

# South Carolina Department on Aging



## SC Vulnerable Adult Guardian ad Litem Program

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# SC Vulnerable Adult Guardian ad Litem (VAGAL SC) What Do We Do?

- Recruit and train volunteers to serve as Guardians ad Litem (GALs) for vulnerable adults in state custody
- Conduct a thorough assessment of the adult's situation
- Advocate for the adult
- Represent the adult's best interest in SC's family courts



# SC Vulnerable Adult Guardian ad Litem Program - Who Do We Serve?

- Vulnerable adults who are taken into state custody due to:
  - Self-Neglect – 54%
  - Neglect – 32%
  - Abuse – 8%
  - Exploitation – 6%

# How VAGAL SC Works with Adult Protective Services (APS)

- APS legal team notifies VAGAL SC when adult is taken into custody
- VAGAL SC assigns a volunteer GAL for the adult
- GAL and APS independently assess adult's situation
- GAL and APS work together to advocate for the adult
- In court, each party makes a recommendation
  
- When legal case closes, GAL is relieved

# Mrs. Brown

- 84 year old with dementia
- Taken into custody after she was found living in home infested with bed bugs and no electricity
- A GAL was assigned to advocate for her

# Mrs. Brown – What GAL Learned

- Caregiver beat her
- Caregiver became her POA
- Caregiver emptied her retirement account and misused her income

# How Does the New Vulnerable Adult Law (S425) Impact VAGAL SC?

- Allows volunteers to address concerns about financial exploitation immediately
- In most cases, the APS case manager would make the report to a financial institution
- When necessary, GAL can make report directly

## SC Vulnerable Adult Guardian ad Litem



## Who can volunteer as a GAL?

- 21 or older
- Volunteers needed statewide
- Able to attend court hearings
- No legal training required
- Passionate about helping vulnerable adults

Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds!



# How much time is required to volunteer as a GAL?

## **TRAINING:**

- Complete application
- Attend all day training class
- Shadow court hearings
- Background & reference checks
- One to two year commitment

## **SERVING AS A GAL:**

- Cases last an average of six months
- Average - 20 volunteer hours per case
- Choose how many cases to take
- Choose which counties to serve



**V A G A L SC**

**Vulnerable Adult Guardian ad Litem  
of South Carolina**

## How can I become a GAL?

- [Aging.sc.gov/vagal](http://Aging.sc.gov/vagal)
- Contact Brenda Stalzer:
  - 803-445-5953
  - [bstalzer@aging.sc.gov](mailto:bstalzer@aging.sc.gov)