

American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council



Bois Forte



Fond Du Lac



Grand Portage



Leech Lake



Lower Sioux



Mille Lacs



Prairie Island



Red Lake



Shakopee



Upper Sioux



White Earth

1/01/23

Minnesota Guardian ad Litem Board
Minnesota Judicial Center Suite G-27
25 Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Wage Increase for Guardians ad Litem

Honorable Board Members:

The Minnesota Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council is authorized in statute to advise on matters concerning American Indian children and families. The Advisory Council is comprised of membership representing eleven Tribal Nations as well as Urban Indian communities. Our goals are to review, advise, and make recommendations on policy, legislation, or funding issues that impact American Indian child welfare. The Minnesota Guardian ad Litem program has made significant strides in 2021 toward improving child welfare outcomes related to American Indian families through its implementation of an ICWA specific GAL Division. This unit has increased efforts toward improved training and support of ICWA guardians ad litem, for which the ICWA Advisory Council extends its support and appreciation.

The ICWA Advisory Council recently discussed remaining barriers that may exist to continue to improve child welfare outcomes for American Indian children and families, and while most are external to the Guardian ad Litem program, there is one that deserves being highlighted within the program, and that is pay equity. When we look at comparative salaries across the State for similar positions, it is apparent that the rate of pay for guardians is low, and it creates concern that this is a barrier to attract qualified individuals to fill the full time positions. The qualifications for guardian positions includes preference for a bachelor degree, or equivalent experience. Within most child

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welfare organizations calling for similar qualifications the rate of pay is noticeably higher. A comparative wage study might highlight the inequity in pay and demonstrate how this issue is impacting recruitment of qualified individuals for guardian positions.

We believe it is critical to the welfare of children to attract a pool of individuals who are qualified to serve in this role. In terms of recruitment and retainment of qualified individuals it requires a livable wage that reflects their education and experience in relation to their critical service.

The American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council supports the goal to work towards 100% ICWA/MIFPA compliance. This is a good time to work provide equity in pay for the coordination and work that GAL provide for children.

If the Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council can be of any further assistance or advocacy in this matter, please feel free to reach out to the Co-Chairs. Our sincere hope with this letter is that the Board will understand the support coming from the ICWA Advisory Council in this matter.

Respectfully,



Laurie York



Tawny **Smith-**

ICWA Advisory Council Co-Chairs