The Public's Professionals

Why guardian ad litem rosters are public records even though children's cases are not.

When a Georgia custodian is asked for the list of guardians ad litem (GALs) approved to serve in a court, one answer comes back in several forms: juvenile cases are confidential, so nothing about them can be released. The answer sounds complete. It is not. Juvenile confidentiality protects the child — the child's identity, records, and proceedings, and which GAL serves which child. It has never, in any system this project has examined, protected the professional: the identity, qualifications, and eligibility of court-appointed GALs as a class. Other states publish their GAL rosters openly, on court websites, in systems whose children's records are just as confidential as Georgia's. This paper documents four of those systems from their own published sources, reads Georgia's confidentiality statute for what it actually covers, and states — in appendices a reader can copy — exactly what a records request for a professional roster should ask for, and how a confidentiality denial should be answered.

What this paper is — and is not

This is a systems paper from a grassroots project, written anonymously by design. It names no family, describes no individual case, and accuses no individual GAL of misconduct. It relies only on published statutes, court rules, and court-posted lists — every one of them opened and read by the project, and listed in the Sources. Where a claim could not be verified from a source actually read, it is not made; the limits of the verification are stated in the method note at the end, including one citation this project corrected in its own working papers before publication.

1 · Two kinds of information

A GAL roster and a child's case file are both, in a loose sense, "court records about GALs." The resemblance ends there.

- **The child's information** is what confidentiality law exists to protect: the child's name and identity, the pleadings and reports in the child's case, what was said in the child's hearings, and the fact that a particular professional was appointed in a particular child's case. Disclosure can follow a child for life. Every system described in this paper protects it, and nothing in this paper seeks any of it.
- **The professional's information** is of a different kind: that a named adult is approved or eligible for appointment as a GAL; the credential the person holds; the person's office; the courts the person serves; whether the person has completed the required training; whether the person accepts a sliding scale or a state rate. None of it identifies a child or touches a case. It is the same kind of information every licensing system publishes about the professionals it licenses.

A roster publishes the second kind only: professionals as a class, with no child, no case, and no assignment. The question this paper answers is whether publishing it is compatible with juvenile confidentiality. In at least four American court systems, the answer is not merely yes in practice — it is yes in the same documents that impose the confidentiality.

2 · Four systems that publish the professionals and protect the children

Ohio — the rule says both things in one sentence

Ohio's Rules of Superintendence, Rule 48, govern guardians ad litem in both domestic relations and juvenile cases. Rule 48.07(A) directs each court to:

> *"Maintain a public list of approved guardians ad litem while maintaining individual privacy pursuant to Sup.R. 44 through 47 of the Rules of Superintendence."*

The sentence is the whole argument in miniature. The list is public — the rule uses the word "public" — and individual privacy is maintained at the same time, under the rules that protect case information. The same rule requires the court to review its list annually and to maintain a complaint process whose written record is kept in the GAL's own file. Ohio did not treat a public roster and children's privacy as a trade-off. It wrote them into a single provision, adopted by the Supreme Court of Ohio, effective January 1, 2021.

Connecticut — a statewide list with professional detail

The Connecticut Judicial Branch publishes, on its public website, a statewide list titled "Individuals qualified to be appointed as a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or an Attorney for a Minor Child (AMC) in a family matter," together with lists for each judicial district. The list's own introduction states that it names the individuals "who have completed the training required by Practice Book Sections 25-62 & 25-62A and who are available to accept appointments from the court." For each person — attorneys, psychologists, licensed counselors, and other professionals — the list publishes a bar or license number, professional title, name, business telephone number, office location or locations, whether the office is accessible, whether the person offers a sliding scale, the court locations the person will serve, the languages the person reports, and whether the person is approved for state-rate payment through the Division of Public Defender Services. The statewide list runs nine pages and is revised regularly; the copy read for this paper is dated March 4, 2026.

In the same state, the records of juvenile matters are confidential by statute. Connecticut General Statutes § 46b-124(b) provides that "[a]ll records of cases of juvenile matters… shall be confidential and for the use of the court in juvenile matters," open to third parties only on court order, with specified exceptions. Connecticut publishes the professionals' names, credentials, and telephone numbers on the open internet while its children's case records stay closed. The two policies coexist because they govern two different kinds of information.

Illinois — sealed juvenile records, a posted list of 169 names

The Circuit Court of Cook County posts on its public website the Domestic Relations Division's list of "Attorneys Approved to Serve as a Guardian ad Litem, Child Representative, Attorney for Child." The list effective June 4, 2025 contains 169 names. It publishes names only: no case, no client, no assignment — the minimum form of a professional roster, and enough to establish who is eligible to serve. The court posts it in a file whose own name calls it the division's public list.

