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How to Become a DN AAL

How to Become a Dependency-Neglect Attorney ad Litem

There are two types of positions for a dependency-neglect attorney ad litem (AAL): (1) full-time state employment, or (2) part-time contractor. When there are vacancies in the program, advertisements are posted on the Judiciary website and advertised in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Attorneys who represent juveniles in dependency-neglect (D-N) proceedings must meet the qualifications of Supreme Court Administrative Order No. 15 [1]. It is not required that applicants have completed the qualification process prior to applying, however, the qualification must be completed prior to an offer of employment or a contract being entered. Pursuant to Administrative Order No 15, each AAL must complete 10 hours of initial qualification CLE specific to dependency-neglect cases. The initial qualification training is sponsored by the AOC. When training dates are available, information about registration can be found on the AOC website. To become a qualified AAL, the attorneys must also complete a clinical requirement for each of the various types of hearings in dependency-neglect cases by participating in the hearings as co-counsel for a qualified AAL. In addition to the other CLE requirements, after becoming qualified as an AAL, attorneys must continue to receive four hours of specific CLE approved by the AOC as dependency-neglect CLE every year to remain qualified.

Applications are reviewed to ensure that the applicant is a member of the bar in good standing and then the AAL Director seeks input from others in the district where the attorney practices, including judges and attorneys in the area. Applicants are required to submit a letter explaining why they want to do this type of work to assure that the attorney has the right philosophy to represent the best interest of children. If attorneys pass this stage, they are interviewed, sometimes with an individual and other times with a panel of interviewers. References are checked and the attorney will be offered employment or a contract if selected. New attorneys are provided with individual orientation, including a review of the Attorney Ad Litem Program Manual, Program Policy and Procedure Manual, reference materials, and forms they are required to complete monthly on their cases. The AAL program is also in the process of establishing mentor attorneys to assist new attorneys in the field when needed. However, we are very fortunate with our level of experienced attorneys. At present, 39% of our attorneys have more than 11 years experience in child abuse and neglect representation; 31% have more than eight years experience, and 30% have 4-6 years experience.

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Source URL: https://courts.arkansas.gov/administration/juvenile/aal/become-dn-aal

Links:
[1] https://courts.arkansas.gov/rules-and-administrative-orders/court-rules/order-15-attorneys-151-qualifications-and-standards