



Guardianships

A guardianship occurs when a person is given legal responsibility to provide housing, health-care, food and other necessities to a person who is deemed incapable of providing these things on their own. Guardianship's can be granted for both adults and children. When a child's parents are unmarried, the mother is the child's sole guardian. But the father can become a joint custodian by pursuing the matter in court or by having the mother sign a legal document that establishes his co-guardianship.

Child guardianship disputes are common among couples that are going through divorce. When the couple cannot reach a guardianship agreement outside of court, the dispute is then placed before the Court and it rules in the best interest of the child. Even in the case of a non-marital child who has been legally adopted by the other parent, guardianship, custody and visitation rights are still decided with the child's overall welfare being the paramount concern.

In the midst of guardianship disputes, the Court may appoint a guardian ad litem to oversee the best interests of the minor child until the dispute is resolved. Two common examples of guardian ad litem are family law attorneys and social workers, although the Court may appoint other kinds of qualified guardian ad litem. Once a guardianship dispute is resolved, the guardian ad litem relinquishes legal guardianship to one or both parents as determined by the Court's ruling.

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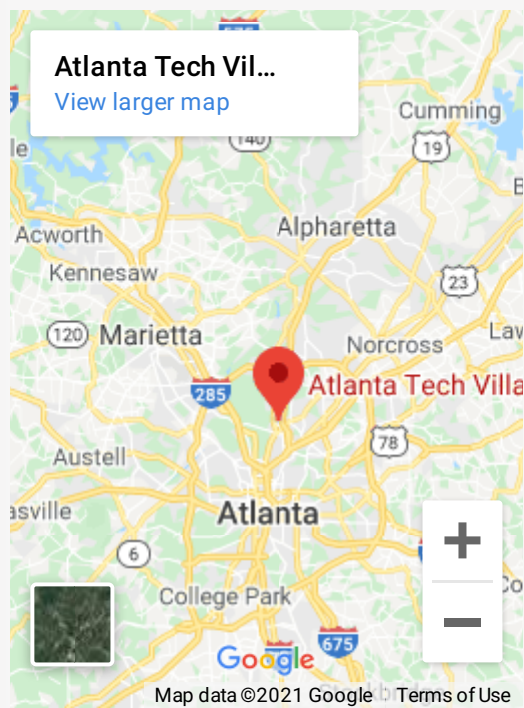
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