

The Honorable David W. Soukup Judge of the Year Award, named for the founder of the CASA model, honors the outstanding contributions of a judge who has advanced the best interests of children through support of the CASA/GAL model.



Leslie Halligan

Fourth Judicial District Court, Missoula, MT

Judge Leslie Halligan is a general jurisdiction judge serving the Montana Fourth Judicial District Court. Governor Steve Bullock appointed Judge Halligan to the bench in 2015; she was elected in 2016 and 2018. From 2012-2015, Judge Halligan presided over family law matters as a Standing Master. Judge Halligan is a member of the National CASA/GAL Judicial Leadership Council and assists with local CASA training in Missoula.

She currently chairs the Missoula County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which seeks to facilitate systemic changes in the County's justice system, maximize available resources, improve social justice, and enhance public safety. As a 1981 Truman Scholar and now Judge, she is committed to public service, access to justice, and ensuring procedural fairness and respect to individuals in the justice system. Judge Halligan and her husband raised three sons, and became foster parents, providing respite care and fostering adolescents for approximately ten years.

Prior to her judicial work, she served as a Missoula Deputy County Attorney, managing mental health, dependency, and delinquency cases for more than 20 years. Judge Halligan earned her undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Montana and a J.D. from the University of Montana School of Law (now Blewett School of Law) in 1986. Judge Halligan worked at the UM law school as a clinical supervisor for the Defender Project and as an adjunct professor in child advocacy and juvenile law. As President of the State Bar of Montana from 2017-2018, she focused on improving access to justice and attorney wellness.