

MEETING MINUTES

GAL'S & PARENT ATTORNEYS



DATE:

4/10/2026

TIME:

12pm

FACILITATOR:

Mary A Cosmo

IN ATTENDANCE

Mary A. Cosmo, Jennifer Hinz, Brian Setzer, Crista Beracha, Ben Burkemper

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

First Meeting

AGENDA

Having Regular Meeting
Meetings Purpose – to gather and share strategies, experiences
Discovery Issues
FST Meetings
DJO Reports

DISCUSSION

REGULAR MEETINGS: We discussed having regular meetings, some like the virtual option, some want in-person. To accommodate and build participation we can start out with a blended option. Mary Cosmo can ensure accommodation for both.

DISCOVERY: Mary Cosmo shared some experiences with discovery. CD does not provide copies of documents until the morning of Court or not at all. I was reluctant to believe but suspected this was on purpose until I received an email stating “they were only providing a certain document to GAL but not the parent’s attorney as they could get it from court.”

Being that we are often the GAL and a parent attorney the discussion was relevant to everyone's experience. Every GAL could state a time when they did know of or have reviewed documents until the hearing. The problem becomes during the pendency of the case, it is hard to counsel a parent when we do not have the documents or know of the documents existence prior to a hearing. For some parents the hearing is their day on court but counsel does have or is unaware of parent's progress and CD discussions with parent. To engage in formal discovery is time consuming and prohibitive where after a motion or request, then a motion to compel, and then by the time when have done the formal request, said documents of concern are provided at the next hearing but have a date of 2-3 months prior. The general consensus is that we do not see documents until it is presented to the court, if at all.

Mary Cosmo, proposed an Administrative Order with specificity of documents that require on going disclosure as they occur or near the time of occurrence having to be disclosed within a reasonable time. Question remains as to what is a reasonable time. We discussed the In-person FST CD is requiring. In one division, the Judge includes in there order that CD shall provide a link to FST meeting for Attorneys.

Mary Cosmo will draft a Proposed Amend Order for GAL's & Parent Attorney for comment. After comments are in and proposed changes are addressed the Proposed Admin Order will be presented to the Administrative Judge for comments and/or approval.

It is so important that GAL's participate and GAL comment in the creation of this proposed order because such an order is to assist us in being the best GAL and Parent Attorneys in a system that is underbudget and dealing with turnover in CD staff and/or GALs within the confidential world of the Juvenile court proceedings. I believe we can address some common issues and make the process better for everyone involved including, advancing juvenile cases forward, providing better advice and counsel , and strengthening the Professional TEAM's participation with each other, all in the best interest of the children we serve. **Keep in Mind that this proposed order is just that a "proposal." The Administrative Judge may change, remove, or refuse to adopt it. However, your GAL experience and knowledge is wanted to make this happen.**

Discussion continues.

NEW BUSINESS

- Discovery Issues
- FST In-Person/Virtual
- Meeting Regularly

NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- Do we want to elect a board
- Do we want to elect a committee

NEXT MEETING

MAY 15, 2026 at 12PM (In-Person and Virtual at the Court house, Room TBD)

ATTACHED DOCUMENT: PROPOSED ADMIN ORDER