

# The Guardian ad Litem Bulletin



## COERCIVE CONTROL

*December 2023*

What's coercive control? The topic isn't new, but the definition of coercive control included on the Revised Chapter Four: Families and Children Model Code on Domestic and Family Violence is! Check out the [resource](#). Remember this definition is specific to family court.

There is an important conversation happening throughout the United States, as well as internationally, on coercive control. Practitioners like GALs, attorneys, advocates, and survivors are actively debating the topic – what it looks like in families, how it impacts children, and whether coercive control should be codified in the protection order or family laws of their state.

Several jurisdictions across the U.S. have already codified coercive control. These jurisdictions are seeing both benefits to survivors and their families, as well as some unintended consequences like an increase in both parties filing for protection orders. For a matrix that lists the state statutes, head [here](#).

Interested in learning more about how coercive control affects children? Look into the work of [Dr. Emma Katz](#), who released a book in 2022 on this very topic titled *Coercive Control in Children's and Mother's Lives*.

For GALs, investigating cases with coercive controlling dynamics poses challenges. For best practices, GALs should follow a robust screening protocol, and inquire about the nature, contexts, and effects of coercive control in order to best provide recommendations that fit the families' needs. Failure to fully analyze the nature, context, and effects can lead to dangerous outcomes. For example, some protective measures taken by non-abusive parents could be seen as coercive controlling behaviors. For an evidence-based approach to analyzing custody and timesharing cases where there is IPV present, check out the [SAFeR Approach](#).

Want to join the conversation? Register [here](#) for access to the discussion board, additional resources, and to participate in the peer to peer drop in calls.



## Whats Next?

Peer to Peer Forum on  
March 20, 2024 at 3pm  
CT/4pm ET: Guardians ad  
Litem: Do we need them?

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GAL Webinar Series 1 of 4 on  
January 31, 2024 at 12pm  
CT/1pm ET: How to Work  
with Perpetrators of Harm  
with Dr. Scott Hampton  
(Ending the Violence)

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GAL Webinar Series 2 of 4 on  
February 28, 2024 at 12pm  
CT/1pm ET: Interviewing  
Children with Jennifer  
Becker, J.D. (BWJP)

