

Guardians Ad Litem (GALs) in Housing Court Information Sheet for OWNERS

What is a “Guardian Ad Litem”?

A Guardian Ad Litem or “GAL” is someone the Judge chooses to help a person who cannot come to court or protect their rights.



What does a GAL do?

In Housing Court, GALs work to help the person they are appointed to represent solve their Court case. This includes going to Court, getting help from agencies that offer services the person needs, and trying to work out an agreement that protects the person’s rights.

What do I do if I think I, or someone I know, needs a GAL?

Tell the Judge! If the case has not been assigned to a Judge, tell the Clerk’s Office.

What should I do if don’t think I need a GAL but the Judge or someone else thinks I do?

Tell the Judge why you think you do not need a GAL.

If the Court appoints a GAL for me, does that mean that the Judge believes that I am not competent?

No. When a Judge appoints a GAL, it is because the Judge thinks you cannot defend your rights and protect your interests by yourself.

Can a GAL recommend a solution that I do not agree with?

Yes. While a GAL must think about your wishes before making a recommendation to the Judge, he or she may believe that your wishes are not in your best interest and recommend a solution you may not agree with. It is up to the Judge to decide.

Does a GAL have the right to get involved in my personal affairs?

A GAL does not have the legal power to manage your personal affairs. He

or she is simply responsible for helping you resolve your Housing Court case.

When does the GAL's work in my case end?

Before the GAL's work in a case can end, the GAL must take any steps needed to make sure that you are able to follow through with your Court agreement.

If the Court appoints a GAL for me, what should I expect the GAL to do to help me in my Housing Court case?

A GAL must:



- try to meet with you, either in Court or at your home, if you cannot come to Court
- speak with you about your case and find out what you would like to see happen in your case
- recommend a solution to the Judge that considers your wishes and is in your best interest
- tell the Judge if you agree or disagree with the solution he or she is recommending so that the Judge knows how you feel

What if the GAL does not do any of these things?

You have the right to tell the Judge if the GAL does not do any of these things. Only the Judge has the power to tell the GAL what to do or to remove a GAL, if there is a problem.

Hon. Edwina G. Mendelson
Deputy Chief
Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives

