

**BELL COUNTY CIVIL DISTRICT COURTS
PROTOCOL FOR APPOINTMENT OF ATTORNEYS AD LITEM**

The Texas Legislature passed S.B. 1876 relating to the appointment of attorneys ad litem, guardians ad litem, mediators, and guardians (the “Act”). The Act has become law and was effective September 1, 2015.

The Act requires each state court to establish and maintain separate lists of all attorneys who are qualified to serve as attorneys ad litem, guardians ad litem, mediators, and guardians.

The Act requires that the lists include all attorneys who are qualified to serve and who are registered with the court.

Rather than maintain their own lists, the Act provides that, at the request of one or more courts, the local administrative judge shall establish and maintain the lists for those courts making a request.

The Bell County District Judges have requested the local administrative judge (“Administrative Judge”) to establish and maintain the required lists of qualified Attorneys Ad Litem based on the criteria listed below for various categories.

The Bell County District Judges adopt the following protocol to establish and maintain the lists of qualified Attorneys Ad Litem in Family Law, General Civil Litigation, Real Estate Law and Delinquent Tax Suits. This protocol also applies to IV-D Child Support cases and CPS cases.

1.0 Creation of Attorney Ad Litem Lists

- 1.1** The Administrative Judge will maintain lists of qualified Attorneys Ad litem in the various categories (the “Lists”), except the lists for IV-D Court and CPS Court will be maintained by the Associate Judge for each court.
- 1.2** Attorneys wishing to be appointed as an Attorney Ad Litem shall apply with the Administrative Judge annually.
- 1.3** Qualifications for Attorney Ad Litem for the Civil Division. Attorneys wishing to be on the Lists must verify in their application that they satisfy the following qualifications:

- (a) Be licensed by and in good standing with the State Bar of Texas for at least one year preceding the initial application;
- (b) An attorney who has received a public reprimand is disqualified from inclusion on the Lists for one year following the reprimand;
- (c) An attorney who received a suspension or disbarment is disqualified from inclusion on the Lists for one year following reinstatement in good standing by the State Bar;
- (d) Exhibit proficiency and a commitment to providing quality representation to clients in civil cases;
- (e) Demonstrate professionalism and reliability when providing representation to clients in civil cases;
- (f) Comply with any and all reporting requirements as determined by the Bell County District Judges; and
- (g) Attend Ad Litem Continuing Legal Education (“CLE”) as required by law, or as required by the Bell County District Judges.

2.0 Use of Attorney Ad litem Lists.

- 2.1** All civil district court judges shall use the Lists except that a district court may opt out of the protocol by written notice to the Administrative Judge.
- 2.2** Appointments are made on a rotation system. A district judge using the Lists must appoint the person whose name appears first on the Lists. When someone is appointed as Attorney Ad Litem, that person is then placed at the bottom of the Lists. A judge may, however, make an exception in appointing the next person if the judge complies with the exception provisions of S.B. 1876.

3.0 Maintenance of the Lists.

3.1 The Bell County District Judges will vote annually to approve the Lists at its December meeting. The approved Lists shall be effective January 1st of the following calendar year.

3.2 The Administrative Judge shall maintain the Lists. Annually, the Lists will be electronically posted on or before January 1st of each year and a hard copy shall be posted at the civil courthouse, in a location to be determined by the Administrative Judge.

3.2 The Administrative Judge shall also post the courts for which the Lists are maintained and used.

4.0 **Removal from the Lists.** A majority of the Bell County District Judges may remove someone from the Lists. An attorney may be removed from the Lists if he or she fails to perform the duties as an Attorney Ad Litem or fails to satisfy the requirements herein.