

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 5895

C 57 L 19
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning fingerprint background checks for guardians ad litem.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Nguyen and Darneille.

Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation
House Committee on Human Services & Early Learning

Background: A guardian ad litem (GAL) is a person appointed in a court proceeding to represent the best interests of a party and to investigate and report to the court on relevant matters. In the context of a child dependency proceeding, the court must appoint a GAL to represent the best interests of the child who is the subject of the dependency. A GAL is authorized to investigate, present evidence at court hearings, submit factual reports, and make recommendations to the court regarding the child's situation and the best interests of the child.

Many GALs appointed in dependency proceedings are volunteers that work through a court-established GAL program or a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) program. When a CASA or volunteer GAL is requested on a case, the court appoints the person recommended by the CASA or GAL program. If a court does not have a GAL program with a sufficient number of volunteers, the court may appoint a suitable person who may be compensated for their services. Compensated GALs must be appointed based on a rotational registry system, unless the court finds there are extraordinary circumstances, or if a joint recommendation of a GAL is made by the parties.

Each GAL program must maintain a background information file on all GALs that must contain specified information, including education, training, experience, number of prior appointments, finger-print based background checks, and criminal history. Upon appointment, this information must be made available to the court and to the parties.

Summary: While a background information file on all GALs must be updated annually, the finger-print based background check is to be updated every three years.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	0
House	96	0

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Effective: July 28, 2019