Greater Demand For Project Services Than You Can Meet, What Criteria Will You Use to Prioritize Who Receives Services?** *The Court will determine who is appointed a GAL Pro Bono Project GAL, after determining whether the family meets the financial qualifications. As for consultations and training for GALs and Judges, all domestic court Judges are eligible to participate, but only those GALs who are participating in the program will be permitted no cost consultation.*
11. **If You Are Proposing Offering Services At The Self-Help Center, Please List the District Court Self-Help Center Location(s) and Number of Hours You Would Provide At the Center On a Monthly Basis.** *N/A*
12. **If You Are Willing To Provide Remote Legal Services At District Self-Help Centers Throughout the State, Please List the Number of Hours You Would Provide on a Monthly Basis?** *N/A*
13. **How Will Your Project Results Be Evaluated?** *The results will be evaluated by gauging the following:*
  - *In the first year, the number of GALs signed up to accept at least one pro bono domestic GAL appointment a year [goal 50]*
  - *By month six, the average number of GALs participating in at least one monthly consultation [goal 15]*
  - *By month six the average the number of Judges participating in at least one monthly consultation [goal 4]*
14. **Have You Ever Received Access to Justice Grant Funds For this Project in the Past?** *No.*
15. **What Is The Total Estimated Cost for This Project During the Grant Period From All Funding Sources?** *\$94,813.00*
16. **If This Project Will Not Be Fully Funded By ATJ Grant Funds, What Are Your Other Sources of Funding For the Project?** *Private donations.*
17. **Project Budget Breakdown- In the Chart Below, List Project Totals For Each Category, Suning Whole Dollar Amounts.**



Item	ATJ	Other	Total
<b>Personnel Costs</b>			
Professional Salaries	\$36,000.00		
Support Salaries	\$9,600.00		
Employee Benefits (taxes, outsourced HR)	-	\$6,560.00	
Total Personnel Costs	\$45,600.00	\$6,500.00	\$52,160.00
<b>Non-Personnel Costs</b>			
Capital Expenditures	-	-	
Non-Capital Expenditures	\$9300.00	\$2700.00	
Supplies	\$480.00	\$480.00	
Travel	\$6,000.00	-	
Insurances		\$5400.00	
Audit & Fiscal Sponsor	\$7,243.00		
Telephone/Communications	\$2450.00		
Other – website development and marketing material, interactive password protected social platforms	\$8,600.00		
Total Non-personnel costs	\$34,073.00	\$8,580.00	\$42,653.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$79,673.00</b>	<b>\$8,580.00</b>	<b>\$94,813.00</b>

**18. Budget Narrative- Explain How You Will Use the Requested Funds For Each of the Categories Shown Below. If A Category Does Not Apply, Write “N/A.” If You Will Use Funds To Pay Salaries, Include the Names and Titles of Employees or Contractors Who Will Be Funded Through the Grant (if known).**

**a. Personal Costs**

- i. Professional Salaries: \$36,000.00 a year would go towards paying Trina A. Nudson, JD, LBSW, fully creating and administering the Guardian ad Litem Pro Bono Project. [approximately 12 – 15 hours per week]
- ii. Support Salaries: \$9600.00 a year would go towards paying support staff salaries, approximately 8 – 10 hours per week.
- iii. Employee Benefits: n/a

**b. Non-personnel costs**

- i. Capital Expenditures: n/a
- ii. Non-Capital Expenditures: office space, training space, office maintenance, utilities cleaning
- iii. Supplies: ordinary office supplies.
- iv. Travel: To market the program across the state of Kansas visits to different jurisdictions will be necessary. This will result in travel costs for driving as well as some lodging.



- v. Insurances: n/a
- vi. Audit/Fiscal Sponsor: *MCA has secured a fiscal sponsor to oversee the project, the fiscal sponsor will be responsible for overseeing the grant funding and auditing cost is 10% of the grant award.*
- vii. Telephone/Communication: *much of the work will be done virtually requiring, internet, computer usage, phone usage, zoom software, calendaring software, ect. This number was calculated based on using 20% of the expenses MCA utilizes for these services, as this project will incur about 25 – 30% of the agency’s available resources and time to administer. [Telephone \$1200.00, Internet \$200.00 Copier/fax machine \$300, computers and software programs \$750.00)*
- viii. Other – *website development and marketing material, interactive password protected social platforms*