



STATE BAR  
OF WISCONSIN

P.O. Box 7158, Madison, WI 53707-7158

## Domestic Violence for Guardians ad Litem 2026

**CREDIT HOURS:**

6.5 CLE | GAL Family/Minor | GAL  
Domestic Violence credits, including  
1 EPR credit

**IN-PERSON SEMINAR:** Wednesday, March 4, 2026 — Madison

**LIVE WEBCAST:** Wednesday, March 4, 2026

**WEBCAST REPLAYS:** Thursday, March 12, 2026

Friday, March 20, 2026

Monday, March 30, 2026

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Friday, May 1, 2026

Monday, May 11, 2026

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

Thursday, November 19, 2026

Friday, December 11, 2026



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN  
PINNACLE

# Domestic Violence for Guardians ad Litem 2026



**6.5** CLE  
GAL Minor / Family  
GAL Domestic Violence

---

**1.0** EPR

Program dates start March 4.  
Register today!

# Domestic Violence for Guardians ad Litem 2026



## Clear-eyed custody analysis

**Domestic Violence for Guardians ad Litem 2026** examines the intersection of domestic violence and contested custody cases, where abuse can be embedded in family dynamics. Experienced practitioners address screening and contextual evaluation of abuse in relation to custody and placement determinations under Wisconsin law. Using the SAFeR approach, this program provides a structured framework for recognizing abuse, assessing its impact, and making safety-forward recommendations that protect children while providing clarity to the court.

**Register now!**

### HOW YOU'LL BENEFIT

- Approach domestic violence cases with a consistent, structured methodology
- Make recommendations that more accurately reflect safety risks
- Better support child-centered custody and placement outcomes
- Integrate findings of abuse into well-supported, safety-focused recommendations
- Strengthen the clarity and credibility of your reports to the court
- Address ethical challenges when GAL duties conflict with party positions or court expectations
- Comply with Wisconsin statutory requirements to accept GAL appointments

## FACULTY

### PROGRAM PRESENTERS

**Meghan E. Healy**, DiRenzo & Bomier, LLC, Neenah

**Kelsey J. Mullins**, Office of Court Operations, Madison

**Kari L. Niesen-LaScala**, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, Madison

**Gricel Santiago-Rivera**, Santiago Family Law & Mediation Services, Madison

## DATES & LOCATION

### IN-PERSON SEMINAR — MADISON

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

**State Bar Center**

5302 Eastpark Blvd.

Madison, WI

(608) 257-3838

### LIVE WEBCAST

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

### WEBCAST REPLAYS

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Friday, March 20, 2026

Monday, March 30, 2026

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Friday, May 1, 2026

Monday, May 11, 2026

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

Thursday, November 19, 2026

Friday, December 11, 2026

## CREDITS

**CREDIT HOURS:** This program will be submitted to the Wisconsin Board of Bar Examiners for **6.5 CLE | GAL Family/Minor | GAL Domestic Violence credits, including 1 Ethics and Professional Responsibility credit.** The BBE is not currently tracking GALDV credits.

**Anytime. Anywhere. CLE OnDemand.™**  
[wisbar.org/ondemand](https://wisbar.org/ondemand)

# SCHEDULE

**8:00 AM Registration**

**8:30 AM Introduction to the SAFeR Framework and SAFeR 1: Screen for Domestic Violence**

- Context: 2017 Domestic Abuse Guidebook for WI GALs
  - Study, Addressing Domestic Abuse in Family Court Cases Involving Guardians ad Litem in Wisconsin
  - SAFeR Framework and Wisconsin-based research
  - Terminology: Domestic abuse vs. domestic violence; survivor vs. victim
  - What is domestic violence?
    - ♦ Behavioral definitions
    - ♦ Legal definitions, looking at the family code, including interspousal batter and domestic abuse in the restraining order statute
  - Barriers to disclosing domestic violence
  - Risks of leaving, screening protocols, and a review of collateral sources
- Kelsey J. Mullins*

**10:00 AM Break**

**10:15 AM SAFeR 2: Assess the Nature and Context of Domestic Violence**

- Preconceived notions of what a “real” survivor looks like or how they act
  - Myths surrounding domestic violence
  - Cultural competence and beliefs, biases, and assumptions
  - Understanding context is critical
    - ♦ Minor/isolated incidents
    - ♦ Resistive violence
    - ♦ Coercive control
  - Children’s experience of the abuse
    - ♦ Looking at experiences by developmental stage
  - Parenting by victims
  - Parenting by abusers
- Gricel Santiago-Rivera*

**11:15 AM SAFeR 3: Focus on the Effects of Domestic Violence**

- The law starts with a presumption of joint legal custody
  - Rebuttable presumption against custody to abusive parent
  - Presumption that domestic abuse equals an inability to cooperate
  - Presumption against custody to abusive parent in cases of child abuse
  - Best interest of the child factors
  - Placement and safety as paramount concern
- Kari L. Niesen-LaScala*

