

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company v. Concepcion Flores Molina

Molina · No. 1:23-cv-01553-CDB · Decided September 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California construed Dawn Harris’s filing as a renewed motion to appoint her as guardian ad litem for Lupe C. Flores, whom the Court had previously found incompetent to pursue the action. The Court directed Harris to submit a supplemental declaration addressing conflicts of interest, her qualifications, and her discussion with opposing counsel by October 10, 2025. The Court also vacated the prior requirement that Lupe Flores file a status report every 90 days.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 24, 2025
DOCKET	1:23-cv-01553-CDB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Order construing a notice requesting appointment of a guardian ad litem as a renewed motion and directing the proposed guardian ad litem to submit a supplemental declaration.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Appointment of a guardian ad litem is ordinarily committed to the sound discretion of the trial court.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; no precedential designation stated.

TOPICS

- guardian ad litem
- guardianship procedure
- guardianships
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- guardianship procedure
- guardianships

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Dawn Harris's notice and supporting documents should be construed as a renewed motion for appointment of a guardian ad litem for Lupe C. Flores.
2. What information the proposed guardian ad litem must provide to permit the court to determine whether the appointment would adequately protect Flores's interests.
3. Whether the prior order requiring Lupe Flores to file status reports every 90 days should remain in effect.

HOLDINGS

1. Because Dawn Harris represented that she was willing to serve as guardian ad litem and submitted documents concerning her authority and relationship with Lupe Flores, the court construed the filing as a renewed motion for appointment of guardian ad litem.
2. Before deciding whether to appoint Harris as guardian ad litem, the court required a declaration under penalty of perjury addressing whether she has conflicts of interest, can competently testify and understand and protect Flores's rights, and has discussed the proposed appointment with opposing counsel.
3. The court vacated the existing order requiring Lupe Flores to file a status report every 90 days, subject to resetting the requirement as necessary.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The court is under a ‘legal obligation’ to consider whether an incompetent person is adequately protected.”
(at 1)

“The appointment of the guardian ad litem is more than a mere formality.” (at 2)

“be truly dedicated to the best interests of the person on whose behalf he seeks to litigate.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Lupe C. Flores was found incompetent to pursue the action. Her daughter, Dawn Harris, filed a notice requesting appointment as guardian ad litem and submitted healthcare and durable powers of attorney, medical letters, and a health-information authorization. Harris represented that she was willing to serve and would confer with counsel for Cross-Plaintiff Concepcion Flores Molina.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Lupe C. Flores previously filed six motions seeking appointment of a guardian ad litem, all of which were denied. After a January 17, 2025 hearing, the court determined that Flores was incompetent to pursue the action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 17, stayed the case, and ordered periodic status reports concerning her condition and search for a guardian ad litem. Dawn Harris, Flores's daughter and power of attorney, then filed a notice stating that she was willing to serve as guardian ad litem; the court treated the filing as a renewed motion, ordered a supplemental declaration, and vacated the prior 90-day status-report requirement.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Jurgens v. Dubendorf, No. 2:14-cv-2780-KJM-DAD, 2015 WL 6163464, at *3 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 19, 2015)
- United States v. 30.64 Acres of Land, More or Less, Situated in Klickitat Cnty., State of Wash., 795 F.2d 796, 804-05 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Davis v. Walker, 745 F.3d 1303, 1310 n.6 (9th Cir. 2014)
- AT&T Mobility, LLC v. Yeager, 143 F. Supp. 3d 1042, 1054 (E.D. Cal. 2015)
- Whitmore v. Arkansas, 495 U.S. 149, 163-64 (1990)

OPINION

Molina

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE Case No. 1:23-cv-01553-CDB

COMPANY,

12 ORDER DIRECTING SUPPLEMENTAL

Plaintiff, DECLARATION FOR RENEWED MOTION 13

FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN AD

14 v. LITEM FOR CROSS-DEFENDANT LUPE C.

FLORES

15 CONCEPCION FLORES MOLINA,

(Doc. 64) 16 Defendant/Cross-Plaintiff,

OCTOBER 10, 2025, DEADLINE

17 v. 18

LUPE C. FLORES,

19 Defendant/Cross-Defendant. 20 21 22 Pending before the Court is a notice from Dawn Harris,
power of attorney for Cross- 23 Defendant Lupe C. Flores. (Doc. 64). Ms. Harris represents
therein her willingness to be appointed 24 guardian ad litem for her mother, Lupe C. Flores. See
id.

25 I. BACKGROUND

26 Lupe Flores has filed six prior motions for appointment of a guardian ad litem, each one 27
denied by the Court, in part because the motions did not identify a person willing and able to serve
1 held on January 17, 2025, the Court issued an order on March 11, 2025, finding Lupe Flores 2
incompetent to pursue this action pursuant to Rule 17 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, 3

staying the case, and ordering Lupe Flores to file a status report every 90 days addressing the status of her medical condition and search for a guardian ad litem. (Doc. 62). The Court ordered Lupe Flores to re-file “a motion for appointment of guardian ad litem upon her identification of a suitable individual willing to serve as guardian ad litem, with any such application complying with Local

Rule 202 and this Court’s prior orders denying her earlier applications.” See *id.* at 9.

