

Importance of a mindful, trauma-responsive approach

To build trust and strengthen the attorney-client relationship

To encourage transparency in communications

To create avenues for advocacy for appropriate services

Children entering foster care often endure significant trauma, including abuse, abandonment, or neglect. This trauma may be intensified by the loss and separation associated with foster placement.

It is the role of the an attorney ad litem to ascertain the stated interest of the child. Taking measurable steps to address the needs of the child ensures that the child receives high-quality legal representation and advocacy.

The purpose of a trauma-responsive approach is to promote the resilience of the child!



To support resilience & healing

For more guidance on fostering a trauma responsive practice, please find the website below for Gator TeamChild Juvenile Law Clinic Scholarship.

Connect with Us

352-273-0800

scholarship.law.ufl.edu
[/gator-team-child/](https://www.instagram.com/gator-team-child/)

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Trauma Responsive Approach

Gator TeamChild
Juvenile Law

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Attorneys ad Litem

Client-Centered Approach

Attorneys ad litem can aid the child in regulating trauma and lowering anxiety levels associated with unfamiliar environments.

Attorneys ad litem should consider these steps to build trust, open a line of communication, and exceed the duties of the role.

diligence

competence

confidentiality

loyalty

advice

communication

Client-Centered Approach

1

Regularly communicate + ask about the needs and wishes of the child

2

Meet outside of court with minimal distractions + removed from threatening parties

3

Work individually with the child to develop case plan options to present + advocate for the child's stated interest

4

Emphasize the child's decision-making ability

5

Consider therapy animals to increase participation by providing comfort and reducing cortisol

6

Preparing for Court
Prepare for court by explaining the process, advocacy, potential questions

7

Explain key takeaways after court to avoid misunderstandings

8

Opt for legal names and full titles to avoid confusion

Recognizing common trauma behaviors will help the attorney ad litem better understand and advocate for the child's needs.

Trauma may manifest in certain behaviors such as elopement, which can be perceived as uncooperative by the court. The child may also exhibit excessive compliance with adults or severe reactions in an effort to gain recognition.

Attorneys ad litem should advocate for their clients by gently reminding the court that these behaviors reflect underlying trauma, and consider the root of these behaviors when advocating for resources. Child clients value communication and feeling heard.

Common responses to trauma include a consistent sense of fear, helplessness, sadness, inability to sleep, hyper-vigilance.