

Vermont GAL Program Newsletter



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What's New

GAL attends 27th Annual National CASA Conference in Washington, D.C.

GAL Rita Rinehart of Rutland and Coordinator Mary Hayden attended the 27th Annual National CASA Conference in Washington, D.C. June 7-10. Rita has served as a GAL in Rutland County for 14 years and has been an immense resource and support to the Rutland County GAL Coordinator. In addition to meeting court advocates for abused and neglected children from across the country, Rita had the opportunity to attend several workshops, including *Improving Outcomes for Babies and Toddlers in Foster Care*; *Relatives: Taking a Look at the Family Tree*; *Adoption for Older Youth*; and a general session on *Cultural Competency* with national speaker and consultant Steve Robbins.

"I enjoyed meeting people, getting ideas and finding out how CASA/GALs from other states do this work," said Rita. "I thought the speaker on cultural competency was wonderful—he brought up thoughts and ideas we usually don't think of when we look at the cultural differences we have even here in Vermont."



Rita Rinehart

Funding for GAL Program

We are pleased to announce that National CASA has awarded another state organization grant to the GAL Program. This latest grant renewal represents the eighth consecutive year of CASA grant funding for the Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program. These CASA funds will support a part-time GAL coordinator position in the southern region in the state, administrative staff, and training and related expenses. We are also pleased to announce that funding for the Rutland Coordinator Project has been renewed for another fiscal year, until June 30, 2009.

Judge Carroll—Thanks!

Thanks to Judge Karen R. Carroll for submitting a letter to the Editor which was published in the June 2008 Redbook magazine. In the letter, the judge draws national attention to the importance of the Guardians ad Litem in abuse and neglect cases.

Rutland County GAL Program Coordinator says Goodbye

Rutland Project Coordinator, Kristi Tolmer, bid farewell to GALs, court staff, attorneys and Judge Corsones at a luncheon in her honor on May 29 at the Rutland courthouse. Kristi served as a contracted GAL Program coordinator for 18 months under a Children's Justice Act grant award. Kristi recently completed her master's in counseling and moved to Arizona where she accepted a position as a family crisis caseworker in a community mental health



Front Row (right to left): Rita Rinehart, Sue Beriau, Kristi Tolmer, Susan Lloyd. Back Row (right to left): Dawn Morgan, Susan Taggart, Elizabeth Mumford, Diane Mott, Lynne Washburn, Alan Held

agency. Kristi will be greatly missed. Fortunately, renewed funding under the Children's Justice Act will allow us to hire a new contract coordinator.

GAL Program Collaborates with Court Improvement Program on Database Enhancements

The GAL Program will be improving its database with funding provided by the Court Improvement Program. The funds will support enhanced database features for tracking information related to security, screening, training, case assignments and program outcomes such as children served by GALs. The enhanced database will improve the program's ability to report on program performance measures to meet funding requirements.

*Legislative Update**Changes to the Juvenile Law Beginning January 1, 2009**Training*

A total of 16 out of 20 applicants completed pre-service GAL Training in May in Waterbury. The four remaining applicants will complete their training this summer in Hartford during June, July and August along with 15 more new trainees. We have tentatively scheduled the next pre-service training for October 10, October 22 and November 5. Juvenile Delinquency pre-service training is tentatively scheduled for October 15. The locations for the training events will be determined based on the applicant pool and the cost.

What has Changed?

Significant revisions to the Juvenile Law were passed into law and signed by the Governor on June 5, 2008 at a ceremony in the statehouse. These revisions will take effect on January 1, 2009. In general, these changes in the juvenile law will impact in a number of ways. First, the old Chapter 55 in Title 33 is now divided into three chapters: Chapter 51: General Provisions, Chapter 52: Delinquency and Chapter 53: CHINS. The new law brings a number of changes to some

terms familiar to GALs. For example, the term "detention" will no longer be used. A "detention" hearing is now called a "Temporary Care Hearing" and an "Emergency Detention Order" is now called an "Emergency Care Order". The changes also reflect some best national juvenile practices, such as early resolution of cases and elimination of historical causes of delay, preservation of family relationships important to a child, early identification

and location of absent parents, clearly delineated standards for removal from home, recognizing kinship placement options early in a case, and addressing parent child contact at every stage of the proceedings. A "conditional custody order" placing a child in the custody of parents under certain conditions (what is now called a "protective supervision order") can be ordered at any stage of the case.

