

**RESOLUTION of the BOARD FOR JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION
of the State of Washington**

In Support of the Washington Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders

WHEAREAS, the National Center for State Courts has conducted substantial research efforts estimating that there are at least 1.5 million guardianships and conservatorships in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the number of vulnerable elderly persons will increase rapidly over the next twenty years. Washington residents age 65 and over have increased 53% since 2010 and are estimated to increase 45% by 2040; and

WHEREAS, the effect of dementia, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), serious mental illness and developmental disabilities on decision-making create particular challenges for individuals and systems, including courts.

The number of persons with dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, will increase significantly in the next 25 years. The Alzheimer's Association expects between 215,000 and 270,000 citizens age 65 or older will have a form of dementia in 2040.

National estimates indicate that about 2% of the US population live with long-term or lifelong traumatic brain injury (TBI) related disability.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Washington reports that seven percent of the US population is seriously affected by mental health challenges; and

WHEREAS, these trends are likely to result in a substantial increase in the number of cases intended to protect vulnerable and elderly persons including abuse and neglect cases, guardianship proceedings; and

WHEREAS, the delegates from ten national organizations participating in the Third National Guardianship Summit adopted a far-reaching set of recommendations, standards for performance, and training for guardians and conservators, as well as additional recommendations for action by courts, legislatures and other entities; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Guardianship and Elder Services and the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts recognized that lack of sufficient financial resources has made it difficult for trial courts to improve their handling of guardianship cases and promote least restrictive alternatives; and

WHEREAS, the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) organization was recommended to every state as a mechanism to raise awareness of the issues facing vulnerable and elderly persons and improve procedures for documenting, tracking and monitoring guardianships; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Supreme Court was awarded a grant to establish Washington WINGS as part of a national effort to raise awareness of issues facing vulnerable and elderly persons; and

WHEREAS, an impressive collection of stakeholders, such as certified guardians, lay guardians, judges, commissioners, care providers, social worker and others have affirmed their willingness to participate in collective efforts through the Washington WINGS to:

1. Identify strengths and weaknesses in the state's current approach to adult guardianship and less restrictive decision-making options;
2. Address key policy and practice issues;
3. Engage in outreach, education and training, including, for example, training on supported decision-making; and
4. Serve as an ongoing problem-solving mechanism to enhance the quality of care and quality of life of adults affected by or potentially affected by guardianship and other decision-making alternatives, and provide the support they need;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board for Judicial Administration strongly supports the Washington Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) and their efforts to:

1. Develop a comprehensive strategy to address timely, accurate, and complete data on the number of guardianship, conservatorship, and elder abuse cases which are essential in determining the policies, procedures, practices and resources needed to address these cases effectively and in measuring how courts are performing in these cases.
2. Promote public awareness of abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly and persons with disabilities.
3. Foster education and training for judges, court personnel, professional guardians, Guardians ad Litem, lay guardians, attorneys, law enforcement and others on matters affecting the elderly such as dementia, TBI, mental illness, financial exploitation, physical abuse and neglect.
4. Provide education, training and awareness for the family and friends of persons in navigating the court system to promote beneficial outcomes and fostering overall system accountability.
5. Recommend changes in statute, court rules, court structure, practices, procedures, or regulations in order to protect the legal rights of the elderly and vulnerable, promote process fairness, monitor guardianships, and facilitate the economic use of available resources.
6. Increase the capacity and availability of services for incapacitated and vulnerable adults including alternatives such as supported decision-making.