

I include the following with my application (please check all applicable boxes):

- ☒ Curriculum vitae, showing work and professional or personal experience in or related to the field that would assist in the performance and completion of Guardian ad Litem duties.
- ☒ Completed Washington State Patrol Conviction Criminal History.
- ☒ Signed release of information directed to all professional regulatory bodies which have licensed or supervised the applicant within the last ten years.
- ☐ Description of nature, status and outcome of any professional complaints, investigations or disciplinary actions, lawsuits or professional liability claims, and any order for removal of the Guardian ad Litem prior to completion of the Guardian ad Litem's duties.
- ☐ Description of any claims or litigation that has been commenced, involving allegations of improper fee charges, charges of fraud, theft or other forms of dishonesty or professional malpractice or misconduct.
- ☒ Copy of fee schedule.
- ☒ Certificate of Qualification/Training for Guardian ad Litem seeking appointment under RCW Title 26.

OR

- ☐ I am currently on the Guardian ad Litem Registry and have included a certificate of updated training taken within the last year.

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing is true and correct.

DATED this 22nd day of June, 2026, at Union, Washington.



SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

PRINT NAME: Matthew Melendez

Matthew Melendez

Championing children's safety, stability, and lifelong wellbeing.

Experienced child advocate, educator, nonprofit executive, and trauma-informed program developer with more than twenty-five years of experience working with children, adolescents, families, and vulnerable populations. Extensive background in child development, educational systems, family dynamics, program evaluation, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Recognized for exceptional written communication, investigative thoroughness, sound judgment, and the ability to synthesize complex information into clear, balanced recommendations. Brings both professional and lived experience navigating high-conflict family systems, including matters involving coercive control, child welfare concerns, and the family court process.

EXPERIENCE

Founder & General Director (2017-present)

Great Bend Center for Music, Union, WA

Design and implement trauma-informed educational and therapeutic curricula for children, families, veterans, and other vulnerable populations. Programs have included music-based interventions for children served by Turning Pointe Survivor Advocacy Center and therapeutic programming for veterans residing in local tiny home communities, emphasizing resilience, emotional regulation, healing, and community reintegration.

K-12 Educator (2000-Present)

Shelton School District, Shelton, WA

Hood Canal School District, Union, WA

More than twenty-five years of direct experience teaching children and adolescents across preschool through twelfth grade settings. Extensive curriculum development experience includes the design and implementation of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs serving adolescents with complex educational, behavioral, and social-emotional needs, including youth affected by trauma, poverty, and family instability.

AWARDS

2025 Mason County Nonprofit of the Year

Shelton Mason Chamber of Commerce

2012 Mason County Citizen of the Year

Shelton Mason Chamber of Commerce

2002 Washington State Seafood Festival

Professional Chef Division: Silver Medal, Soups

Professional Chef Division: Bronze Medal, Appetizers

Portland's Most Creative Chef – 2001

Willamette Week & Portland Zagat Guide

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)

1997 Public Service Campaign Spotlight Award

AFFILIATIONS

Turning Pointe Survivor Advocacy Center (Board Member, Current Treasurer)

Salish Sea Rotary Club (Charter President, Current Board Member)

American Choral Directors Association

Chorus America

Skookum Shelton Rotary Club (Past Board Member, Past Public Relations Director)

Union Tourism Association (Founder, Past President)

Mason Shelton Chamber of Commerce

Adjunct Faculty (2017-present)

Olympic College

Teach undergraduate coursework while mentoring students from diverse backgrounds.

EDUCATION

University of Washington, Seattle, WA — D.M.A

My doctoral research focused on the powerful positive social impacts of community musicking, with an emphasis on applied applications of arts education at the community level with an emphasis on therapeutic and trauma-informed applications.

University of Washington, Seattle, WA — M.M.

My masters level research focused on cultural tourism as a mechanism for revitalizing and diversifying rural economies.

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY — B.S.

My undergraduate studies resulted in a communications degree with specialties in sociology, social psychology and advertising copywriting with a further specialization in graphic design.

