

210.160. Guardian ad litem, how appointed — when — fee — volunteer advocates may be appointed to assist guardian — training program. — 1. In every case involving an abused or neglected child which results in a judicial proceeding, the judge shall appoint a guardian ad litem to appear for and represent:

(1) A child who is the subject of proceedings pursuant to sections 210.110 to 210.165 except proceedings under subsection 6 of section 210.152, sections 210.700* to 210.760, sections 211.442 to 211.487, or sections 453.005 to 453.170, or proceedings to determine custody or visitation rights under sections 452.375 to 452.410; or

(2) A parent who is a minor, or who is a mentally ill person or otherwise incompetent, and whose child is the subject of proceedings under sections 210.110 to 210.165, sections 210.700* to 210.760, sections 211.442 to 211.487, or sections 453.005 to 453.170.

2. The judge, either sua sponte or upon motion of a party, may appoint a guardian ad litem to appear for and represent an abused or neglected child involved in proceedings arising under subsection 6 of section 210.152.

3. The guardian ad litem shall be provided with all reports relevant to the case made to or by any agency or person, shall have access to all records of such agencies or persons relating to the child or such child's family members or placements of the child, and upon appointment by the court to a case, shall be informed of and have the right to attend any and all family support team meetings involving the child. Employees of the division, officers of the court, and employees of any agency involved shall fully inform the guardian ad litem of all aspects of the case of which they have knowledge or belief.

4. The appointing judge shall require the guardian ad litem to faithfully discharge such guardian ad litem's duties, and upon failure to do so shall discharge such guardian ad litem and appoint another. The appointing judge shall have the authority to examine the general and criminal background of persons appointed as guardians ad litem, including utilization of the family care safety registry and access line pursuant to sections 210.900 to 210.937**, to ensure the safety and welfare of the children such persons are appointed to represent. The judge in making appointments pursuant to this section shall give preference to persons who served as guardian ad litem for the child in the earlier proceeding, unless there is a reason on the record for not giving such preference.

5. The guardian ad litem may be awarded a reasonable fee for such services to be set by the court. The court, in its discretion, may award such fees as a judgment to be paid by any party to the proceedings or from public funds. However, no fees as a judgment shall be taxed against a party or parties who have not been found to have abused or neglected a child or children. Such an award of guardian fees shall constitute a final judgment in favor of the guardian ad litem. Such final judgment shall be enforceable against the parties in accordance with chapter 513.

6. The court may designate volunteer advocates, who may or may not be attorneys licensed to practice law, to assist in the performance of the guardian ad litem duties for the

court. Nonattorney volunteer advocates shall not provide legal representation. The court shall have the authority to examine the general and criminal background of persons designated as volunteer advocates, including utilization of the family care safety registry and access line pursuant to sections 210.900 to 210.937**, to ensure the safety and welfare of the children such persons are designated to represent. The volunteer advocate shall be provided with all reports relevant to the case made to or by any agency or person, shall have access to all records of such agencies or persons relating to the child or such child's family members or placements of the child, and upon designation by the court to a case, shall be informed of and have the right to attend any and all family support team meetings involving the child. Any such designated person shall receive no compensation from public funds. This shall not preclude reimbursement for reasonable expenses.

7. Any person appointed to perform guardian ad litem duties shall have completed a training program in permanency planning and shall advocate for timely court hearings whenever possible to attain permanency for a child as expeditiously as possible to reduce the effects that prolonged foster care may have on a child. A nonattorney volunteer advocate shall have access to a court appointed attorney guardian ad litem should the circumstances of the particular case so require.