



# FACT SHEET

## WHY VOICES FOR CHILDREN?

For 31 years, Voices has provided funding to support the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program. The state of Florida requires that the interests of every abused, abandoned, and neglected child be represented by a Guardian ad Litem (GAL). However, the GAL Program does not receive adequate public funding, so Voices For Children Foundation fills the gap. Additionally, Voices raises funds to meet the social, education, and medical needs of Miami-Dade's abused, abandoned, and neglected children.

## WHAT IS THE GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL) PROGRAM?

The 11th Judicial Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program recruits, trains, supports, and supervises court-appointed adults to represent the best interests of Miami-Dade's abused, abandoned, and neglected children in dependency court proceedings. Guardians ad Litem serve as the "voice" of abused, abandoned, or neglected children in juvenile court. [www.WeAreGuardians.org](http://www.WeAreGuardians.org)

It is part of a nationwide network of advocacy organizations under the umbrella of the National Court-Appointed Special Advocates Association (NCASAA). [www.CasaForChildren.org](http://www.CasaForChildren.org)

## HOW MANY CHILDREN DOES THE GAL PROGRAM REPRESENT?

Although the number fluctuates, as of May 15<sup>th</sup> 2016, there were 3,039 children in Miami-Dade's foster care system. That month, the GAL Program represented approximately 70% of those children and youth, leaving approximately 887 youth without a voice in court.

## WHAT ARE THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THESE CHILDREN?

Approximately 51 % of these children are African American, 40% are Hispanic, 1% are Caucasian, and 8% are multicultural and/or other ethnicities; 43% are 0-5 years, 22% are 6-9 years old, 15% are 10-13 years old, 19% are 14-17 years old, and 1% are 18 years of age or older (Eleventh Judicial Circuit GAL Program, April 2016); and approximately 51% of these children are below the federal poverty level, 40% are low-income, and only 9% are above moderate income level. All of these children are the victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, alcoholic or drug-addicted parents and neglect.



## MORE ABOUT VOICES...

### WHAT DO GALs DO?

- Speak up for the best interests of the child
- Gather information through regular visits with the child
- Conduct interviews with people associated with the child
- Attend hearings on the child's behalf
- Make recommendations to the judge

### WHO CAN BECOME A GAL?

Anyone who:

- Possesses a strong desire to help children
- Demonstrates good judgment and common sense
- Exhibits good communication skills
- Provides favorable references and consents to a background check
- Completes 30 hours of training
- Is at least 19 years old

### HOW CAN I BE A VOICE?

If you would like to make a financial contribution, please contact Voices For Children at 305.324.5678 or donate online please visit [www.BeAVoice.org](http://www.BeAVoice.org)

To become a Guardian ad Litem volunteer, call 305.638.6861 Ext. 245.

**For media inquiries please contact** Beatriz Bellorin at 786.469.3865 or [BBellorin@BeAVoice.org](mailto:BBellorin@BeAVoice.org).

### GET CONNECTED



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