

Hello my name is Michelle Tolmoff I am from Torrington CT. I am an adult child of parental alienation from my parents' divorce, I am a mom, and a step-mom to an alienated child, and I have completed the GAL training. I will tell you it is not easy to grow up feeling like I missed time or feeling guilty for being mean to a parent because I felt I had to I had to. Watching the way the family court system works I can tell you it is not working in the best interest of the child. It is destroying families and these children are growing up broken because of greed. Tomorrow a documentary is being released in theaters called Divorce Corp and the amount of people you have testifying here today tell you it's not just a few parents that didn't get their way and are complaining. Many of us haven't even gotten a solution yet we have been in the system for years and a judge is refusing to enter orders or to allow a trial for years in our case 5 years! Many parents haven't even walked into a court room to fight for visitation because they have heard the horror stories of what happens when they do. Instead they choose to walk away making a child feel abandoned when in fact they aren't the parent feels they are protected them from awful practices happening. They feel praying and hope has a better chance of a positive outcome then entering a court room.

- 1.) First let me address that I am very grateful this task force is in place and hope it creates positive change but I am very concerned that the people that are fueling the issues with the system are the ones leading the task force that is supposed to uncover the issues and come up with solutions. Attorney Sue Cousineau currently has 212 cases and Sharon Dornfield has 112 cases and are creating investigative and statistical road blocks for the task force to uncover these issues because they are attorneys and GAL/AMCs (<http://www.jud.ct.gov/family/PDFs/Statewide.pdf>), they oversee the GAL/AMC training, sit on the grievance committee or to the public the attorney complaint system, and work with the AFCC they want to see these family court cases in conflict and stretched out indefinitely because they have immunity while doing so and collect \$200-\$800/hour. Like our case that's about 6 hours/month*5 years. That's how they get paid and help their peers get paid.
- 2.) The length of time it takes to reach a solution. If a child is involved it should not take longer than 6 months to restore visitation to a parent and child when there is reason to believe no harm will come to the child by doing so. I.E the parent lives with other children with no issues.
- 3.) The cost of reaching a solution is astronomical and is financially devastating families. It should not cost a parent their entire lifesavings, home, or cause a parent financial hardships to have a relationship with a child. It is common sense and should be part of the best interest of the child guidelines for professional conduct. How is that relationship once restored going to be meaningful or comfortable if the parent is left destitute by the family court system? \$2,500 for the 6 months to hear child custody and visitation matters from beginning to end should be the reasonable range this includes all professionals engaged. The parent that is not following court orders making the other parent have to come back to court for remedy should have to pay these costs. GAL and other professional fees should be capped and fully disclosed evaluators and therapists should be giving bills and receipts and be allowed to accept insurance. GALs should be rotated so that they are not overloaded with cases like our GAL who has 212 cases.

- 4.) The lack of enforcement of orders once entered. Parents know they can get away with not bringing a child for visitation because the judges ARE NOT using any sort of punishments for contempt. If the system needs more money start fining parents that are in contempt! A child not wanting to go to visitation is not a good enough excuse if it's not good enough for education/school and there are enforceable and parental accountability truancy laws so should there be for visitation.
- 5.) GALs/AMCs should not have immunity and should be mandated reporters
- 6.) GALs should be doing their due diligence and fiduciary responsibilities and therefore should be making recommendations to the judge and not be used as witnesses or "rules of evidence" for practice book and procedure. There are too many families that need solutions and don't have the funds to hire an attorney and are forced to pay for a GAL and the procedure should be more streamlined, easily understood, and accessible.
- 7.) All court ordered evaluations and recommendations made should be in writing and given to all parties involved on the case. Many of the top evaluators being used choose to call the GAL or Judge with the recommendations keeping everything in chambers and off the record after the family was order to pay for their services. The court appointed evaluators and therapist should be required to provide WRITTEN billing and contracts of service.