

What is a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)?

A Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) is someone the judge appoints, to help a person who cannot protect their rights due to a mental impairment.

What does a GAL do?

GALs advocate for the person they are appointed to help. This includes going to court, getting help from agencies that offer services the person needs, and trying to work out an agreement with the landlord that protects the person's rights. GAL powers are limited and end when the case ends.

How is a GAL Appointed?

A GAL may be appointed if the landlord or tenant asks for one. The judge may also appoint a GAL if they determine one is needed.

What can I do, if the judge or another person tells the court I need a GAL and I disagree?

Tell the Judge why you do not think you need a GAL.

If a GAL is appointed, does that mean the judge believes I am not competent?

No. When a judge appoints a GAL, it is because they have determined that a person needs help to defend their rights and protect their interests in their housing court case.

If a GAL is appointed to help me, what should I expect the GAL to do?

- meet with you, either in court or at your home, if you cannot come to court,
- speak with you about your case and learn what you would like to happen with your case,
- find out whether you have any legal defenses or whether you may qualify for any social service benefits that may help solve your case,
- recommend a solution to the judge that considers your wishes and is in your best interest,
- tell the judge if you agree or disagree with the solution they recommend, so that the judge knows how you feel.

What if the GAL does not do any of these things?

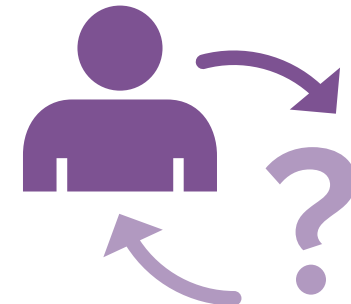
You have the right to tell the judge if the GAL does not do what they are directed to do, in the order appointing them as your GAL. The judge has the power to tell the GAL what to do and to remove a GAL from their appointment, if appropriate.

Can a GAL recommend a solution to the judge that I do not agree with?

Yes. While a GAL must consider your wishes before making a recommendation to the judge, the GAL may believe that your wishes are not in your best interest. As a result, the GAL may recommend a solution you do not agree with. It is important that you tell the judge why you disagree with the GAL's recommendation. The judge will make the final decision.

Does a GAL have the right to make decisions about my life that are not related to my Housing Court case?

No. The GAL is only responsible for helping you resolve your Housing Court case.



What are examples of things a GAL cannot do?

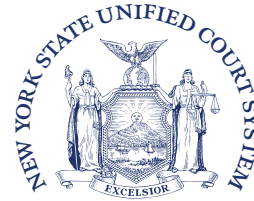
- ✓ let someone into your apartment without your permission,
- ✓ sign papers for you to get past-due social benefits from government agencies,
- ✓ make agreements on your behalf to (1) remove pet(s) from your apartment, or (2) stop family member(s) from staying in your apartment.

When does the GAL's work on my case end?

The GAL's work ends when your court case is over and everything you and your landlord agreed to do in the settlement agreement is completed.

Before the GALs work on your case ends, the GAL must:

- ✓ make sure the landlord completes any needed repairs (if the case involves repairs), or
- ✓ apply and follow-up with the Department of Social Services (DSS) or charities to get help to pay any rent owed, or
- ✓ take any steps needed to make sure that you can follow through with your court agreement.



Office for Justice Initiatives
Access to Justice

New York City Civil Court Locations

Bronx County Civil Court

1118 Grand Concourse Bronx, NY 10456

Kings County Civil Court

141 Livingston Street Brooklyn, NY 11201

New York County Civil Court

111 Centre Street New York, NY 10013

Queens County Civil Court

89-17 Sutphin Boulevard Jamaica, NY 11435

Richmond County Civil Court

927 Castleton Avenue Staten Island, NY 10310

Harlem Community Justice Center

170 East 121st Street New York, NY 10035

Red Hook Community Justice Center

88 Visitation Place, Brooklyn, NY 11231

For more information, visit

<https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/GAL.shtm>



ADA Accommodations
[nycourts.gov/adarequest](https://www.nycourts.gov/adarequest)



Spoken or Sign Language Interpreters
646-386-5670 • interpreter@nycourts.gov



www.nycourthelp.gov
1-800-COURT-NY (268-7869)



The Judge says I need a Guardian Ad Litem. What does that mean?

New York City GAL Housing Court Program

