



FAMILY LAW GUARDIAN AD LITEM

Department: Superior Court
Job Class #: 334200
Pay Range: Professional 09

FLSA: Exempt
Represented: No

Classification descriptions are intended to present a descriptive list of the range of duties performed by employees in this class and are not intended to reflect all duties performed within the job.

GENERAL FUNCTION: Under the direction of the Court Administrator, conduct neutral and impartial investigations and provide objective evaluations, report findings, testify in court and prepare recommendations to Superior Court Judges and Court Commissioners for the disposition of issues concerning residential schedules or visitation in family law cases, where there are allegations of abuse and neglect, and both parties are unable to afford the costs associated with obtaining the services of a privately paid guardian ad litem.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Prepare written evaluations and assessments for persons who are requesting, through the court, residential schedules for children or visitation rights. Evaluate and assess parenting plans submitted to the Court for purposes of obtaining residential placement or visitation rights.
- Gather information regarding family and marital history; conduct extensive interviews with clients; assess client level of emotional and social functioning; respond to potential crisis situations; recommend appropriate services; maintain confidential detailed client files.
- Collect and analyze case information available through various social service agencies, law enforcement agencies, childcare providers, and through collateral contacts; prepare written evaluations and recommendations; verify accuracy of family court information received.
- Present findings and recommendations, under oath, to the Court as required by the Superior Court Judges and Court Commissioners.
- Ensure all parties, including the public, receive rules, policies, procedures and any pertinent information regarding their case; Maintain contact and correspondence with the court, parties, and others to monitor activity and progress in serious and complex cases; maintains comprehensive log of contacts and information obtained relative to cases.
- Develop cooperative and professional working relationships with professional partners, community service agencies and contracted service providers. (i.e., family law judges and attorneys, child welfare entities, school staff, law enforcement officers, mental health professions, and other professionals involved directly or peripherally in the evaluation process.)
- Adhere to Pierce County Court program policies and procedures, and to state and federal confidentiality regulations.
- Keep up to date on current trends and practices applicable to the area of assignment through continuing education (seminars, meetings, and classes) and reading applicable laws and journals.
- Maintain regular, predictable and punctual attendance during regularly scheduled work hours.
- Meet the traveling requirements of the position.
- Perform the physical requirements of the position; work within the established working conditions of the position.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with Court and County officials, employees and the general public.
- Ensure effective communication with Court and County departments and staff to facilitate and ensure adherence to policies and procedures.

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- Ensure consistent interpretation of laws, rules, policies and procedures.
- Perform other job functions as assigned.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED: Work is performed under general supervision of the Court Administrator and Family Court Judicial Team with the employee expected to plan and complete work independently after objectives, priorities and deadlines have been defined. Work is reviewed in progress and upon completion by the Court Administrator and/or Court Judicial Team for thoroughness, timeliness and compliance with regulations, policies and procedures.

WORK ENVIRONMENT: The work environment characteristics described herein are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of the position. Work is performed in the office, courtroom and also involves travel to schools, homes, community service or employment sites, and other locations. May come into contact with individuals who are argumentative, and in highly emotional situations. May be required, or called upon to work non-standard business hours, evenings and weekends. Driving is required. Danger of physical harm may occasionally be present in the courtroom and during field visits. Some lifting of equipment and furniture in excess of 20 pounds may be required.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: The physical demands described herein are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions. Must have finger dexterity to operate equipment used in the position, able to effectively communicate. There is some walking, sitting, bending/stooping, pushing/pulling and minimal lifting associated with the classification as it is currently performed. Ability to travel to attend meetings away from regular work site may be required.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of:

- The family law justice system, dependency, and courtroom proceedings.
- Trends in the field of child welfare.
- Family and individual assessment; family systems theory, child and adolescent development and attachment dynamics; methods of forensic interviewing and assessment practices
- Domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, drug and alcohol abuse/dependence, and demonstrated ability to assess intimate partner/violence/abuse, child abuse (sexual and physical), and alcohol and drug abuse within the family unit.

Skill in:

- Plan, organize, supervise, delegate, and evaluate program operations.
- Report writing.
- Use of independent judgment and effective decision-making in the application of a wide variety of laws, policies and procedures and in effective problem-solving.
- Effectively coordinating, performing, and completing multiple duties and assignments concurrently and in a timely manner.

Ability to:

- Establish and maintain friendly, supportive and effective, professional working relationships with internal and external customers and stakeholders of the justice system, and treatment providers; effectively efficiently interact with all parties involved in the court process.
- Assess client danger, lethality, and suicide risk in these areas
- Maintain confidential information.

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- Maintain impartiality within a highly charged court environment; and to present expert witness testimony in a domestic relations court of law, present forensic material in adversarial hearings, and make recommendations concerning family disputes.
- Work efficiently and effectively under stress.
- Effectively apply customer service techniques to both internal and external customers.
- Exercise initiative and judgment, and make decisions within the scope of assigned authority.
- Understand and follow written and verbal instructions.
- Work and communicate effectively verbally and in writing to audiences of various social, cultural, ethnic, educational and economic backgrounds.
- Effectively coordinate, perform and complete multiple duties and assignments concurrently and in a timely manner with a varied caseload.
- Utilize word processor or personal computer at an acceptable level of proficiency as required of the position; and operate standard office machines and software.
- Meet the travel requirements of the position.
- Physically perform the essential job functions of the classification.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY: A Masters or Doctorate degree from an accredited College or University, in Counseling, Psychology, Social Work or Law, or a Juris Doctorate from an accredited School of Law. With at least one year of experience as a Guardian ad Litem or at least five years experience as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

An individual whose professional license has been revoked, or surrendered while disciplinary proceedings are pending before professional licensing entities or has been removed from a list of approved guardian ad litem following an unsatisfactory performance evaluation shall not be eligible.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS AND/OR QUALIFICATIONS: Ability to successfully complete and pass a Pierce County background investigation. Must have successfully completed Guardian ad Litem training consistent with the requirement of RCW 2.56.030(15). This requirement may not be waived or substituted. Must possess a valid Washington State Driver's license, or have the ability to obtain the license within 30 days of employment, or otherwise meet the travel requirements of the position.