COURSE NAME: Guardian Ad Litem Workshop

CATALOGUE NUMBER: 8752G

PROFESSORS: O’Malley and Glesner Fines

ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE:

Students may enroll in the workshop subject to instructor approval. To apply for the program, students should submit a letter of interest and resume to Professors Glesner Fines and O’Malley. Students must obtain a “permission to enroll” letter signed by Professor O’Malley before enrolling in the course.

To be eligible for the workshop, students must have successfully completed civil procedure, evidence and professional responsibility.

In order to screen for conflicts of interest, all students must disclose any part-time legal employment (whether paid or volunteer) they are or will be undertaking during the clinic year. Students must consent to a criminal and child abuse background screening.

Students must be eligible and apply for Rule 13 certification for law student practice. Students may apply in the dean’s office. The applications may take up to eight weeks to be approved; thus, early application is critical if students are to be eligible to undertake courtroom representation upon beginning their field work.

Students may not receive compensation for their work.

DESIRABLE PRE- or CO-REQUISITES: Family Law, Children and the Law

METHOD OF GRADING AND APPRAISAL OF STUDENT FOR GRADE:

Students would be assigned credit-no credit grades based on a combination of in-class work, field work (30 hours minimum), and reflective journals.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:

Advanced study of guardian ad litem practice. Topics may include adult and child orders of protection, requirements for guardian ad litem appointments, role of the GAL, ethical considerations, working with social workers and other professionals, and best practices in investigation, recommendation, and representation. Students will partner with volunteer attorneys to act as guardians ad litem in order of protection cases.

COURSE CONTENT:

Course will begin with a full-day training session, to be attended by attorneys and students together. Students would be assigned to attorneys appointed as GAL. Several attorneys in the
Kansas City office of the Sonnenschein law firm, along with individual volunteer attorneys, have agreed to act as supervising attorneys with students on GAL cases. Students would conduct interviews with pertinent family members, obtain relevant records, obtain information from state agencies, schools, etc.; conduct home visits in appropriate cases, participate in filing pleadings and motions; identify resources and development of parenting plans for negotiated resolutions; and participate in court hearings. Additional meetings and training sessions on advanced topics will be scheduled throughout the semester.

Topics covered in training and learned through field practice include:

I. What is a Guardian ad Litem? Who is the client?

II. Regulation of GALs
   A. Court appointment process
   B. Certification requirements
   C. Standards of liability

III. Substantive law issues GALs must address
   A. Abuse and neglect law
   B. Options for recommendations

IV. GAL Practice
   A. Investigation
   B. Communication with other professionals
   C. Developing recommendations
   D. Trial and motion practice

V. Reflective Learning – how to learn on the job.

COURSE BOOK(S):
Course materials prepared by instructors.

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR CAREER PURPOSES:
Important for students planning careers in family or child law. Relevant for any student considering this area of law as their pro bono work of choice.

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR MO/MULTI-STATE BAR EXAMINATION PREPARATION:
Tangential.