

Florida PTA Position

Florida PTA urges that the legislature require qualified legal counsel for all children in all proceedings governed by Chapter 39, Florida Statutes\*. Florida PTA supports the expansion of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program to ensure that every child in dependency court has a Guardian ad Litem.

\*Judicial proceedings that deal with the care, safety and protection of children.

Background

Florida Law currently provides for legal representation for child welfare agencies and for parents. The law allows legal representation for children, but does not require it.

Florida PTA Position

Florida PTA urges that the legislature require qualified legal counsel for all children in all proceedings governed by Chapter 39, Florida Statutes\*. Florida PTA supports the expansion of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program to ensure that every child in dependency court has a Guardian ad Litem.

\*Judicial proceedings that deal with the care, safety and protection of children.

Background

Florida Law currently provides for legal representation for child welfare agencies and for parents. The law allows legal representation for children, but does not require it.

Florida PTA Position

Florida PTA urges that the legislature require qualified legal counsel for all children in all proceedings governed by Chapter 39, Florida Statutes\*. Florida PTA supports the expansion of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program to ensure that every child in dependency court has a Guardian ad Litem.

\*Judicial proceedings that deal with the care, safety and protection of children.

Background

Florida Law currently provides for legal representation for child welfare agencies and for parents. The law allows legal representation for children, but does not require it.

Florida PTA Position

Florida PTA urges that the legislature require qualified legal counsel for all children in all proceedings governed by Chapter 39, Florida Statutes\*. Florida PTA supports the expansion of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program to ensure that every child in dependency court has a Guardian ad Litem.

\*Judicial proceedings that deal with the care, safety and protection of children.

Background

Florida Law currently provides for legal representation for child welfare agencies and for parents. The law allows legal representation for children, but does not require it.

## Talking Points

In abuse and neglect cases, a court determines a child's future, including whether the child will remain in his or her home, the nature and duration of any placement outside the home, the child's contact with parents and other relatives and the child's access to social services. A child's interest in these proceedings are of fundamental importance.

In a June 2002 report, The Florida Bar Commission on the Legal Needs of Children recommended that Florida should fully fund independent advocacy that includes the availability of legal counsel and Guardians ad Litem for children in certain legal and administrative proceedings.

To adequately promote and protect the legal rights of children, Florida should develop a comprehensive system and structure for child representation, which includes legal counsel for children and Guardians ad Litem.

- Florida's Guardian ad Litem program is a nationally respected model in which trained volunteers make important contributions to children's safety and well being. However, in very few cases are children represented by attorneys. In spite of the training, commitment and experience of volunteer guardians, their ability to assist children would be greatly enhanced if the children also were represented by attorneys.

## Talking Points

In abuse and neglect cases, a court determines a child's future, including whether the child will remain in his or her home, the nature and duration of any placement outside the home, the child's contact with parents and other relatives and the child's access to social services. A child's interest in these proceedings are of fundamental importance.

In a June 2002 report, The Florida Bar Commission on the Legal Needs of Children recommended that Florida should fully fund independent advocacy that includes the availability of legal counsel and Guardians ad Litem for children in certain legal and administrative proceedings.

To adequately promote and protect the legal rights of children, Florida should develop a comprehensive system and structure for child representation, which includes legal counsel for children and Guardians ad Litem.

- Florida's Guardian ad Litem program is a nationally respected model in which trained volunteers make important contributions to children's safety and well being. However, in very few cases are children represented by attorneys. In spite of the training, commitment and experience of volunteer guardians, their ability to assist children would be greatly enhanced if the children also were represented by attorneys.

## Talking Points

In abuse and neglect cases, a court determines a child's future, including whether the child will remain in his or her home, the nature and duration of any placement outside the home, the child's contact with parents and other relatives and the child's access to social services. A child's interest in these proceedings are of fundamental importance.

In a June 2002 report, The Florida Bar Commission on the Legal Needs of Children recommended that Florida should fully fund independent advocacy that includes the availability of legal counsel and Guardians ad Litem for children in certain legal and administrative proceedings.

To adequately promote and protect the legal rights of children, Florida should develop a comprehensive system and structure for child representation, which includes legal counsel for children and Guardians ad Litem.

- Florida's Guardian ad Litem program is a nationally respected model in which trained volunteers make important contributions to children's safety and well being. However, in very few cases are children represented by attorneys. In spite of the training, commitment and experience of volunteer guardians, their ability to assist children would be greatly enhanced if the children also were represented by attorneys.

## Talking Points

In abuse and neglect cases, a court determines a child's future, including whether the child will remain in his or her home, the nature and duration of any placement outside the home, the child's contact with parents and other relatives and the child's access to social services. A child's interest in these proceedings are of fundamental importance.

In a June 2002 report, The Florida Bar Commission on the Legal Needs of Children recommended that Florida should fully fund independent advocacy that includes the availability of legal counsel and Guardians ad Litem for children in certain legal and administrative proceedings.

To adequately promote and protect the legal rights of children, Florida should develop a comprehensive system and structure for child representation, which includes legal counsel for children and Guardians ad Litem.

- Florida's Guardian ad Litem program is a nationally respected model in which trained volunteers make important contributions to children's safety and well being. However, in very few cases are children represented by attorneys. In spite of the training, commitment and experience of volunteer guardians, their ability to assist children would be greatly enhanced if the children also were represented by attorneys.