

To Whom It May Concern,

I have practiced law in CT since 1984 and have focused my practice on family law since the late 1980s/early1990s. For about the past eight years, except for GAL/AMC work, I have essentially limited my family law practice to non-adversarial divorce/family work.

I experience immense personal satisfaction when I can help my wards/clients by serving as their GAL or AMC. Helping my wards/clients have a better life is the primary reason I continue serving. I continue serving notwithstanding the financial, emotional and other negative consequences associated with this work.

I have spent hundreds of hours of time and tens of thousands of dollars of my own money on CLE training to maintain and improve my professional skills, which benefits my clients and wards. For example, in 1993 I completed the 21 hour Child Development training provided by the State of Connecticut Regional Family Trial Docket and in 2010 completed the 30 hour State of Connecticut Judicial Department Guardian Ad Litem/Attorney for the Minor Child Comprehensive Basic Training.

I have rarely been paid in full for the GAL/AMC services provided. Typically, I am fortunate to collect a small portion of the fees incurred for services rendered after the minimal retainer. Often I must go back to court several times before receiving any payment. This is true even when the judge in the particular case acknowledges the quality of services rendered on the record. Why? Often the parents of my wards/clients ignore court orders and judges do not enforce fee agreements or court orders for payment. Accordingly, I certainly do not accept GAL/AMC appointments for the money.

My GAL/AMC work is emotionally draining and demanding. First, in no area of my family work do I feel as much responsibility to my clients as I do when my client/ward is a child whose parents are involved in litigation. Second, it is often heartbreaking to see what parents and extended family members will do to their children Third, parents are often rude, disrespectful and threatening toward me and have little sense of boundaries. They may criticize me at one moment for not calling their next door neighbor's cousin who allegedly saw the other parent drunk at a party seven years before yet at the next moment complain that my bill is too high. I have a good professional and personal reputation and a very busy successful family law practice. I certainly do not need the GAL/AMC work in order to fill my days.

The focus of my family law practice is on non-adversarial divorce in part so that I can maintain a somewhat regular professional schedule and exercise control over my practice by limiting court intervention. GAL/AMC work often wreaks havoc on the rest of my practice. Evening and weekend meetings are routine to accommodate my clients/wards and their parents. Text messages, emails and telephone calls outside normal business hours are frequent. Emergency hearings and days of sitting in court hinders my ability to take care of my other clients and myself the way I wish to take care of us.

The purpose of this email is to give you some firsthand perspective from a GAL/AMC. I can't speak for other GALs/AMCs. For myself, I can attest that I serve the children of Connecticut

primarily so that I can help make a positive difference in their lives. Any mistakes I may make are not the result of lack of commitment to my clients/wards. At the end of each case I often promise myself not to accept another appointment because the disadvantages of this work are tremendous. But when given an opportunity to impact the life of another child, at least for now, I expect I will continue to say yes, I'll accept the appointment.

Very truly yours,

Lisa J. Cappalli