Training for GALs on the New Law

The new law goes into effect on **January 1, 2009**. The Judicial Branch anticipates sponsoring trainings throughout the state for GALs and other juvenile court players this fall. In the coming weeks, each GAL will be provided with a copy of a booklet entitled, "A Guide to the 2008 Vermont Juvenile Judicial Proceedings Act", prepared by Administrative Judge for Trial Courts, Amy M. Davenport.

Please note that the booklet you will be receiving is also available on the Judiciary website at:

http://www.vermontjudiciary.org/eforms/2008JuvenileProceedingsAct_Guidebook.pdf

Before downloading the booklet, please be advised that it is a very long document!

*Did you Know...?*

REMINDER: Should your contact information (email, mailing address, phone numbers) change, please let the Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program know. We send most information via email. Thanks!

A national report on Child Maltreatment 2006 is now available online. This 17th annual publication provides national and State findings on referrals for child maltreatment, substantiated cases, and types of abuse and neglect. Information on perpetrators of maltreatment, child protective services (CPS) workload, and preventive and post investigation services is also included.

In 2006, CPS agencies investigated reports involving the possible maltreatment of nearly 3.6 million children. An estimated 905,000 children were found to be victims of abuse or neglect.

The report is available online at:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/index.htm

To view Child Maltreatment reports dating back to 1995, go to:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm

The Vermont DCF Child Abuse 2007 Report is available online. Go to the following link:
http://www.dcf.state.vt.us/site/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/2007_Child_Abuse_and_Neglect_Report.pdf

Other Training Opportunities *(Please note there may be fees for the following training opportunities. If you wish to request a fee waiver or scholarship to attend any of the trainings, please contact the GAL Program Office.)*

July 8 & 9
Medical Issues in Child Maltreatment for Non-Medical Team Members, sponsored by Family Services Division, DCF, at the Hilton Hotel (formerly Wyndham), Burlington, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, contact 241-3431 or cwtpttraining@uvm.edu

August 6 - 9
34th Annual Conference for the National Association for Rural Mental Health – Changing Practices for a Changing Rural Environment, speakers include Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Dr. Terry Kline & Dr. Kenneth Minkhoff, at the Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center, Burlington, various rates, go to www.narmh.org

October 20th & 21st
11th Annual New England Conference on Child Sexual Abuse, sponsored by OUR House of Central VT, Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center, contact 476-8825

July 23 Video & Dialogue Nite – Substance Abuse & Mental Health Conditions in Adolescents & Young Adults, sponsored by Friends of Recovery VT, Centerpoint & others, 5:30 to 7:00 pm at Centerpoint, 1025 Airport Drive, So. Burl, FREE, RSVP by 7/22 to 1-800-769-2798 or forvtpeerservice@aol.com.

September 26th
Walk a Mile in My Shoes – Bridging Peer Support & Treatment Services, sponsored by Friends of Recovery VT, VT Psychiatric Survivors, VT Vet to Vet, VT Recovery Network, VT Harm Reduction Coalition, Rutland Holiday Inn, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, FREE, contact Patty Breneman at 652-2033 or pbrenem@vdh.state.vt.us

October 24th
De-escalation Techniques, sponsored by VT Dept for Children & Families, Andy Lange & Chris Dalley, trainers, at Langevin House, VTC, Randolph, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, contact Chris Dalley at 241-2965 or chris.dalley@ahs.state.vt.us or go to <http://humanservices.vermont.gov/professional-development>



