

GETTING STARTED . . .

Who are our Volunteers?

Our volunteers come from all walks of life. They may have experience in business, medical and social service fields, or just a sincere desire to help the less fortunate, but ALL have aspirations to make a difference in someone's life.

What do I need to know before becoming a Volunteer?

Every potential volunteer will receive the information to successfully complete orientation. During orientation the potential volunteer guardian will learn about:

- The legal aspects of the guardianship process and its purpose under the Ohio law.
- The responsibilities of making a long-term commitment of being a volunteer guardian, as well as the short-term commitment.
- End-of-life decision making for the volunteer guardian and its impact with his/her ward.
- Reporting requirements
- Educational and training requirements

Who is qualified to be a Volunteer Guardian?

- Resident of the State of Ohio
- At least 21 years of age
- No prior felony conviction
- Complete an orientation session
- If non-family guardian, complete Fundamentals Training provided by Supreme Court of Ohio and three hours of continuing education annually
- Reliable transportation
- Good moral standing
- Willingness to visit your ward regularly
- Ability to establish a nurturing and trusting relationship with your ward

What is a Guardian?

A Guardian of the person is responsible for advocating and seeking services for the person they serve, their "Ward," to help him reach or maintain his full potential, and that will allow the person to live in the least restrictive environment possible. The Guardian is also responsible for assuring that the person's rights and dignity as a person are defended.

A Guardian of the person may authorize medical, health, or other professional care, counsel or treatment. **As a volunteer for the Volunteer Guardianship Program of Holmes County, financial matters are not part of your responsibility.**

Persons eligible for assignment of a Volunteer through this Program.

- The ward must be a resident of Holmes County and be indigent and have no family members or friends willing or able to serve as Guardian
- The ward must be a resident at a nursing home or group home facility in Holmes County
- A statement of expert evaluation must be completed and signed by a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist, determining if a guardianship is needed
- The ward is unable to make competent decisions

How long does the guardianship process take?

Emergency guardianship may be established quickly, often within a day. However, most guardianship application proceedings can take approximately three weeks to come to hearing and have the guardianship become effective.

What kinds of things would I be doing as a volunteer?

As a Volunteer Guardian your primary tasks would be to make health-related decisions, placement-related decisions, as well as managing personal relationship issues, and advocating for the ward.

The Court requires that you visit your ward at least once per quarter; however, it is hoped that a Volunteer will visit their ward more frequently in order to establish a relationship, as much as is possible, on which to base decisions in the ward's best interest.

As a Guardian you will be advised by facility staff of any incidents or medical situations involving your ward. You will also be advised of Care Conferences which are held periodically at your ward's residential facility, and you are welcome and authorized to participate in those Care Conferences.

What do I do and who do I call if I run into a problem?

The Program will provide you with various reference materials to assist you as you carry out your responsibilities as guardian, including this handbook. In 2015 the Supreme Court of Ohio adopted new Rules of Superintendence governing adult guardianships, and one of the new requirements is that every non-family guardian appointed after June 1, 2015, take a six-hour "Fundamentals Course" within six months

of their appointment, and a three-hour continuing education course each calendar year thereafter. These courses and the materials provided by the Supreme Court through them will be invaluable resources to you as a guardian.

If an issue, problem, concern or question arises at any time during the guardianship, you may contact the Program Coordinator who will provide information or put you in contact with a resource person who can help answer your questions or give you insight into situations that will be helpful to you in ultimately making your decisions. It is also important to remember that the Court is available to assist and give direction to guardians in making decisions that are in the best interest of their wards. Accordingly, if you are struggling with making a decision and other resources have not answered your questions or resolved your concerns, matters and issues can be brought to the Court's attention. If appropriate, hearings can be held to make a determination regarding a situation that is of concern to the guardian.

What kinds of paperwork will I have to do?

The Court requires Guardians to file a Guardian's Report every two years with the Probate Court. You should keep records of the date, time and type of contact you have with your ward, because this information will be helpful as you prepare this biannual Guardian's Report. This manual includes Activity Logs for you to use in keeping records of your visits and other contacts with your ward and facility staff.

Does guardianship ever end?

Guardianship is normally a long-term relationship. The Court may modify, revoke, or terminate a guardianship if the ward's ability to make and communicate decisions changes and can be demonstrated to the Court. The Guardian may also ask to resign from his position if for personal reasons the Guardian feels unable to continue in that capacity. In those cases, a successor guardian would need to be found and appointed. A guardianship also terminates when the ward passes away. It should be noted that you should keep the Court advised of the status of your ward, and if the ward does pass away, you should promptly notify the Court of that fact.

Will I receive any type of reimbursement for volunteering?

No payments or reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenditures will be made to volunteers.

Can I take my ward on outings?

Some wards may do well out of the supervised setting of the nursing home or group home; however, our Guardians are prohibited from taking their wards off premises due to liability issues involving the Guardian, the Volunteer Program, and the facility.