



Utah State Courts

2018
Annual Report

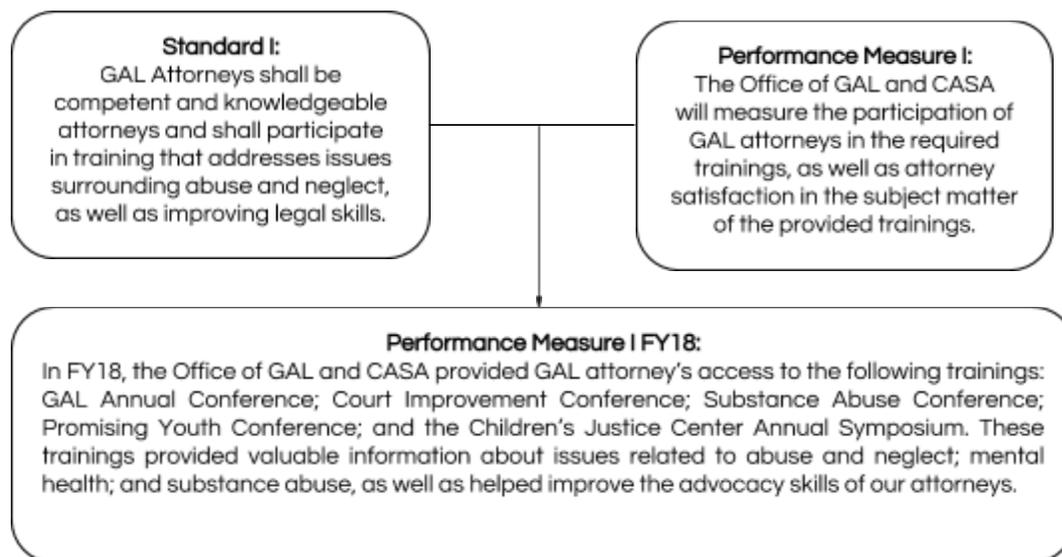
UTAH OFFICE OF
GUARDIAN AD LITEM
AND CASA

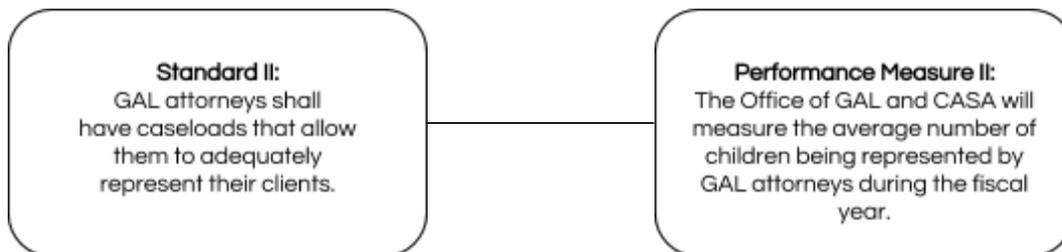
OFFICE OF GUARDIAN AD LITEM AND CASA

The job of a Guardian ad Litem attorney carries with it a tremendous responsibility. It is their job to stand in the shoes of the child and zealously advocate for the children the Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA represents. Our attorneys are committed and well trained, and as such, are an asset to the State of Utah.

In FY2013, the Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA was asked to develop performance measures and to report on those measures annually to the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice Subcommittee. In FY2014, the Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA developed these Standards and Performance Measures and they were approved by the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice Subcommittee. The approved Standards and Performance Measures, as well as supporting FY2018 data, are listed below.