October 17th
6th Annual Collaboration Conference on Children, Youth & Families, Killington Grand Hotel, Killington, contact don.mandelkorn@ahs.state.vt.us for information or go to <http://humanservices.vermont.gov/barre> for periodic updates

Check for DCF Trainings at the following link:
<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/professional-development>

Brown Bag Lunch Meetings

- There are some new DCF initiatives. A GAL monthly meeting/training on new DCF initiatives such as Family Group Conferencing, and the new Centralized Intake process may be an appropriate lunch time topic. Local Court Staff or volunteers can contact the GAL Program office to make arrangements with the UVM Extension office to send a DCF trainer to one of your local meetings.
- Many GALs report seeing more cases of self-harm and cutting behavior in youth. Invite qualified community mental health agency to speak at a monthly meeting about the meaning of cutting behavior and appropriate treatment interventions for youth.



Local Court GAL Meetings & Events

Franklin County

On April 2, GALs, Pat Deasy, Robert Peterson, and Deborah Lynch, attended the first Franklin/Grand Isle Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force brown bag lunch series in recognition of Sexual Violence Awareness Month. The topic was Sexual Assault and Vulnerable Adults presented by Janette Floyd from Adult Protective Services. On April 16, GALs Mary Connor, Deborah Lynch, Robert Peterson, Pat Deasy, and Jacqueline Thibert attended another brown bag lunch in the series on "Statutory Sexual Assault".

On April 18, Judge VanBenthuyzen held an informational brown bag luncheon for the GALs. He spoke about the types of Juvenile proceedings and the hearings involved, when they are set, what goes on at the hearings, what the GAL role is at these hearings. Present were Beverly & Butch LeClair, Bruce Scott, Bob Peterson, Pat Deasy and Deborah Lynch.

The Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program wishes to thank all GALs for their hard work and continued efforts on behalf of children in Vermont's court system.

On 4/23/08 Bob Peterson, Deb Lynch, Pat Deasy, Mary Connor attended the Franklin/Grand Isle Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force brown bag lunch series on Building Safety with Families Where Sexual and Domestic Violence May be Occurring: A DCF-Family Services Response presented by Jan Appel, DCF.

On May 23, Judge VanBenthuyzen spoke to GALs about the Domestic Relations statute to determine Parental Rights and Responsibilities in the best interest of the child.

Caledonia County

Judge Eaton and court staff spoke to the Kiwanis Club in St Johnsbury on April 28 about the GAL Program.

Rutland County

Rutland County GALs attended a training on Family Group Conferencing on May 15. Gale Burford of the UVM Extension training partnership for DCF presented at the training.

Washington County

Jane Monroe from the Educational Surrogate Program of Department of Education gave a presentation to the GALs in Washington County on May 15, 2008 at a monthly brown bag meeting.

Windham County

On June 26, Ingrid Longo, MSW presented to GALs on the topic of self cutting behavior in youth.

GALs—A Great History -- Words from a GAL Program Volunteer

In the 30 years since the inception of the volunteer Guardian ad Litem Program, guardians have etched their place in history with a clear determination: we did not create the past, but we can change the future.

And yet, despite my own pride in the history in which I have been just a modest part, many times I reflect that I could have done more; or perhaps, that I could have done something differently. But as guardians we must always remember that what matters most is that we did something. It's not always about being perfect—every case offers a new lesson to learn. It's about being there and taking action.

And though the lessons may sometimes seem harsh and cause us to ask if we did all that we could have done, we must remember what created our rich and honorable history. Not everyone can be a guardian. It requires talent, energy, compassion, diligence, perseverance and determination. It requires someone willing to do something for someone who needs them.

We must remember that when something was needed, something was done. And we did it. What a legacy to have etched into history.

Douglas Cooner,
GAL Volunteer
South Carolina GAL Program
From *The Connection*, Winter 2008

"Not everyone can be a guardian. It requires talent, energy, compassion, diligence, perseverance and determination."

