

FISCAL NOTE

This bill creates the Office of Guardian Ad Litem (Office) as a separate operating agency. The Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, would appoint a director of the Office who shall serve as the administrative head of the Office and as Chief Guardian Ad Litem.

The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) program currently resides as a separate division both functionally and fiscally within the Public Defenders Office, and has been in the Public Defenders Office since 2008. The GAL program is funded approximately 80 percent from the General Fund and approximately 20 percent from county matching funds. The GAL provides 100 percent payment for GAL legal services in the counties that enter into Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Each of those counties is then billed for a match of the General Funds expended for services provided in each county. Currently, the GAL has MOUs with 22 counties (Goshen County does not participate in the GAL). The GAL has 10 employees and 28 independent professional contractors who provide legal services to children in abuse and neglect cases in the 22 participating counties.

The Governor's total 2021-22 budget recommendation for the GAL program is presented below:

Source of Funding	Standard Budget	Exception Request	Total Budget Recommendation
General Fund	\$3,990,051	\$368,000	\$4,358,051
Special Revenue	\$1,067,570	\$92,000	\$1,159,570
Total	\$5,057,621	\$460,000	\$5,517,621
Full-time positions	10	0	10

This bill is effective July 1, 2020. The bill states that the following actions occur on the effective date of the bill:

- All unexpired contracts existing between the Public Defenders Office and attorneys under W.S. 14-12-101(a) or W.S. 14-12-102(c) shall continue with the proposed Office.
- All unexpired agreements existing between the Public Defenders Office and counties under W.S. 14-12-103 shall continue with the proposed Office.
- Any unexpired MOU existing between the Public Defenders office and the Department of Family Services shall continue with the proposed Office.
- All unexpended, unobligated funds appropriated on or before July 1, 2020 for the GAL program to the Public Defenders Office are hereby reappropriated to the Office on July 1, 2020.
- All positions authorized on or before July 1, 2020 for the GAL program to the Public Defenders Office are hereby transferred to the Office on July 1, 2020.

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