

505th District Court Policy Regarding Court Appointments

The 505th District Court maintains a list of qualified attorneys, mediators, guardians ad litem, and other professionals who are eligible for appointment in family law matters pending before the Court.

Submission of an application does not create a right to receive appointments or placement on the Court's appointment list. All appointments are made at the discretion of the Court and in accordance with applicable law. Applicants are responsible for maintaining all required qualifications and promptly notifying the Court of any change affecting their eligibility.

Acknowledgment

By submitting an application for court appointments, the applicant acknowledges that he or she has read and agrees to comply with this Policy Regarding Court Appointments, including all qualifications, billing procedures, and payment requirements established by the Court.

General Requirements

Applicants must:

- Be licensed and in good standing with the State Bar of Texas
- Complete the Court's Appointment Application
- Submit all required supporting documentation, including a **current** State Bar of Texas MCLE transcript
- Meet all applicable statutory qualifications for the appointment sought
- Have successfully completed Trauma-Informed Care Training (*for CPS appointments*)
- Maintain all required continuing legal education and training
- Certify that they will comply with all applicable statutory duties and promptly notify the Court of any State Bar disciplinary sanctions
- Renew the application annually

Attorney Ad Litem Qualifications

- Devote at least 50% of the practice to family law
- Complete at least 8 hours of Family Law CLE and 3 hours of Ethics CLE during the preceding reporting year
- Successfully complete an approved Attorney/Amicus Ad Litem training program

Guardian Ad Litem Qualifications

- Successfully complete an approved Guardian/Amicus Ad Litem training program

Mediator Qualifications

- Meet the requirements of Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code §154.052

- Complete at least 3 hours of Alternative Dispute Resolution CLE during the preceding reporting year
- For CPS appointments, complete 3 hours of CLE related to Texas Family Code Chapter 262 or possess prior qualifying CPS mediation training and experience

Available Appointment Categories

- Attorney Ad Litem – Parent (CPS)
- Attorney Ad Litem – Child (CPS)
- Attorney Ad Litem – Respondent Served by Publication
- Defense Attorney – Contempt Proceedings
- Defense Attorney – Protective Order Proceedings
- Amicus Attorney – Custody Matters
- Amicus Attorney – Adoption/Termination Matters
- Mediator – Non-CPS Cases
- Mediator – CPS Cases
- Guardian Ad Litem
- CPS Appeals (see below)

CPS Appeals

The applicant must demonstrate sufficient appellate experience to competently represent clients in accelerated CPS appeals.

A writing sample prepared within the preceding **three (3) years**, consisting of an appellate brief, petition, motion, or other substantive legal writing authored primarily by the applicant is required. The writing sample shall demonstrate the applicant's legal research, analysis, and writing abilities. (*Confidential information shall be redacted as required by law.*)

Compensation

Court-appointed attorneys shall be compensated at the rate of \$200.00 per hour for approved services reasonably and necessarily performed in connection with the appointment. Compensation is subject to Court approval. The Court reserves the authority to review all requests for payment to determine the reasonableness and necessity of the services performed.

Any travel outside the counties contiguous to Fort Bend County for which reimbursement will be sought must receive prior Court approval. Requests for advance approval should identify:

- the purpose of the travel;
- the destination;
- the anticipated travel expenses; and
- why the travel is necessary to the representation.

Absent prior approval, travel expenses incurred outside the contiguous county area are not subject to reimbursement, except upon a showing of extraordinary circumstances and good cause.

Billing and Payment Procedures

- Compensation shall be requested at the approved hourly rate.
- Vouchers for interim payments shall be submitted monthly while the appointment remains pending.
- Vouchers for final payment must be submitted within thirty (30) days after the final hearing or other conclusion of the appointment.
- All vouchers must include sufficient detail to permit the Court to determine the reasonableness and necessity of the services performed.
- Failure to timely submit a voucher may result in delayed payment or denial of compensation.

Appointment Considerations

- Compliance with statutory qualifications
- Relevant family law experience
- Specialized education or training
- Professionalism and courtroom demeanor
- Timeliness and quality of prior appointments
- Availability and conflicts of interest
- Equitable distribution of appointments, where appropriate
- Any other factor the Court determines to be relevant

Court Discretion

- Decline any application
- Remove an individual from the appointment list at any time
- Suspend appointments pending review of qualifications or conduct
- Require additional training or documentation
- Make appointments outside the appointment list