

**SEMINOLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: Guardian ad Litem's request for additional funding

DEPARTMENT: County Manager's Office **DIVISION:** NA

AUTHORIZED BY: Cynthia A. Coto **CONTACT:** Donald Fisher **EXT.** 7212
County Manager Deputy County Manager

Agenda Date <u>12/12/06</u> Regular <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Work Session <input type="checkbox"/> Briefing <input type="checkbox"/>
Public Hearing – 1:30 <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing – 7:00 <input type="checkbox"/>

MOTION/RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Continue Guardian ad Litem's request for additional funding to the Mid-Year Budget Adjustment estimated in April 2007; or,
- 2) Authorize a portion of Guardian ad Litem's request for \$88,200 in additional funding and authorize the transfer of the same from General Fund Reserves to the appropriate program fund line(s); or,
- 3) Deny Guardian ad Litem's request for additional funding.

At the September 26, 2006 County Commission meeting, the Board directed staff to bring forward Guardian ad Litem's request for additional funding. Please note that the subject request was not included in the its budget proposed during workessions. Further, the 26th was the date of the second public hearing for budget adoption; during discussion the Board decided not to consider the request at the time but rather at a later date.

BACKGROUND:

The Guardian ad Litem is a volunteer program that assists children involved in court proceedings. Duties of volunteers include investigation, facilitation, advocacy and monitoring. The program's

Reviewed by:
Co Atty: _____
DFS: _____
Other: _____
DCM: <u>[Signature]</u>
CM: <u>[Signature]</u>
File No. <u>RCN061</u>

staffing and budget is detailed in the attached memorandum from Ms. Nadine Miller, dated October 24, 2006. The County funds one administrative support position and operating expenditures for a total budget of \$88,844.00.

The following page is a summary of the funding requests as well as Ms. Miller's September 22, 2006 memorandum the details the request.

ITEM	REQUEST	REQUESTOR'S JUSTIFICATION	FUNDING AMOUNT
1	Contract for one full time attorney to help with case load.	There are currently 2 attorneys managing 380 cases (180 each). State guidelines recommend a caseload of 125 per attorney. By adding one more attorney, the caseload per attorney would drop to 126.	\$41,600 estimated at \$20 per hour.
2	Create a Resource Development Coordinator position – 30 hours per week	There are not enough volunteers to meet caseload and there is no one dedicated or experienced in recruitment, which is currently done by the director. There are currently 125 volunteers, not all of which are active. In 2005 there were 48 trained and certified volunteers and 23 new volunteers as of September 2006. There are not enough volunteers to cover the caseload. The position will manage volunteer recruitment / retention, outreach, and grant writing.	\$21,000
3	Double funding for outreach program.	Currently \$10,000 is provided of which \$9,000 was used to advertise on shopping carts in 3 grocery stores. Program exposure to the community is important and feedback has been positive.	\$10,000
4	Increase training budget	Additional funding needed to train staff and volunteers to understand existing and new Statutes.	\$5,000
TOTAL FIRST YEAR REQUEST			\$88,200

Please note that the above does not include the request for two vehicles. Should the Board add this item, the cost is estimated at \$35,200. This would provide \$30,000 for two sedans and \$5,200 for operating and maintenance.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM FUNDING:

Seminole County's Guardian ad Litem program is primarily funded by the General Fund and is supplemented by a portion of the \$65 additional court costs collected by the Clerk of the Court.

Florida Statute 939.185 indicates that 25% of the \$65 court costs can be allocated to support innovative court programs; Seminole County currently funds two such programs: Guardian ad Litem and Court Administration.

The mentioned programs are budgeted from the General Fund and as the court costs are collected throughout the year, the General Fund gets reimbursed. Provided as an example is the FY 05/06 budget:

General Fund Allocation:

Guardian ad Litem:	\$ 79,667
Court Administration:	<u>\$457,938</u>
	\$537,605

There was a total of \$546,556 collected in court costs, therefore, 25% of this amount (\$136,639) went toward reimbursing the General Fund allocation indicated above.

Total Budget:	\$537,605
25% of Court Costs:	<u>\$136,639</u>
	\$400,966 in General Fund Allocation

Please note that the reimbursement can fluctuate based on several factors including the rate of crime and the rate of convictions.

The total adopted budget for the programs in FY06/07 is \$597,604 (\$84,844 for Guardian ad Litem and \$512,760 for Court Administration).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that this item be continued to the Mid-Year Budget Adjustment, estimated for April 2007, so that this item can be reviewed in context with other adjustment and requests.