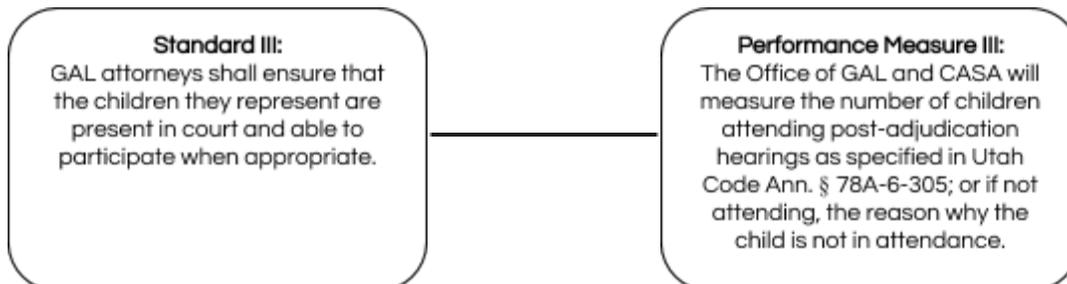
STANDARDS & PERFORMANCE MEASURES





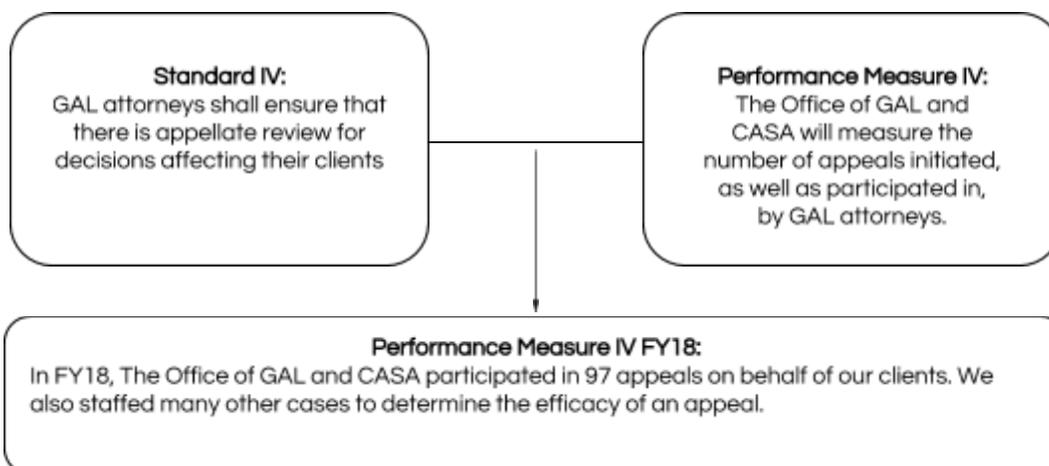
Performance Measure II FY18:

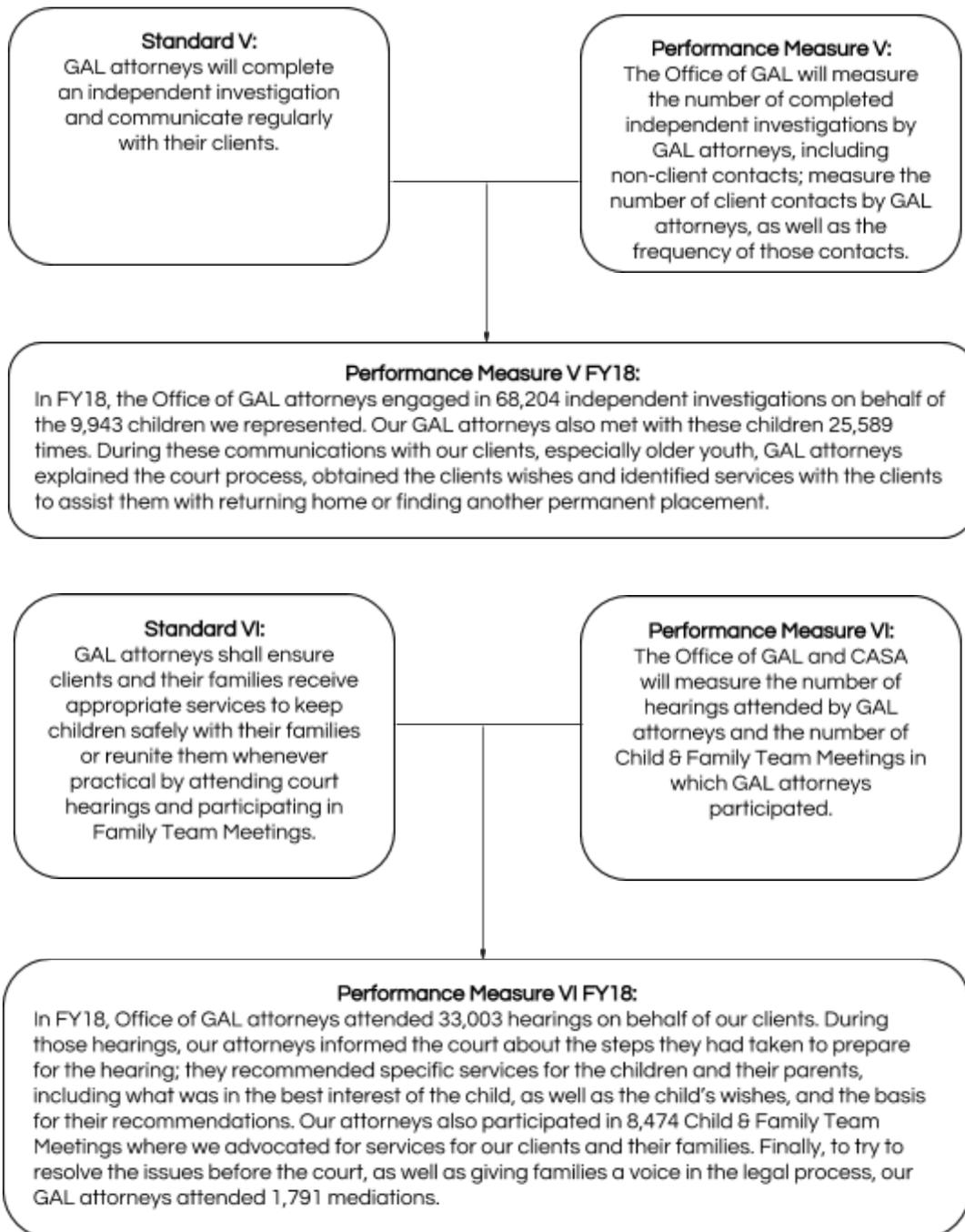
In FY18, GAL attorneys had on average 125 children and 100 families on their caseloads at any given time. This number is decreasing in part to authorization by the legislature to reallocate resources within the Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA. In FY18 the Office added one full time GAL attorney to help with increasing caseloads.