**12:15 PM Lunch (on your own)**

**1:15 PM SAFeR 4: Recommendations that Account for Domestic Violence**

- Priorities
  - Integrating your analysis
  - Statutory duties of GAL
    - ♦ Investigate
    - ♦ Report
    - ♦ Recommend
  - How each category of your recommendation can incorporate safety provisions
    - ♦ Custody
    - ♦ Placement
    - ♦ Child exchanges
    - ♦ Communication
  - Wisconsin law provides safety provisions
    - ♦ Exchanges
    - ♦ Supervised placement
    - ♦ Batterers treatment
  - Importance of specificity
  - Presenting recommendations to the court
- Meghan E. Healy*

**2:15 PM Break**

**2:30 PM Ethical Issues in Obtaining or Presenting the Best Interest of the Child**

- Obligation and responsibility when the GAL does not believe parent(s)’ desires are in best interest of child
- Duty to control the process
- Confidentiality concerns when a victim does not wish information such as health or medical records to be revealed to court
- Does duty to protect best interest of child extend to duty to protect parent who is a victim?
- Addressing nonspecific orders such as “reasonable notice” when there is known domestic abuse
- Cultural competence: how beliefs, bias, and assumptions can negatively impact decision-making

**Ethical Considerations when GAL Recommendations are at Odds with Parties or the Court**

- Obligation when the best interest of child is in conflict with the agreement parents wish to present to court
  - Obligation if GAL believes court is not applying the right legal standard or law
  - Is there an ethical obligation to interview the child? At what age? How might evidence of impact on children be obtained without an interview?
  - How does a GAL get evidence of impact on child(ren) if not interviewing them?
  - Duty to litigate or force a deal when Court does not agree with GAL recommendations
  - Responsibility to address safety concerns for both child(ren) and non-abusive parent
  - Issues with interim authority
- Kelsey J. Mullins, Kari L. Niesen-LaScala, Gricel Santiago-Rivera*

**3:30 PM Program Concludes**

*Following start time, schedule may vary slightly from above. All times are Central Time Zone.*

## TUITION

|                           | IN-PERSON     | WEBCAST       |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| State Bar Member          | \$259         | \$289         |
| Nonmember                 | \$339         | \$369         |
| Ultimate Pass Gold/Silver | \$0           | \$0           |
| Ultimate Pass Bronze      | \$259         | \$0           |
| Passbook Certificate      | 1 Certificate | 1 Certificate |

## REGISTRATION & GENERAL INFO

**ONLINE:** [wisbar.org/seminars](https://wisbar.org/seminars)

**PHONE:** (800) 728-7788

**MAIL/FAX:** Visit [wisbar.org/regform](https://wisbar.org/regform)  
for registration form



**PINNACLE PASSBOOK REGISTRATIONS:** PINNACLE Passbook certificates must be received by the State Bar at least one business day prior to the event. For in-person seminars, walk-in registrations using Passbook certificates are also welcome.

**COURSE MATERIALS:** Course materials are provided to seminar attendees in PDF format and are downloadable from myStateBar on [wisbar.org](https://wisbar.org) up to two days prior to and 90 days after your seminar.

**CANCELLATIONS:** Please visit [wisbar.org/cancellations](https://wisbar.org/cancellations) for information on PINNACLE registration cancellation policies.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** If you need special accommodations, please contact us at (800) 728-7788, ext. 6142 at least three weeks prior to the program date so we can make appropriate arrangements.

**NOTICE:** By attending this State Bar event, you understand and agree that you may be photographed and/or electronically recorded during the event and you hereby grant to the State Bar the right to use and distribute your name and likeness for promotional or educational purposes without monetary compensation. The State Bar assumes no liability for such use.

**Event Code:** CA3936 **Priority Code:** S4704B

## BOOK BONUS!

### The Guardian ad Litem Handbook

**SAVE 15%** on *The Guardian ad Litem Handbook*.\*

This comprehensive resource equips you with practical guidance for GAL appointments, from routine matters to complex decision-making.

**Use discount code CA3936** when you order online or by calling (800) 728-7788.

\*Discount applies to both print and digital Books UnBound editions of this title and cannot be applied to previous purchases. Offer valid through 12/31/27. For Books UnBound users, discount may be applied to purchase of individual Books UnBound title only and may not be used on the purchase of libraries. Discount cannot be combined with any other offers.



## ADDITIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### GAL Training 2026

Receive practical training for guardians ad litem representing minors, focusing on designated responsibilities, effective advocacy, and best practices for ensuring children's voices, safety, and interests are fully and thoughtfully presented to the court.

**In-Person Madison Seminar and Live Webcast:** 5/14/26

**Webcast Replays:** 5/22/26 | 5/27/26 | 6/2/26 | 6/12/26 | 6/22/26 | 6/27/26 | 7/9/26  
7/15/26 | 7/28/26 | 8/17/26 | 9/24/26 | 10/16/26 | 11/11/26 | 12/8/26

### Family Law in Wisconsin: A Forms and Procedures Handbook

From the initial client meeting through post-judgment matters, this guide walks you step-by-step through divorce procedures with clarity. Forms, checklists, and practical tools help you stay organized, save time, and manage even complex cases with confidence.

**Print Book:** AK0052 | **Books Unbound:** AE0052\_SUB

### Family Law Forms Library

This online library puts more than 250 trusted, up-to-date forms in one searchable place, so you can stop hunting for documents. With customizable, e-filing forms drawn from leading State Bar of Wisconsin PINNACLE® resources, it's a faster, cleaner way to handle everyday family law work.

**Members Only – Online Subscription:** FSFB8000