MEMO:

TO: COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COUNTY MANAGER

FROM: NADINE MILLER, DIRECTOR
GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

DATE: OCTOBER 24, 2006

RE: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION
BUDGET REQUEST

STAFF ALLOCATION

County Funded Full Time Staff:

1 Staff Assistant

State Funded FTE Staff:

1 Program Director

2 Senior Program Attorneys

3.5 Case Coordinators (supervises volunteers)

2.5 Staff Advocates (visits children)

1 Paralegal

1 Human Resource/Recruiter/Trainer/Budget Liaison

State Funded OPS Staff:

30 hrs/wk Case Coordinator

20 hrs/wk Senior Secretary

Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office in Tallahassee manages all dollars regarding staff salaries/benefit packages. Most initiatives required for individual program operation are

maintained and paid at the state level. Budget for Seminole GAL Program is \$552,947.00.

Seminole GAL Program also receives \$11,496 that is managed at the local level. This represents \$5,800 Discretionary (all other needs not specifically budgeted), \$500 Litigation Expense (depositions, transcripts, psychological evaluations, expert witness fees) and cost of postage meter rental (\$1,392) and copier lease (\$3,804).

ALL FUNDING RECEIVED BY THE STATEWIDE GAL OFFICE SINCE IT'S CREATION IN 2004 HAS GONE TOWARDS POSITIONS THAT INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPRESENTED BY A GAL. With increased funding through the State and County, Seminole GAL Program has seen a steady increase in the number of children represented by a GAL.

January 2005 - 423 children had a GAL

January 2006 - 531 children had a GAL

September 2006 - 579 children had a GAL

As of September 31, 2006, the total number of Seminole abused children who need GAL representation is 650*. We do not have the resources to represent 650 children. Based upon current resources, Seminole GAL will maintain representation of 580 children with a volunteer base of 125 (at any one time, approximately 100 volunteers are actively working a case).

*Data given is a "snapshot in time" and will vary depending upon the number of children brought into the system on any given day and the number of children whose cases close on any given day.

Org Code Expenditure Detail Item Budget grouped by Business Center, Business Unit

Seminole County Government

Fiscal Year 2007

Expenditure Detail Item Description	Service Level	Issue #	FY 2007 Budget	FY 2008 Budget	FY 2009 Budget	FY 2010 Budget	FY 2011 Budget
03 Judicial							
0340 Guardian Ad Litem							
034000 Guardian Ad Litem							
510120 Regular Salaries And Wages Salary - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		29,135	30,591	32,121	33,727	35,413
510210 Social Security Matching FICA - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		1,806	1,897	1,992	2,091	2,196
Medicare - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		422	444	466	489	513
510210 Social Security Matching			<u>2,228</u>	<u>2,341</u>	<u>2,458</u>	<u>2,580</u>	<u>2,709</u>
510220 Retirement Contributions Retirement - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		2,870	3,013	2,480	2,604	2,734
510230 Health And Life Insurance Health Insurance - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		4,721	4,343	4,343	4,343	4,343
Life Insurance - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		86	89	95	98	104
LTD - Salary LT \$72,000 - 8564*034000 Cone Sheryl	1		70	73	77	81	85
510230 Health And Life Insurance			<u>4,877</u>	<u>4,505</u>	<u>4,515</u>	<u>4,522</u>	<u>4,532</u>
510240 Workers Compensation Worker Comp - 8564*034000	1		251	263	276	290	305
530310 Professional Services Contract Family Law Attorney Temporary Employment	1		6,680	6,680	6,680	6,680	0
530340 Contracted Services Contracted Services	1		6,680	6,680	6,680	6,680	0
530400 Travel And Per Diem Home Monitoring Visitation By Guardians And Associated Costs	1		1,030	1,030	1,030	1,030	0
530420 Transportation Postage Stamps, Express Mail Charges For Emergency Situation	1		309	309	309	309	0
530440 Rental And Leases Additional funds Rental of Storage Space for Case Files	1		1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Rental of Storage Space for Case Files	1		1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	2,700
530440 Rental And Leases			<u>2,700</u>	<u>2,700</u>	<u>2,700</u>	<u>2,700</u>	<u>4,200</u>
530450 Insurance Property/liability	1		534	534	534	534	0
530460 Repairs And Maintenance Equipment And Associated Costs Not Covered County Contracts	1		1,133	1,133	1,133	1,133	0
530470 Printing And Binding Outsourced Printing Services	1		1,030	1,030	1,030	1,030	0
530480 Promotional Activities GAL Promotional Activities	1		10,000	10,000	10,000	0	0
530510 Office Supplies Supplies Under \$750.00	1		1,236	1,236	1,236	1,236	0
530520 Operating Supplies Equipment & Associated Costs Under \$750	1		2,606	2,606	2,606	2,606	0
530540 Books, Dues Publications GAL Program pre-service volunteer training/certification	1		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	0
Literature Materials For Library	1		1,545	1,545	1,545	1,545	0
530540 Books, Dues Publications			<u>11,545</u>	<u>11,545</u>	<u>11,545</u>	<u>11,545</u>	<u>0</u>
034000 Guardian Ad Litem			<u>84,844</u>	<u>86,196</u>	<u>87,333</u>	<u>79,206</u>	<u>49,893</u>
0340 Guardian Ad Litem			<u>84,844</u>	<u>86,196</u>	<u>87,333</u>	<u>79,206</u>	<u>49,893</u>
03 Judicial			<u>84,844</u>	<u>86,196</u>	<u>87,333</u>	<u>79,206</u>	<u>49,893</u>
Report Grand Total			<u>84,844</u>	<u>86,196</u>	<u>87,333</u>	<u>79,206</u>	<u>49,893</u>