REFERENCES

Jill McKnight, Principal
Best Interest Advocacy
jill@best-interest.org
(360) 545-3023

Dr. Monica Casper, Dean of
Arts & Sciences
Seattle University
monica@monicajasper.com
(602) 791-6444

Anna Miller, CMT-E
Mindfulness Works
anna.marin.miller@gmail.com
(206) 920-7769



AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION

As an applicant for a GAL position with Kitsap County, I hereby authorize any employers or supervisors, educational institutions, personal references and /or other persons to release information about my work history for use in determining my qualifications for this position. I understand, agree and authorize a copy or facsimile of this form to be as valid as the original.

I further authorize any law enforcement agency to conduct a criminal records check and to release the results of said criminal records check to the CASA/GAL program.

I understand that the information requested in this application will be used only for the purpose of determining suitability as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Further, I understand that after the successful completion of my training, I will be expected to serve a minimum of two years in the CASA/GAL program. If unforeseen circumstances prevent me from fulfilling this obligation, I will submit my written resignation to the program director with as much advance notice as possible.

I am aware of the sensitive and confidential nature of the official documents, reports and other material I will examine in my capacity as a volunteer guardian ad litem. I will discuss these matters only with those persons directly involved in the case or who will be consulted for their professional knowledge and expertise.

I have read the above waiver and release statement and fully understand what rights I am waiving by signing this document.

Signature: 
Name (Printed): Matthew Melendez
Social Security #: 138-74-3019

Date: June 22, 2026

Release Exp. Date: June 30, 2027



GUARDIAN AD LITEM FEE SCHEDULE & BILLING POLICIES

Effective Date: July 1, 2026

OUR COMMITMENT

Best Interest Child & Family Advocacy is committed to providing thorough, impartial, child-centered investigations and recommendations to the Court. We strive to deliver timely, trauma-informed, and professionally rigorous services while maintaining transparency regarding fees and billing practices.

RATES

Service	Rate
Guardian ad Litem Services	\$150 per hour
Court Testimony / Trial Attendance	\$150 per hour
Emergency or Expedited Services	\$300 per hour

Billing occurs in increments of one-quarter (0.25) of an hour (15 minutes).

BILLABLE SERVICES

The following activities are billable unless otherwise ordered by the Court:

Investigation Activities

- * Interviews with parents, children, and collateral witnesses
- * Home visits
- * Observation of parent-child interactions
- * Review of court files
- * Review of educational, medical, mental health, and CPS records
- * Document analysis
- * Consultation with professionals and service providers
- * Preparation of recommendations

Administrative Activities

- * Scheduling and case management
- * Telephone calls
- * Emails, text messages, and written correspondence
- * Preparation and review of releases
- * Record requests and follow-up

**Report Preparation**

Time spent preparing written reports, recommendations, declarations, affidavits, and other court documents is billable.

Court Activities

Time spent preparing for, attending, and participating in hearings, settlement conferences, mediation, trial, depositions, and testimony is billable.

Travel

Travel time is billable at the standard hourly rate unless otherwise ordered by the Court. Mileage is billed at the current IRS reimbursement rate.

COSTS AND EXPENSES

The parties are responsible for reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, including but not limited to:

- * Mileage
- * Parking
- * Tolls
- * Postage and certified mail
- * Record retrieval fees
- * Copying and printing costs
- * Long-distance travel expenses
- * Lodging, meals, and transportation for overnight travel when necessary

Any extraordinary expense exceeding \$250 will be discussed with the parties and/or attorneys in advance whenever practicable.

RETAINERS

A retainer of \$2,250 (equivalent to 15 hours of work) is required prior to commencement of services unless otherwise ordered by the Court.

The retainer is deposited into a trust account and applied against earned fees. Additional retainers may be required as the case progresses.

Failure to replenish retainer balances may result in suspension of services, motion to withdraw, or application to the Court for further direction.



INVOICING

Invoices are issued:

- ☐ Monthly
OR
☐ At major case milestones

Payment is due within 15 days of invoice date.

Balances unpaid after 30 days may accrue interest at 1.5% per month as permitted by law.

PAYMENT METHODS

We accept:

- * Check
- * Cashier's Check
- * ACH Transfer
- * Credit/Debit Card
- * Online Payment Portal

Returned checks are subject to a fee of \$30.