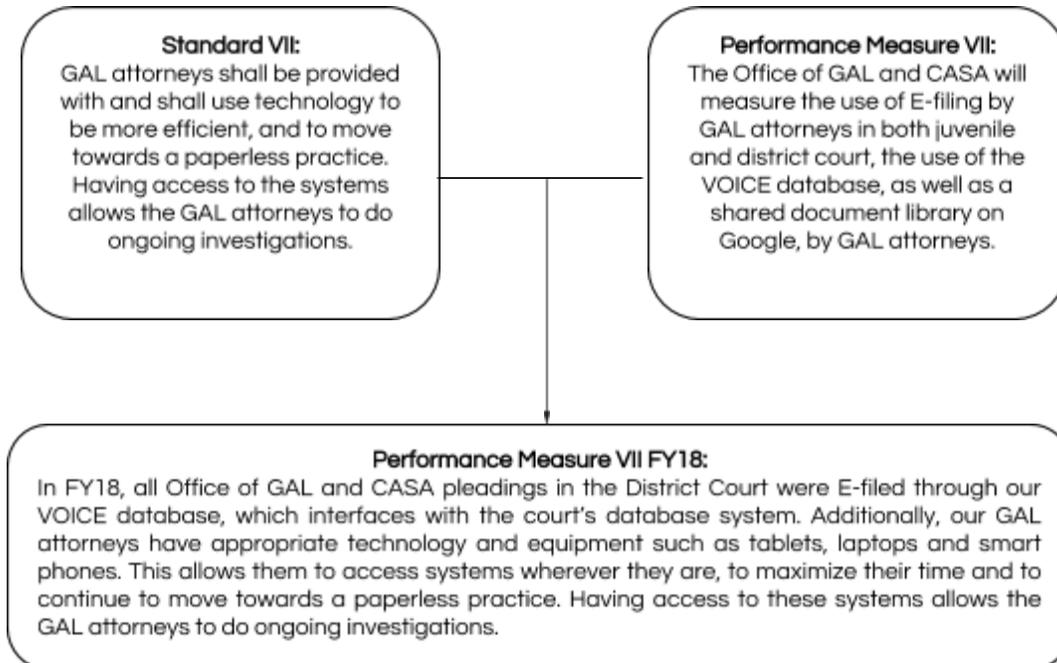


Performance Measure III FY18:

In FY18, more than 50% of children attended and participated in their court hearings. The most common reasons for children not attending their court hearing is that it was impractical for the child to attend or it was detrimental for the child to attend. The Office of GAL and CASA continues to work with the courts and community partners to increase the presence of our clients in court, especially older youth.







PRIVATE GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

In FY18, the Private Guardian ad Litem program continued to expand. We currently have 109 private attorneys who have accepted over 319 cases this past year, including over 25 pro bono cases. Dixie Jackson, our Private Guardian ad Litem Coordinator, continues to support these private attorneys by responding to questions, providing guidance and attending hearings when necessary. Also, the Best Practice Guidelines were expanded significantly, in the form of a Private Guardian ad Litem Manual, for the Private Guardians ad Litem to be better equipped to handle these difficult cases.

We continue to update our website monthly to keep the list of available Private Guardian ad Litem attorneys as well as the collection of pleadings that attorneys can use and modify. We also provide a Newsletter with information relevant to the role of the Private Guardian ad Litem each month. Finally, to assist the private attorneys comply with CJA R4-906, The Office of the Guardian ad Litem and CASA has hosted sessions of Continuing Legal Education throughout the state.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) PROGRAM

The CASA program is a valued resource for the Office of Guardian ad Litem and CASA. During FY18, 774 volunteer advocates served 1,475 children and donated 32,140 hours. Advocates are appointed pursuant to U.C.A. § 78A-6-902, subsection (4) (a) that states:

“An attorney guardian ad litem may use trained volunteers, in accordance with U.C.A. § 67-20-1 et seq...to assist in investigation and preparation of information regarding the cases of individual minors before the court.”

CASA volunteers are assigned to an individual case and gather information for the GAL attorneys by visiting consistently with child clients, attending child and family team meetings and court hearings, and tracking the child’s progress in school. In addition, these advocates ensure that the child is receiving needed services and is in a safe, nurturing environment by monitoring court orders and reporting to the GAL attorney.

CASA volunteers are carefully screened; they receive a background check and are provided with 32 hours of pre-service training and 12 hours of annual in-service training. Research conducted by the National CASA Association has found that children with CASA volunteers do better in school, spend less time in the foster care system, are less likely to re-enter foster care and are more likely to have a consistent, responsible adult present than other children in care.

UTAH'S FRIENDS OF CASA

Utah's Friends of CASA is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that supports the CASA program by providing supplemental funding for volunteer recruitment, training and retention. This past year, the Utah's Friends of CASA Board assisted in funding participation at the National CASA Conference for our Director and the interim CASA Program Administrator.



Standing in the Shoes of the Child

