

## LAW GUARDIAN ADMINISTRATION

Lorraine M. Augostini, First Assistant Public Defender  
Chief Investigator Paul Fitzpatrick  
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Tel: 609-530-3623 Fax: 609-530-7880

## DCP&P CONFLICT UNIT

Asst. Chief Investigator: Debra Asberry

### Mountain View Office

840 Bear Tavern Road, 2nd Floor, Ewing, NJ 08628  
Tel: 609-530-3623 Fax: 609-530-7886

## LAW GUARDIAN APPELLATE

James Louis, Deputy Public Defender

### Mountain View Office

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## CAPITOL REGION

Managing Attorney: Seetha John-Holmes

Supervising Investigator: Maria Benet-Rush

### Mountain View Office (Mercer, Hunterdon, Burlington)

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### Burlington Office

100 High Street, Suite 102

Mount Holly, NJ 08060

Tel: 609-518-3068 Fax: 609-518-1277

## SHORE REGION

Managing Attorney: Gilbert Zlock

Asst. Chief Investigator: Deborah Wong

### Atlantic City Office (Atlantic, Cape May)

157 West White Horse Pike, Galloway, NJ 08201  
Tel: 609-748-1360 Fax: 609-748-7005

Managing Attorney: Joseph Suozzo

Asst. Chief Investigator: Ahisha Quallis

### Asbury Park Office (Monmouth, Ocean)

630 Bangs Avenue, 3rd Floor, Asbury Park, NJ 07712  
Tel: 732-869-2268 Fax: 732-869-2261

## SOUTHERN REGION

Managing Attorney: Kelly Donegan

Asst. Chief Investigator: Tracey Smith

### Gibbsboro Office

(Camden, Cumberland, Salem, Gloucester)

20 East Clementon Road, Suite 301 North  
Gibbsboro, NJ 08026

Tel: 856-346-8008 Fax: 856-346-8017

### Bridgeton Office 14 East Commerce St., 3rd Floor

Bridgeton, NJ 08302

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## NORTHERN REGION

Managing Attorney: Traci Telemaque

Asst. Chief Investigators: Nadia Simmons and  
Caridad Ferrell

### Hackensack Office (Bergen, Hudson)

60 State Street, 3rd Floor

Hackensack, NJ 07601

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## ESSEX REGION

Managing Attorney: Guadalupe Casillas

Asst. Chief Investigators: Carmen Figueroa and  
Eleanor Lesperance

### Newark Office (Essex)

31 Clinton Street, 2nd Floor, P.O. Box 46007

Newark, NJ 07101

Tel: 973-648-4572 Fax: 973-648-3220

## CENTRAL REGION

Managing Attorney: Lillian Brennan

Asst. Chief Investigators: James Jackson and  
John Gallus

(Middlesex, Union, Somerset)

### New Brunswick Office

550 Jersey Avenue

New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Tel: 732-246-5912 Fax: 732-729-6573

### Elizabeth Office

65 Jefferson Avenue, 4th Floor

Elizabeth, NJ 07201

Tel: 908-820-8971 Fax: 908-820-7898

### Somerville Office

75 Veterans Memorial Drive East, Suite 203

Somerville, NJ 08876

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## NORTHWEST REGION

Managing Attorney: Yvonne DeCicco

Asst. Chief Investigators: Renee Lassiter and  
Rachelle Browne

(Passaic, Morris, Sussex, Warren)

### Paterson Office

66 Hamilton Street, 5th Floor

Paterson, NJ 07505

Tel: 973-977-4185 Fax: 973-225-7145

### Morristown Office

250 Headquarters Plaza

Morristown, NJ 07960

Tel: 973-451-5630 Fax: 973-451-5638

### Newton Office

20 East Clinton Street, Newton, NJ 07860

Tel: 973-383-5002 Fax: 973-383-9949

# Law Guardian: The Children's Voice



*Our mission is to deliver the highest quality of child-centered advocacy that best assures children's rights to health, safety, and well-being and that promotes their best opportunity to thrive.*

**Joseph E. Krakora**

*New Jersey Public Defender*

**Lorraine M. Augostini**

*First Assistant Public Defender*

**Office of Law Guardian**

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**Hon. Chris Christie**

*Governor*

**Kim Guadagno**

*Lt. Governor*

## What is a Law Guardian?

A Law Guardian is a specially trained lawyer employed by the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender's Office of Law Guardian who represents children in family court matters involving allegations of abuse and neglect against parents or other caregivers.

The Law Guardian, also referred to in this brochure as the "child's attorney," represents the child in court by presenting the child's wishes and making recommendations to the judge as to how those wishes may best be accomplished. The Law Guardian also protects the child's legal interests throughout the court proceedings and maintains a lawyer-client relationship with the child to the extent possible.

The child's attorney gives the child legal advice about the best and most realistic course of action to protect the child's safety and to advance the child's wishes and interests.

The Law Guardian is also responsible for helping the child understand his/her legal options and for assisting the child in developing a legal position. Further, the Law Guardian explains the court process to the child and keeps the child informed as the case progresses through the child welfare system.

The special training and expertise of Law Guardians help the child participate fully in the court hearings. The child's attorney speaks directly with the child, and interacts with the other parties in the case on behalf of the child.

## Confused about the role of the Law Guardian?

Many people are confused about the term "Law Guardian" because in New Jersey, "guardian" can have many different meanings. It may help you to understand the role of the Law Guardian, if you keep in mind that:

(\* **A Law Guardian is not the** same as a "guardian" or "guardian ad litem," legal terms which apply to people making parental or best interest decisions for the child.

(\* **A Law Guardian represents** only the child, never other parties or other people interested in the case. For example, Law Guardians do not represent parents, caregivers, family members, resource parents or the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (previously DYFS).

### **A Law Guardian can help by**

- articulating the child's wishes
- advocating for the child in court
- helping to arrange services
- obtaining an expert evaluation of the child

You may hear some unfamiliar terms when involved in an abuse or neglect case. Such as:

**Title 9:** A case in which a civil complaint has been filed against a child's caregiver alleging abuse or neglect. Also referred to as FN cases.

**Title 30:** A case in which the termination of parental rights is sought, clearing the way for a child to be adopted. Also referred to as FG cases.

## The Role of the Investigator

Each Law Guardian attorney works as a part of a team of professionals on behalf of the children they represent. This team includes specially trained investigators and clerical staff. Investigators take an active role in meeting with the child to discover the relevant facts of a case necessary to developing a position on behalf of the child-client. Similar to the confidential relationship enjoyed by attorneys and investigators in other types of matters, Law Guardian attorneys and investigators also enjoy confidential relationships with the children they represent. It is not unusual for the attorney or investigator to ask to speak privately with the child either in school, in a foster home, or even in the home of parents or other relatives. This private meeting is an important part of protecting the confidential attorney-client relationship.

The singular training and expertise of Law Guardian investigators enables them to effectively interview other people involved in the child's life in order to gather facts about the case and to help further the client's position. It is important that these individuals give the investigator clear and accurate information that will allow the child's lawyer to develop the best legal position for the child.

### **Frequently used terms:**

**DGP&P:** "The Division", refers to the N.J. Division of Child Protection and Permanency

**DAG:** Deputy Attorney General

**OLG:** Office of Law Guardian

**OPR:** Office of Parental Representation