On September 2, 2025, Dawn Harris, power of attorney for Lupe Flores, filed a document titled “Notice to Judge,” in which she states that Lupe Flores has been hospitalized and requests to be appointed guardian ad litem on her behalf. (Doc. 64). Ms. Harris represents that she “will be reaching out to Mr. Knitters office [sic] tomorrow (28 August 2025) as well, letting them know I would like to bring all of this to an end.” *Id.* at 1. Attached to the filing are letters from physician Victoria R. Shada discussing Lupe Flores’ medical diagnosis (*id.* at 2, 11, 33); a healthcare power of attorney form designating Dawn Harris as Lupe Flores’ designated healthcare agent, notarized, and signed by Lupe Flores as well as two witnesses (*id.* at 3-10), a durable power of attorney form designating Dawn Harris as attorney-in-fact, notarized, and signed by Lupe Flores (*id.* at 12-32); and an authorization for release of protected health information form designating Dawn Harris as an authorized recipient for disclosure, notarized, and signed by Lupe Flores (*id.* at 34-36).

II. GOVERNING AUTHORITY

Under Rule 17 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, a representative of an incompetent person may litigate on that person’s behalf. Fed. R. Civ. P. 17(c)(2). “The court is under a ‘legal obligation’ to consider whether an incompetent person is adequately protected.” *Jurgens v. Dubendorf*, No. 2:14-cv-2780-KJM-DAD, 2015 WL 6163464, *3 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 19, 2015) (citing *United States v. 30.64 Acres of Land, More or Less, Situated in Klickitat Cnty., State of Wash.*, 795 F.2d 796, 805 (9th Cir. 1986)); accord *Davis v. Walker*, 745 F.3d 1303, 1310 n.6 (9th Cir. 2014). The appointment of the guardian ad litem is more than a mere formality. *30.64 Acres of Land*, 795 F.2d at 805. A Court shall take whatever measures it deems appropriate to protect the ward to act on behalf of his ward and may make all appropriate decisions in the course of specific litigation.”). The guardian need not possess any special qualifications, but must “be truly dedicated to the best interests of the person on whose behalf he seeks to litigate.” *AT&T Mobility, LLC v. Yeager*, 143 F. Supp.3d 1042, 1054 (E.D. Cal. 2015) (quoting *Whitmore v. Arkansas*, 495 U.S. 149, 516-64 (1990)). This means that the guardian cannot face an impermissible conflict of interest with the ward, and courts consider the candidate’s “experience, objectivity and expertise” or previous relationship with the ward. *Id.* (citations omitted). Further, the Local Rules of the Eastern District of California provide: (a) Appointment of Representative or Guardian. Upon commencement of an action or upon initial appearance in defense of an action by or on behalf of a minor or incompetent person, the attorney representing the minor or incompetent person shall present (1) appropriate evidence of the appointment of a representative

for the 11 minor or incompetent person under state law or (2) a motion for the appointment of a guardian ad litem by the Court, or (3) a showing satisfactory to the Court that 12 no such appointment is necessary to ensure adequate representation of the minor or 13 incompetent person. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 17(c). 14 E.D. Cal. Local Rule 202(a). 15 The decision to appoint a guardian ad litem “must normally be left to the sound discretion 16 of the trial court.” 30.64 Acres of Land, 795 F.2d at 804.

17 III. DISCUSSION

18 Here, the Court has already determined Lupe Flores to be incompetent to pursue this action 19 pursuant to Rule 17. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 17. Dawn Harris represents her willingness to be appointed 20 as guardian ad litem for Lupe Flores and represents that she will confer with counsel for Cross- 21 Plaintiff Concepcion Flores Molina. See (Doc. 64). As such, the Court will construe the filing as 22 a renewed motion for appointment of guardian ad litem for Lupe Flores. Dawn Harris is the 23 daughter of Lupe Flores and presents documents setting forth that she possesses healthcare power- 24 of-attorney and durable power-of-attorney for Lupe Flores. 25 Thus, the Court will direct Dawn Harris to file a supplemental declaration, signed under 26 penalty of perjury, setting forth (if true) the following: 1) that she has no interests that are in conflict 27 with Lupe Flores; 2) that she could competently testify to the matters concerned and she is qualified to understand and protect the rights of Lupe Flores in this action; and 3) the results of her discussion 1 | with counsel for Cross-Plaintiff, particularly concerning the matter of her appointment as guardian 2 | ad litem for Lupe Flores, and whether Cross-Plaintiff is opposed to such appointment.

3 IV. CONCLUSION AND ORDER

4 For the foregoing reasons, it is HEREBY ORDERED that: 5 1. Dawn Harris, the proposed guardian ad litem for Lupe C. Flores, SHALL FILE a 6 declaration no later than October 10, 2025, signed under penalty of perjury, setting 7 forth Cf true) the following: 8 a. She has no interests that are in conflict with Lupe Flores; 9 b. She could competently testify to the matters concerned and she is qualified to 10 understand and protect the rights of Lupe Flores in this action; and 11 c. The results of her discussion with counsel for Cross-Plaintiff, particularly 12 concerning the matter of her appointment as guardian ad litem for Lupe Flores, 13 and whether Cross-Plaintiff is opposed to such appointment. 14 2. The Court’s order directing Cross-Defendant Lupe Flores to file a status report every 15 90 days (Doc. 62) is HEREBY VACATED, to be reset as necessary. 16 | IT IS SO ORDERED. M Dated: _ September 24, 2025 | hr

18 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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