

MIKAELA'S LAW

Divorce and custody matters are a multi-billion-dollar industry in the United States. Families are ripped apart due to inadequate protection under the law. Parents are entrapped in a never-ending cycle, losing their life savings and property while children lose their college funds, all to pay court involved guardians ad litem (GAL), therapists, psychologists, and custody evaluators, who use outdated laws to their advantage with no accountability. In Missouri, court involved professionals, including GALs, therapists, psychologists, and custody evaluators have quasi-judicial immunity which means parents cannot hold them accountable if they wrongfully recommend to a family and/or juvenile court removal of their child from their custody. Children are often placed with DFS without any investigation and/or with predatory parents, who have the money to drain the good parent of all their wealth by prolonging the court case over many years. Legitimate cases of child abuse are almost never investigated. Parents are often threatened with contempt, incarceration, and dismissal of their counter claims if they challenge the conclusions and recommendations made by court involved GALs', therapists', psychologists', and custody evaluators'.

The most vulnerable, our children and their families in the 'Show Me State', deserve much better treatment in Missouri juvenile and family courts. Outdated and broken laws in Missouri must be changed immediately to protect our children and hold court involved professionals, who are entrusted with best interest of a child and their placement, accountable. We must:

1. Eliminate the corrupt bond that exists between the court involved professionals, DFS, juvenile and family court lawyers;
2. Set stringent deadlines on completion of juvenile and family court cases to prevent multi-year litigation that exploits families emotionally and financially;
3. Remove the presumption that parents no longer have any rights and standing to proceed when a GAL is appointed in juvenile and family court;
4. Allow children to be represented by attorneys, who are not GALs and allow families to have a choice in the selection of an attorney for their child in juvenile and family court; and
5. Eliminate court involved professionals' immunity and set accountability standards for these professionals in juvenile and family courts.

Mikaela's law, an ACT CONCERNING GUARDIANS' AD LITEM, ATTORNEYS FOR MINOR CHILDREN, THERAPISTS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CUSTODY EVALUATORS IN FAMILY & JUVENILE COURTS.

To: (1) Allow parents to have a choice in hiring a counsel for a child in lieu of a GAL; (2) provide greater clarity to court orders involving the appointment of counsel and/or a GAL for a child; (3) provide parties to a family and/or juvenile relations matter with standing to remove counsel and/or GAL for a child appointed in such matter; (4) remove immunity from court involved professionals'; (5) enact new provisions concerning the accountability of court involved professionals'; (6) require the Judicial Branch to develop a publication that informs parties to a family and juvenile relations matter about the roles and responsibilities of counsel for the minor child, GAL and/or the court involved professionals; and (7) establish accountability standards and enforcement mechanisms for child's counsel and GALs by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel for the Missouri Bar.