



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

Criminal Justice Committee

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

1:30 PM

**Cook County Building, Board Room,
118 North Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois**

Issued on: 6/02/2026

NOTICE AND AGENDA

There will be a meeting of the Committee or Subcommittee of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County at the date, time and location listed above to consider the following:

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Authorization as a public speaker shall only be granted to those individuals who have registered to speak, with the Secretary, 24 hours in advance of the meeting. To register as a public speaker, go to the meeting details page for this meeting at <https://cook-county.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> to find a registration link. Duly authorized public speakers may speak live from the County Board Room at 118 N. Clark Street, 5th Floor, Chicago, IL or be sent a link to virtually attend the meeting and will be called upon to deliver testimony at a time specified in the meeting agenda. Authorized public speakers who are not present during the specified time for public testimony will forfeit their allotted time to speak at the meeting. Public testimony must not exceed three minutes; the Secretary will keep track of the time and advise when the time for public testimony has expired. After each virtual speaker has completed their statement, they will be removed from the meeting. Once removed, you will still be able to follow the proceedings for that day at:

<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/watch-live-board-proceedings> or in a viewing area at 69 W. Washington Street, 22nd Floor Collaborative Room F, Chicago, IL. Persons authorized to provide public testimony are encouraged to speak to an item that is germane to the meeting and shall not use vulgar, abusive, discriminatory, profane, or otherwise inappropriate language when addressing the Board; failure to act appropriately, or failure to adhere to the time requirements may result in expulsion from the meeting and/or disqualify the person from providing future testimony. Written comments will not be read aloud at the meeting, but will be posted on the meeting page and made a part of the meeting record.

[25-3661](#)

Sponsored by: DONNA MILLER, ALMA E. ANAYA, BRIDGET DEGNEN and BRIDGET GAINER, Cook County Board of Commissioners

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

CALLING FOR A HEARING OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE PUBLIC SAFETY COUNTY STAKEHOLDERS TO ENSURE FAIR AND EQUITABLE PROCESSING OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS MEDIATIONS AND CHILD REPRESENTATION

WHEREAS, the Cook County Board of Commissioners convened a hearing of the Criminal Justice Committee on July 22, 2025, to hear from advocates and county public safety stakeholders on the implementation of safeguards for the protection of gender-based violence survivors and domestic relations mediations and child representation; and

WHEREAS, several critical findings from the hearing highlighted the urgent need to address the ineffectual and inequitable processes within the Domestic Relations Court; and

WHEREAS, the processes within the domestic relations court system are crucial for daily operations and play a vital role in ensuring the safety of victim-witnesses, much like the domestic violence court; and

WHEREAS, domestic relations court mediations and proceedings, particularly those involving children, are vital in safeguarding both the victim and the well-being of children; and

WHEREAS, consequently, any proceedings involving the support, custody, visitation, allocation of parental responsibilities, education, parentage, or general welfare of a minor or dependent child, the court may, on its own motion or that of any party, appoint an attorney to serve as guardian ad litem, child representative, and/or an attorney for child pursuant to 750 ILCS 5/506; and

WHEREAS, additionally the court may decide that a child needs a representative, and may appoint the Public Guardian's Office; and

WHEREAS, attorneys seeking admittance on the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) / Child Representative (CR) / Attorney for Child (AFC) active roster are interviewed by members of the GAL / CR / AFC Screening Committee, and after acceptance by the Presiding Judge and the Screening Committee, the attorney attends a training session hosted by current GAL / CR / AFC attorneys; and

WHEREAS, once said training is complete, attorneys are placed on the active GAL / CR / AFC roster, which is distributed to all Domestic Relations Division judges; and

WHEREAS, the Public Guardian Department within Cook County operates under different guidelines;

Court appointments of the Public Guardian in a domestic relations case may be made if all parties and children live in Cook County, if at least one of the parties is represented by an attorney, and if the parties have attempted mediation of their dispute prior to the appointment. Additionally, the Office of the Public Guardian accepts appointments as child representative in the majority of cases (as opposed to GAL or attorney for the child); and

WHEREAS, the testimony from the July 2025 hearing paints a stark picture of systemic failures: ineffective civil orders of protection, inequitable and often exorbitant fees for Guardian ad Litem representation that have resulted in victims being jailed for non-payment, and the absence of crucial data and court documents, and victims must pay up to \$1,000 to obtain through court reporters; and

WHEREAS, there is a glaring lack of oversight and training for judges in domestic relations courts, leading to their disregard for prior protective orders, and the prolonged duration of cases exacerbates the challenges faced by victims; and

WHEREAS, if a victim of domestic violence seeks an order of protection while also seeking child support, divorce or other civil matter, the order of protection is transferred from the domestic violence to domestic relations court, this transfer means the victim loses all access to resources including working with an assistant state's attorney or a domestic violence advocate; and

WHEREAS, a recent analysis determined that 75% of civil orders of protection remain unserved in Cook County, meaning evidence in those cases is not available to prosecutors, law enforcement and other victims, and serial abusers go undetected; and

WHEREAS, a recent survey of litigants in domestic relations court revealed that 90% said they felt they were in danger and worried about the safety and well-being of their children; and

WHEREAS, it is significantly important in domestic relations matters that any fees that are to be borne by victims as well as child representatives are clear, fair and properly communicated by the court; and

WHEREAS, holding victims in contempt and even arresting and jailing them for inability to pay court ordered fees is unconscionable; and

WHEREAS, the lack of availability of court reporters in the Domestic Relations Division, for maintaining accurate records of proceedings is an impediment for any efforts to seek review or appeal; and

WHEREAS, survivors bravely and passionately testified at the hearing, exposing the judges' neglect in listening to their concerns and meeting their needs. They highlighted the devastating impact of the absence of court reporting and access to court data, which left these failures undocumented and unaddressed; and

WHEREAS, survivors should not be saddled by a lack of services, devastating wait times, abusive judges, and a complicated and expensive system impossible to navigate to receive relief when in involved

in domestic relations mediations; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Board urgently requests actionable measures from the court and relevant county public safety stakeholders to improve the domestic relations process and is committed to collaborating with all Cook County stakeholders to guarantee the public safety of every resident in the County without undue delay;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby request that a public hearing of the Criminal Justice Committee be convened to update the Board of Commissioners on measures that will be taken to improve processes, training, oversight, victim resources and safeguards related to Domestic Relations cases including the following matters:

Procedures used by judges to appoint a Guardian ad Litem or the Public Guardian.

Procedures used by judges to determine what attorney shall be appointed as Guardian ad Litem.

Financial obligations and fee structure the court adheres to and how they are communicated.

Availability or lack thereof of court reporters in the Domestic Relations Division and how reports are obtained when a party wishes to seek review or appeal.

Oversight of the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) / Child Representative (CR) / Attorney for Child (AFC) program and associated fee structure.

Training for judges and staff in the Domestic Relations Court.

Serving of Orders of Protection Process in Domestic Relations and Judges' access to such orders.

Communication of records between the Domestic Violence Court and Domestic Relations Court.

Other suggested process improvements and safeguards to implement and potential challenges to ensure the welfare of children and victims are in place.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a representative from each Cook County public safety stakeholder be prepared to participate in the hearing and provide a synopsis of the measures their agency will seek to implement to improve the mediation of justice in Domestic Relations cases relevant to their jurisdiction.

Legislative History : 9/18/25 - Board of Commissioners - refer to the Criminal Justice Committee

Lynne M. Turner

Secretary

Chair: Moore

Vice-Chair: Stamps

Members: Committee of the Whole