

SJR 22: Guardianship Laws and Services

Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS)

Prepared for the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

by Alexis Sandru, Staff Attorney

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At its January 2016 meeting, the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee (Committee) learned about Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) and requested that additional information regarding WINGS be provided to the Committee at its March meeting. In March, the Committee will hear several presentations from WINGS programs in Washington and Ohio. The following summary provides general background information about WINGS.

One of the key recommendations of the 2011 Third National Guardianship Summit, which was sponsored by the National Guardianship Network¹, called for a partnership between a state's highest court and community agencies and groups -- Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders, also known as WINGS -- to evaluate on an ongoing basis "on the ground" guardianship practice, including: "[identifying] strengths and weaknesses in the state's current system of adult guardianship and less restrictive decision-making options; [addressing] key policy and practice issues; [engaging] in outreach, education and training; and [serving] as an ongoing problem-solving mechanism to enhance the quality of care and quality of life for adults in or potentially in the guardianship and alternatives system".

According to *Wings Tips*, a state replication guide for WINGS, there are 10 WINGS hallmarks:

1. WINGS are ongoing and sustainable. WINGS are not a time-limited task force; they continually strive for improved guardianship practices.
2. WINGS are broad-based and interdisciplinary, including nonprofessionals. However, required stakeholders have included in the past the court, the state unit on aging, adult protective services, and the state protection and advocacy agency for people with disabilities.
3. WINGS are problem-solving in nature.
4. WINGS groups look primarily to changes in practice and extend beyond legislative changes.
5. WINGS groups start with solutions that are short-term to generate momentum.
6. WINGS depends on mutually reinforcing activities of stakeholders and fosters trust and communications among them.

¹ The National Guardianship Network consists of the following 11 organizations: AARP, American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging, American Bar Association Section of Real Property, Trust and Estate Law, Alzheimer's Association, American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, Center for Guardianship Certification, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, National Center for State Courts, National College of Probate Judges, National Disability Rights Network, and National Guardianship Association.

7. WINGS includes a focus on rights and person-centered planning.
8. WINGS groups welcome public input and are transparent.
9. WINGS groups make continuous adaptations.
10. WINGS groups see themselves as part of a national network.

There are currently 15 WINGS states:

- Prior to the WINGS initiative, Ohio, Missouri, and West Virginia already had guardianship improvement programs in place.
- In 2013, with funding from the State Justice Institute and the Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging, the National Guardianship Network provided funding to four pilot WINGS in New York, Oregon, Texas, and Utah.
- In 2015, the District of Columbia, Indiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Washington received grants of up to \$7,000 to launch WINGS in their states. Wisconsin independently launched WINGS.
- More recently, Guam and Georgia have initiated WINGS.

Montana has not applied for funding for the WINGS initiative.

Sources:

- American Bar Association, *National Guardianship Network Names State Courts for Guardianship Improvement WINGS Awards*, https://www.americanbar.org/publications/bifocal/vol_36/issue_4_april2015/ngn_new_wings.html (accessed February 5, 2016).
- Erica Wood, Presentation to CFHHS Interim Committee, *National Reform Trends in Guardianship* (January 11, 2016) (recording available at <http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/Interim/2015-2016/Children-Family/default.asp>).
- National Guardianship Network, *WINGS Tips: State Replication Guide for Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders* (2014).
- Telephone Conversation with Beth McLaughlin, Montana Court Administrator (February 2016).

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