

# Juvenile Court Staff: Roles & Responsibilities

S1-HO

## Judge (Judge Ceckowski, Judge Morozin)

Note: 15 of Lake County's 39 judges are elected. The elected (Circuit) judges appoint – and vote to reappoint - the remaining (Associate) judges. In our Juvenile Court, Judge C. is elected and Associate Judge M. is appointed.

### **Role**

- Protect the safety and Best Interest of children *and* the constitutional rights of families

### **Responsibilities**

- Determine whether a child is abused, neglected, or dependent and, if so, order services to address the needs of the child.
- Hear and make rulings in regards to testimony, motions, etc. on the case.
- Appoint the Guardian Ad Litem and the CASA organization to the case
- Ensure the confidentiality of the case
- Ensure decorum and objectivity are maintained on the case
- Order appropriate case reviews
- Oversee the adjudication of the case; file decisions regarding determinations of abuse, neglect, or dependency.
- Authorize the service plans for all parties to the case.
- Oversee the progress of the case and order corrective action when needed
- Over time, determine whether a child safety issue still persists which necessitates the continuation of out-of-home placement
- Approve the permanency plan for the child.
- Order termination of parental rights when appropriate

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**Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) - Attorney for the Child: Kathy Gordon** (in Judge Ceckowski's court),  
**Kathleen McGee** (in Judge Morozin's court)

## **Role**

- Represent the child's best interest and/or wishes, and protect the child's legal rights in court

## **Responsibilities**

- Meet with the child at least 1 time per year
- Contact the individuals involved in the case and investigate the details of the case
- Explain the status of the case to the child and learn about the child's wishes in regards to the case.
- Ensure services are appropriate to achieve the goal.
- Present evidence regarding, and argue on behalf of, the child's Best Interests

**Public, Conflict, or Private Defense Attorney – Attorney for the Parent (Public Defenders Leslie Volk, (in Judge Morozin's court) Karen Levi (Judge Ceckowski's court), plus outside Conflict Attorneys Lindsay Johnson, Thomas Meyers)**

## **Role**

- Represent the legal and constitutional rights of the parent/caretaker in court, and communicate the parents' wishes

## **Responsibilities**

- Advise the parent/caretaker on legal matters
- Explain to clients the court process and requirements
- File all legal documents on behalf of client(s)
- Defend client(s) against unfair expectations/treatment by DCFS and the state

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**State's Attorney** (Amy Meister-Falbe, Kristen Robinson, Lauren Callinan, Ji Un Saw, Deborah Menas)

## **Role**

- Represent the position of the people of Illinois in court
- Uphold IL child welfare laws

## **Responsibilities**

- File a petition and prosecute the case until the goal is achieved.

## **DCFS Attorney**

### **Role**

- Represent the interests of the state agency of Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

### **Responsibilities**

- Ensure that DCFS and their agencies comply with court rules
- Review agency recommendations where the goal is other than return home (i.e. "legal screening") and determine whether the goal is legally supportable
- Advise DCFS personnel in navigating legal nuances of specific cases
- Ensure that DCFS and their agencies comply with legal requirements in achieving the goal in the case.
- Ensure that court orders directed at agencies are consistent with child welfare laws.