

GAL Guidebook Revision Workgroup Minutes

Attendees:

1. Krystal Chase, The Women's Center
2. Virginia Gittens Escudero, UNIDOS
3. Jessica Honish, Rainbow House
4. Kari LaScala, End Domestic Abuse WI
5. Kelsey Mullins, Office of Court Operations
6. Amber Peterson, Director of State Courts Office
7. Gricel Santiago-Rivera, Santiago-Rivera Family Law & Mediation
8. Bronson Stein, Bolton Refuge House
9. Tegan Swanson, End Domestic Abuse WI

Update on Participants: The following individuals are no longer able to be part of the committee.

10. Kaitlin Thorpe, the Sunflower Project
11. Amy Vann, Dep't of Children and Families

Today's pre-meeting task: Individual members updated, using tracked changes, their respective sections of the *Guidebook*, based on their selected sections below. Updates were made by Monday, June 24.

Groups: At the last meeting, each participant chose to be part of one+ of four groups based on the SAFeR framework.

- I. **Screen/identify domestic abuse:**
 1. Kelsey
 2. Virginia
 3. Jessica
 4. Tegan
- II. **Assess the nature and context of IPV/define the nature and context**
 1. Kelsey
 2. Krystal
- III. **Focus on the effects of IPV/evaluate the implications of abuse**
 1. Kelsey
 2. Bronson
 3. Kari
- IV. **Respond to IPV/make informed recommendations that account for the domestic abuse**
 1. Kelsey
 2. Gricel
 3. Virginia
 4. Bronson
 5. Amber

Discussion of the present revisions:

LANGUAGE

The group collectively discussed language consistency throughout.

- Abusive and non-abusive parent
 - However, in some instances such as statutes, the language will have to match the statute
 - When discussing general dynamics, “victim” may be more accurate than “non-abusive parent”
 - Is it better to use “victim” due to its statutory meaning?
 - *Discussion tabled for meeting on Introduction and Definitions sections*
- For gender neutral: singular “they”
 - Again, for statute, language must match
- **Tegan:** Families use different vocabulary for themselves – how do we represent this?
- **Kelsey:** We can bracket the language and instruct GALs to follow the lead of families, e.g., [parent]
- **Amber, Kelsey, Tegan:** Not all survivors are in a relationship with the person who has been abusive, how do we represent this? Again, instead of partner - [other parent]
- **Amber:** Domestic abuse (not domestic violence)
- **Kari:** Can we use GAL instead of guardian ad litem? Group agrees.

STEP ONE

- Steps in an Investigation
- Interviewing Children
- **Tegan:** Disclaimer about seeking additional resources before interviewing children, including the Appendices.
 - **Kelsey:** A child interviewing expert has agreed to review.
 - **Amber:** Would someone within DCF have additional resources to add? Possibly add links.
- Restraining Orders – **Amber/Gricel:** Due to attorney audience, this section can be shortened. Make the formatting consistent across the four types of restraining order. Reference that they are a tool that can support safety within a family case

STEP TWO

- Coercive control
 - **Krystal:** Tie this back, creating questions a GAL should ask themselves to reflect.
- Developmental stages.
 - **Amber:** Make this into a table, provide key info. **Kelsey:** Include the developmental goals for each stage.
- Parenting in the context of domestic abuse
 - **Bronson/Gricel:** Need to include something on how the non-abusive parent is affected, often this is a sticking point in custody/placement decisions.

- **Krystal:** There is some research showing the resolution of parenting deficits caused by trauma when an abusive relationship has ended.
- **Amber:** Move “trauma signs” practice point into this new subsection.

STEP THREE

- Statutory presumptions
 - **Kari:** Make the emphasis on the fact that the presumption must be addressed prior to the best interest of the children factors.
- Best interest factors
 - Parental alienation: Discussion of who has expertise to provide information. Kelsey to reach out to experts for resources.

STEP FOUR

- Group approved changes to formatting of the section titles
- Group approved change to format language for recommendations as a table

Next steps:

- Wrap up revision of Step 4
- Discuss *Introduction* and *Definitions and Foundation* sections
- Finalize language for consistency throughout (e.g., victim or non-abusive parent, abuser or abusive parent, domestic violence or domestic abuse)

Next meeting:

- Scheduled for Friday, July 12, 11am-1pm