Illinois law on the other side of the line is strict. The Juvenile Court Act, 705 ILCS 405/1-8(A), provides that "[a]ll juvenile court records which have not been expunged are sealed and may never be disclosed to the general public or otherwise made widely available." A sealed-records statute and a publicly posted GAL list operate in the same state, in the same court system, without conflict — because the list is not a juvenile court record. It is a record about professionals.

Washington — court registries, published with training status

King County Superior Court, in Seattle, maintains guardian ad litem registries and appoints from them on a rotational basis; eligibility turns on training, experience, and background review, as the court's published registry pages describe. The court publishes the registries themselves: its "2026 KCSC Registries" document, published October 2, 2026, names the members of each registry, including the twelve members of its Title 26 Family Law Guardian Ad Litem registry. The published document even tracks qualification status — one entry is annotated "pending receipt of training cert" — so the public

list shows not only who serves, but who has completed the training the court requires.

Washington's juvenile-records statute is again strict on the child's side. RCW 13.50.100(2) provides that records covered by the section "shall be confidential and shall be released only pursuant to this section and RCW 13.50.010." The registries are published anyway, because a registry of professionals is not a record of a child.

The pattern across the four systems is uniform. None of them publishes a child's name, a case, or an assignment. All of them publish who the professionals are. The confidentiality statutes in each system are aimed, in terms, at records relating to children — and the rosters survive alongside them because a roster is not one.

3 · Georgia's confidentiality law protects the child's records — and says nothing about a roster

Georgia's governing provision is O.C.G.A. § 15-11-704, "Public inspection of court files and records." Subsection (a) provides:

> *"Except as provided in subsection (b) of this Code section and Code Sections 15-11-705 and 15-11-706, all files and records of the court in a proceeding under this chapter shall be open to inspection only upon order of the court."*

Read it for its unit. What the statute closes is "files and records of the court **in a proceeding**" — the materials generated in a child's case. A list of the professionals a court has approved for appointment is not a file or record in a proceeding. It exists before any case is filed and after every case is closed; it names adults in their professional capacity; it is maintained, where it is maintained, as an instrument of court administration. Nothing in § 15-11-704 mentions such a list. The Code itself treats the two regimes as separate tracks: subsection (d), governing statistical data extracted from case files by state agencies, takes care to state that such data "shall not be subject to release by such agency pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50" — the Open Records Act. The General Assembly knew how to fence case-derived information off from the general records law when it meant to. No comparable fence surrounds a professional eligibility list.

What Georgia has instead of a roster is a set of appointment rules that never mention one. Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.9 governs the appointment, role, fees, and removal of GALs in custody cases; O.C.G.A. § 15-11-104 governs appointment in dependency cases, including a training requirement administered or approved by the Office of the Child Advocate. Neither creates a list the public can see. No official public roster of Georgia GALs exists — none published by any court, circuit, county, or state office. A parent in Georgia today cannot look up whether the GAL in the parent's case is trained, certified, or approved anywhere else, because there is no public document that would say.

The absence is not because Georgia courts keep no lists. Where Georgia circuits have written their GAL rules down, lists appear — held, not published. The Conasauga Judicial Circuit's published GAL rules, posted on Murray County's official website, provide that a GAL "shall be selected for appointment from a list of qualified attorneys maintained by" the Superior Court Administrator's Office — the rules are public; the names on the list are not posted with them. Cobb County's GAL Program appoints from a list of certified guardians, under written certification requirements. The lists exist. What does not exist is the step Ohio's rule takes in a single sentence: maintain the list **publicly**.

That step matters for reasons beyond curiosity. A public roster is the document that makes the rest of accountability possible — it is how a parent verifies a credential, how a court in one county learns what a court in another county decided, and how anyone counts how many GALs serve in Georgia at

all. It is also, not incidentally, the first of this project's three asks: a public registry of who is eligible to serve, alongside a training floor with continuing education and an oversight home that is not the appointing judge.

4 · How to answer a "juvenile confidentiality" denial

A custodian who denies a roster request on confidentiality grounds has usually answered a request nobody made — for a child's case file. The denial can be answered on the documents, in five points.