SHARED PAYMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Unless otherwise ordered by the Court:

- ☐ Fees shall be divided equally between the parties.
OR
☐ Fees shall be allocated pursuant to Court order.

Each party remains individually responsible for the full amount of fees unless otherwise limited by Court order or written agreement.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Appointments canceled with less than 24 hours' notice may be billed for up to one hour of scheduled time.

Missed appointments ("no-shows") may be billed at the full scheduled amount.



EXPEDITED OR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Requests requiring action outside normal business hours, expedited reports, emergency hearings, or urgent investigations may be billed at an enhanced rate.

Availability for emergency services cannot be guaranteed.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Guardian ad Litem Role

The Guardian ad Litem represents the best interests of the child(ren) and does not serve as an attorney, therapist, counselor, mediator, or advocate for either parent.

No Guarantee of Recommendations

Recommendations are based upon information available at the time of investigation. No guarantee can be made regarding recommendations or Court outcomes.

Court Authority

The Court retains ultimate authority regarding appointment, scope of investigation, fees, allocation of fees, and compensation.

Professional Independence

Payment of fees does not influence the Guardian ad Litem's findings, recommendations, or professional judgment.

Confidentiality

Communications with the Guardian ad Litem are generally not confidential and may be included in reports or disclosed to the Court as appropriate.

Mandatory Reporting

Guardians ad Litem are mandatory reporters under Washington law and must report suspected child abuse or neglect as required by law.

COUNTY-SPECIFIC APPOINTMENTS

Compensation in court-appointed cases is subject to:

- * Applicable Washington statutes;
- * Local county rules;
- * Court orders;
- * Contracts with counties or courts, where applicable.



When local rules or court orders conflict with this fee schedule, the applicable court order or local rule shall govern.

BUSINESS HOURS

Normal business hours: Monday-Friday: 9AM to 4PM

Weekend and after-hours services are available only by prior arrangement or emergency necessity.

Questions regarding fees or billing may be directed to:

Best Interest Child & Family Advocacy

Phone: 360-545-3019

Email: info@best-interest.org

Website: <https://www.best-interest.org/>



Certificate of Attendance



_____ This certifies that _____

MATTHEW MELENDEZ

attended the Washington State Title 26
Guardian ad Litem Certification Training held
via Zoom on June 5, 6, 12 and 13, 2026.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Mindy Belhiba-Rovira.

Mindy Belhiba-Rovira
Executive Director
Kitsap Legal Aid Services

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Kelly Warner-King.

Kelly Warner-King, JD
Administrative Office
of the Courts

THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
FOR KITSAP COUNTY

614 DIVISION STREET, MS-24
PORT ORCHARD, WASHINGTON 98366
(360) 337-7140

TINA ROBINSON, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 1
MICHELLE ADAMS, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 2
MELISSA A. HEMSTREET, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 3
WILLIAM C. HOUSER, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 4
JEFFREY P. BASSETT, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 5
KEVIN D. HULL, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 6

JENNIFER A. FORBES, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 7
CADINE FERGUSON-BROWN, JUDGE
DEPARTMENT NO. 8

MATTHEW L. CLUCAS
COURT COMMISSIONER
LYNN K. FLEISCHBEIN
COURT COMMISSIONER
FRANK A. MAIOCCO, JR.
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

June 29, 2026

Mr. Matthew Melendez
Best Interest Child & Family Advocacy
625 W. Railroad Avenue #186
Shelton, WA 98584

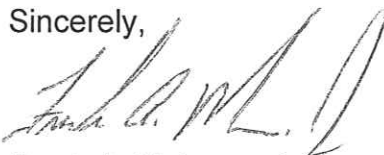
Re: Kitsap County Superior Court Title 26 Guardian ad Litem Registry, 2026-2027

Dear Mr. Melendez:

The Kitsap County Superior Court Guardian ad Litem Committee has received and reviewed your application for the Title 26 Guardian ad Litem registry. We are pleased to include you on the 2026 - 2027 Registry, effective July 1, 2026.

Thank you for your interest and participation in Kitsap County's Guardian ad Litem program.

Sincerely,



Frank A. Maiocco, Jr.
Court Administrator
Kitsap County Superior Court