MEMO

TO: Board of County Commissioners
Cindy Coto, County Manager
Lisa Spriggs, Director of Fiscal Services

FROM: Nadine Miller, Guardian ad Litem Program Director

DATE: September 22, 2006

RE: Additional Support Request

The Guardian Ad Litem Program is in need of additional support from Seminole County. I fully understand funding for our program should be a state responsibility. Every state fiscal year I optimistically anticipate receiving approval for additional state requested positions and increased operating dollars, but ultimately receive a very small portion as the need is greater in the larger GAL programs throughout Florida. Further, I never know until after the county budget process what, if any, resources I will be receiving from the State. I tend to be overly conservative making county requests, not wanting to ask for "too much" from an already supportive BCC. But the fact remains that we are having difficulty providing the much needed representation of our county's abused children. It was suggested making this late request would be appropriate.

The Seminole County GAL Program, as well as all GAL programs statewide, has been charged with the challenge of representing 100% of our county's abused children. This means not only accepting appointment on all new children entering the dependency system, but also remaining on each case until permanency has been achieved (usually through adoption, reunification with a parent or long term relative care). The number of abused children who benefit from GAL representation has increased from 378 in June 2004 to 604 in August 2006. The state funded one additional position in July 2005 for a Staff Advocate (paid staff who visits children in lieu of a volunteer). A paralegal position was awarded in August 2006 which is the only support staff available to two program attorneys who together must manage 380 cases, representing our 600+ children. State guidelines indicate that a program attorney should have no more than 125 cases at one time. Therefore, each program attorney is handling 65 cases, in excess of the State guidelines. In order to handle this increased caseload, **we need an additional full time attorney (newly licensed is acceptable). A 40 hour/week contracted attorney would be sufficient to meet our needs. Estimated cost: \$41,600 (\$20.00/hour)**

Visiting children every month, assessing their needs and reporting those needs to the court is the responsibility of a GAL volunteer (when available) or a Staff Advocate. The GAL program was created to have volunteers do all advocating while being supervised by office staff (Case Coordinators). But we don't have enough volunteers and are forced to hire staff to ensure all children are represented properly. We currently have 125 volunteers, though not all have an active case. We have been marginally successful recruiting new volunteers. Unfortunately, we are a volunteer based program that has no funded position to recruit volunteers! In 2005 the program trained and certified 48 new volunteers. As of September 2006 we have trained and certified 23 new volunteers with an additional training scheduled for October 2006. Note that the program loses almost the same number of volunteers that we gain per year. **The program needs a Resource Development Coordinator who will manage Volunteer Recruitment and Retention/Outreach/Grant Writing. A 30 hour/week contract position would meet our needs. Estimated cost: \$21,000 (\$14.50/hour)**

GAL Staff Advocates, who are responsible for visiting each assigned child in his/her home at least once a month, are reimbursed for mileage. This does not compensate them fairly for the wear and tear on their automobiles. Our two Staff Advocates each travel an average of 750 miles per month. **Use of 2 county automobiles is requested to supplement their modest incomes.**

The Program has made advances in outreach through additional dollars (\$10,000) provided by the county. \$9,000 was used to procure advertisement in three local grocery stores by having GAL recruitment ads placed on 100% of in-store grocery carts. This exposure is critical to make Guardian ad Litem known to the community and feedback has been positive. **We would request doubling this funding to expand advertisement in more local stores. Estimated increase: \$10,000**

Training of Staff and Volunteers has become critical due to the increased responsibility of the GAL to understand new and ever-changing Florida Statutes. GAL volunteer and staff are expected to have a clear working knowledge of these complicated laws that guide and govern child advocacy. GAL volunteers and staff are required to attend regular training sessions. We cannot expect volunteers who are already spending their money on gas, incidentals for their children and valuable time to pay for attendance at trainings. **We request an increase to provide training opportunities to more volunteers and staff. Estimated increase: \$5,000**

We will be pleased to furnish projected budget numbers to the Board should there be interest in funding these needs. Thank you for your concern for the neediest children of Seminole County.