- **The cited statute governs proceeding records.** Section 15-11-704(a) closes "files and records of the court in a proceeding under this chapter." The request seeks no file or record in any proceeding. Ask the custodian to identify the provision that covers a list of approved professionals, as distinct from a child's case file.
- **The request excludes the protected information by its terms.** It names no child, seeks no case record, and asks nothing about which GAL serves in any particular case. If the list as maintained carries any case-related notation, the request asks for that notation to be redacted and the remainder produced — the standard treatment for a record mixing exempt and non-exempt material.
- **The professional's identity is not the child's information.** A GAL's name, credential, business contact, training status, and courts served are facts about an adult public appointee. Publishing them — as Connecticut's list shows, down to business telephone numbers — discloses nothing about any child.
- **Other systems resolve this exact question the other way.** Ohio's Supreme Court rule orders a public list in terms; Connecticut, Cook County, and King County publish theirs, each under a statute keeping children's records confidential. A denial should explain why Georgia's statute — which does not mention rosters — compels a result those statutes do not.
- **If no list exists, that answer is a finding, not a failure.** A written statement that no roster is maintained is a responsive record: it documents, jurisdiction by jurisdiction, where Georgia stands. What the custodian should not do is convert "we keep no public list" into "the law forbids us to say who serves." The first is a fact about administration. The second is a claim about the law, and the law cited for it does not say it.

5 · What the project asks for

What a roster request should ask for. A request for the professional roster should ask for the court or circuit's list of individuals approved, certified, empaneled, or otherwise eligible for appointment as GALs — with the professional fields the list records as maintained: name, credential, business contact, courts or case types served, training or certification status, sliding-scale or state-rate availability, and the date the list was last updated. The model language is at Appendix A, and the model reply to a confidentiality denial is at Appendix B. Both are written to be copied.

In structure, as the standing ask. Georgia should do by rule what Ohio did by rule: direct each court to maintain a public list of approved guardians ad litem, reviewed on a stated cycle, while maintaining individual privacy under the rules that protect case information. A rule of the Supreme Court of Georgia or the Judicial Council would settle the question statewide, for every circuit at once, without legislation — and would give Georgia's courts the same instrument four other systems already use to show the public who serves in them.

Until then, every answer to the question — a produced list, a statement that none exists, or a denial — is part of the record of how Georgia answers a simple question: who are the professionals

appointed to speak for children in its courts? At present, in most of Georgia, the honest answer is that the public cannot be told — not because the law protects the professionals, but because no one has built the list the law would allow.

Help build the record

The Georgia GAL Accountability Project is a grassroots effort to document how guardians ad litem work across Georgia — and to press for a system that is accountable and fair.

Two kinds of help matter most right now:

- **Answer a survey.** The project runs separate anonymous surveys for parents who have had a GAL in a Georgia case and for professionals who work alongside GALs. Surveys carry no phone number and ask for no child's name or case details.
- **Share an experience — through the anonymous surveys.** Experiences reach this project only through its anonymous surveys, which ask for no name, no email address, and nothing that identifies a child. The project does not accept accounts by email. Patterns are the point; no single story is published as fact on its own.

Contact: georgiagalreform@gmail.com

Project email only. This paper was published anonymously by the project; no individual is named as its author, and no family's case is described in it.

A note on method — and on limits

The four out-of-state examples were verified on November 5, 2026 from the primary sources listed below, each opened and read in full or in the relevant part: the Supreme Court of Ohio's published Rule 48 amendments document; the Connecticut Judicial Branch's statewide GAL/AMC list as posted (revised March 4, 2026); the Cook County Circuit Court's posted Domestic Relations Division list (169 names, counted in the document, effective June 4, 2025); and King County Superior Court's registries page and 2026 registries document (Title 26 membership counted in the document). The Connecticut, Illinois, and Washington confidentiality provisions were read in statutory text from the official or full-text sources listed below. Georgia Code § 15-11-704 was read in a current republication of the 2025 Code, and the quotation in Section 3 was confirmed against two further republications of the same section, which agree word for word. One correction is recorded because it is exactly the kind this project exists to catch: an early working citation for this paper pointed to O.C.G.A. § 15-11-9 as the juvenile-records provision. On verification, § 15-11-9 is titled "Authority to issue arrest warrants"; the records provision is § 15-11-704, and this paper relies on § 15-11-704 only. Two scope notes: King County's registries cover family-law and guardianship matters and are presented as what they are — a court-published professional registry in a state with strict juvenile-records confidentiality — not as a dependency-court roster; and Cobb County's certification requirements are documented in the project's standards research from published program criteria, so this paper states the Cobb list's existence without quoting its criteria. No claim is made about any state or system not documented above.

Sources

- Supreme Court of Ohio, Rules of Superintendence, Rule 48 (guardians ad litem; adopted amendments, adopted August 18, 2020, effective January 1, 2021), including Sup.R. 48.07(A): supremecourt.ohio.gov/ruleamendments/documents/Guardian%20Ad%20Litem%20Amendments%20(As%20Adopted%20with%20Changes%20Notes).pdf

• Connecticut Judicial Branch, "Individuals qualified to be appointed as a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or an Attorney for a Minor Child (AMC) in a family matter" — statewide list, revised March 4, 2026: jud.ct.gov/family/PDFs/Statewide.pdf

• Connecticut General Statutes § 46b-124 (confidentiality of records of juvenile matters), full text as republished: lawserver.com/law/state/connecticut/ct-laws/connecticut_statutes_46b-124; Connecticut Judicial Branch, Media FAQs (juvenile records confidential under § 46b-124): jud.ct.gov/external/Media/faq.htm

• Circuit Court of Cook County, Domestic Relations Division, "Attorneys Approved to Serve as a Guardian ad Litem, Child Representative, Attorney for Child," effective June 4, 2025: ocj-web-files.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/documents/DRD-Public-List-of-GAL-CR-AFC-eff-06-04-2025.pdf

• Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1987, 705 ILCS 405/1-8 (confidentiality and accessibility of juvenile court records), Illinois General Assembly: ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/070504050K1-8.htm

• King County Superior Court, Guardian ad Litem Registries (program page): kingcounty.gov/en/court/superior-court/courts-jails-legal-system/guardianship-court/guardian-ad-litem-registries; "2026 KCSC Registries," published October 2, 2026: cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/superior-court/documents/guardianship/gal-registries.pdf

• Revised Code of Washington § 13.50.100 (records not relating to commission of juvenile offenses — maintenance and access), chapter 13.50 RCW as published by the Washington State Legislature: app.leg.wa.gov (RCW archive, Title 13, Chapter 13.50)

• O.C.G.A. § 15-11-704 (public inspection of court files and records), 2025 Georgia Code as republished: law.justia.com/codes/georgia/title-15/chapter-11/article-9/section-15-11-704/; O.C.G.A. § 15-11-9 ("Authority to issue arrest warrants"), Article 1 index: law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2016/title-15/chapter-11/article-1/

• Georgia Uniform Superior Court Rule 24.9 (custody GAL appointment, role, fees, removal): gasupreme.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/un_sup_ru_24_9and25_E.pdf; O.C.G.A. § 15-11-104 (dependency GAL appointment and training), as described in the project's Georgia GAL Training and Legislation Reference (project files).

• Rules of the Superior Courts of the Conasauga Judicial Circuit of Georgia for Guardian Ad Litem Appointment in Domestic Relations Cases (list of qualified attorneys maintained by the Superior Court Administrator's Office), hosted on Murray County's official site: murraycountyga.org/DocumentCenter/View/345/GAL-Rules?bidId=

• Project research files, November 4–5, 2026: "How Other States Do It: GAL Oversight and Accountability Models" (Paper No. 2) — Georgia GAL Accountability Project files.

Appendix A · Model records request — GAL eligibility roster

Dear [Custodian]:

Under the Georgia Open Records Act, O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq., I request a copy of the current list, roster, registry, or register — however it is titled or maintained — of the individuals approved, certified, empaneled, or otherwise eligible for appointment as guardians ad litem in [this county / this judicial circuit], whether for cases in Superior Court or Juvenile Court.

If the list records any of the following, please include it as maintained: each individual's name; professional title or credential (for example, attorney, CASA, or other); business contact information as listed; the courts or case types the individual is approved to serve; any notation of

completed training or certification; any notation of sliding-scale or state-rate availability; and the date the list was last updated.

This request seeks professional information only. It does not seek the name of any child, any case number or case record, or any information about which guardian ad litem serves or served in any particular case, and if any record responsive to this request contains material of that kind, please redact that material and produce the remainder.

If no such list is maintained, please state so in writing; that answer is itself a responsive record for our purposes. If the list is maintained by a different office or custodian, please identify that office. Electronic copies by email are preferred. If any portion of this request is denied, please cite the specific statutory exemption relied upon. If fees are expected to exceed $25, please provide a written estimate before proceeding.

Thank you for your time.

Georgia GAL Accountability Project — georgiagalreform@gmail.com

Appendix B · Model reply to a confidentiality denial

Thank you for your response of [date], which declines our request of [date] on juvenile-confidentiality grounds. We write to clarify the request. The provision cited, O.C.G.A. § 15-11-704(a), governs "all files and records of the court in a proceeding under this chapter." Our request seeks no file or record in any proceeding. It seeks the list of professionals approved or eligible for appointment as guardians ad litem — names and professional information only — and expressly excludes any child's identity, any case, and any appointment in a particular case. Courts in other states publish exactly this information while keeping children's records confidential by statute; Ohio's court rules, for example, direct each court to "[m]aintain a public list of approved guardians ad litem while maintaining individual privacy." If the list as maintained contains any case-related notation, we ask that the notation be redacted and the list produced. If your office does not maintain the list, please identify the office that does. If the denial is maintained, please cite the specific exemption that covers a professional eligibility list, so that the record is clear.

Georgia GAL Accountability Project — georgiagalreform@gmail.com

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Georgia GAL Accountability Project — georgiagalreform@gmail.com