



Guardianship Monitoring and Support Initiative

2023 Annual Report

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Letter From Stacey Johnson

The Guardianship Monitoring and Support Initiative (GMSI) is pleased to present the 2023 GMSI Annual Report. This report provides an overview of GMSI's current position, challenges, and accomplishments.

Developing, implementing, and maintaining guardianship monitoring practices across 39 counties has been a significant undertaking. Unfortunately, the courts lack the resources or funding necessary to establish and sustain monitoring programs in every jurisdiction.

Both national and state experts, including the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, the National Center for State Courts, the American Bar Association, the US Government Accountability Office, and the Elder Law section of the Washington State Bar Association, have acknowledged the insufficient data available to determine the incidence of abuse of adults subject to guardianship (ASG) by guardians or the extent to which guardians are protecting ASGs in Washington State.

These findings, discussions, and conclusions solidifies the belief that there is little state-level guardianship data collected beyond filings and dispositions. Currently, county-level data in Washington State cannot be aggregated in a manner that makes it usable for effective guardianship monitoring, or provide guidance for policy makers and practitioners to strengthen the guardianship system and prevent abuse. Effective monitoring and reporting would (1) facilitate effective case processing; (2) gauge the extent of abuse by guardians and the extent to which guardians protect ASGs from abuse; (3) gauge the effect of court orders; (4) provide useful feedback and support in a demanding role; and (5) have a preventive effect.

While Washington's superior courts have varied approaches to monitoring guardianship cases, many courts lack monitoring programs altogether. In counties where monitoring occurs, it often involves verifying the timely submission of required guardian reports, with limited court evaluation of their contents or accuracy.

In 2021, the GMSI was established within the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). GMSI is dedicated to enhancing the management of guardianship cases. By improving court monitoring, GMSI aims to ensure ASGs receive appropriate care, uphold guardian compliance, and establish a systematic process for addressing concerns.

GMSI is committed to developing a statewide framework of best practices for monitoring programs. The data collected will enhance effective guardianship case management, inform policymakers and practitioners, and bolster the guardianship system against abuse. Effective monitoring will increase effective case processing and shape guardianship policy, practices, training, and education.

We invite you to peruse the 2023 GMSI Annual Report and discover GMSI's activities and achievements to date.



Stacey Johnson
Manager, Office of Guardianship and Elder Services (OGES)



GMSI's Mission, Vision, Purpose, and Objectives

Throughout 2023, the GMSI operated with a new mission, vision, purpose, and objectives:

GMSI Mission

The GMSI mission is to develop supports for the courts, guardians and adults subject to guardianship in an effort to prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation, and the unnecessary restriction of any individual's liberty and autonomy.

GMSI Vision

The GMSI vision is to set the national standard for guardianship monitoring that assists the courts, supports lay guardians, and protects the liberty, autonomy, and well-being of vulnerable adults.

GMSI Purpose

The Guardianship Monitoring and Support Initiative (GMSI) is a statewide initiative of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to develop a program to increase the court's ability to gather information about the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of adults subject to guardianship* and enhance the court's ability to monitor the guardianships under their jurisdiction. The GMSI will increase the court's ability to detect and prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals under their protection. By combining the expertise of the courts with skilled program staff and volunteers, the GMSI is intended to ensure guardians carry out the responsibilities the courts entrust to them.

GMSI Objectives

The initiative is guided by three strategic objectives that support the GMSI's vision and mission. The GMSI's three main objectives are:

1. To provide the courts information that verifies the location of an adult subject to guardianship; confirms the physical, emotional and financial well-being of adults subject to guardianship; and supports the court's determination regarding the continued appropriateness of guardianships or the option for less restrictive alternatives.
2. To strengthen the integrity and reliability of guardianship data and increase the court's capacity to track and monitor guardianships cases.
3. To engage with lay guardians to enhance their knowledge of court rules and processes and improve their understanding of the duties and powers entrusted to them by the court.

These program objectives relate to the AOC's external goal and Objective 3F: "Support accountability/therapeutic courts, community alternatives for adult and juvenile offenders, and programs to assist the elderly or incapacitated."

GMSI Operations, Stakeholders, and Projects

GMSI Operations

In 2023, the GMSI worked to build on connections and successes in 2022. However, the year presented unexpected challenges, and the GMSI had the most employee turnover since its inception. This turnover was predominately within Volunteer Operations/Community Engagement (VO/CE).

To address these challenges and adapt to the evolving needs of the program, GMSI reorganized its staffing structure. At the beginning of 2023, one of the two GMSI Regional Coordinators was reassigned to providing comprehensive data support and analysis in guardianship cases, and conducting county case reviews, leaving the second Regional Coordinator to focus on VO initiatives. This change also resulted in a title modification for that staff member from "Regional Coordinator" to "General Resource Coordinator."

In April 2023, a third Regional Coordinator was hired, which brought the GMSI to a full staff of five. In May 2023, the senior Regional Coordinator for the VO left the organization and a replacement was hired in August. The replacement hire was the GMSI's Court Program Assistant, which created a vacancy in that role. The Regional Coordinator hired in April 2023 left the GMSI in November 2023, creating another vacancy in the VO/CE. In December 2023, the Court Program Assistant role was filled.

The GMSI ended 2023 with a staff of four: a Lead Program Coordinator, one General Resource Coordinator, one Regional Coordinator, and a Court Program Assistant. Discussions with AOC Human Resources to post the open Regional Coordinator position were under way with the goal to fill the position by February 2024, bringing the GMSI back up to a full staff.

GMSI Stakeholder Outreach

GMSI staff continued meeting with internal and external stakeholders to make progress advancing both GMSI initiatives and establishing the VO/CE program in a partnering county.

Internal meetings with AOC staff included GMSI and OGES staff meetings to brainstorm and conduct business on a weekly or as needed basis. Most internal stakeholder (AOC staff outside GMSI) meetings centered on addressing questions, concerns, and establishing AOC policies for the VO/CE.

AOC court education professionals hosted trainings and Q&A sessions for GMSI staff in the first half of 2023 to assist GMSI staff in advancing case review methods and understand the programs used by the courts. These discussions included mapping guardianship event codes to guardianship time standards and addressing challenges in developing a guardianship tracking and monitoring system, furthering GMSI staff's comprehension of this complex information.

Meetings regarding the development of the GMSI Guardianship Tracking & Monitoring System (GTMS) with AOC IT and the Customer Service Division Associate Director continued throughout the year. With the Associate Director's support, GMSI staff participated in a Judicial Information System Committee (JISC) meeting for the endorsement of the GTMS, and then a Superior Court endorsement panel to further said endorsement. The GTMS was approved to move to the next phase of development in June 2023.

The GMSI Workgroup and GMSI Subcommittee continued holding monthly meetings. Workgroup members continued to advise GMSI staff on initiatives and projects. GMSI Subcommittee members were asked to

review court websites, access to online guardianship information, engage in court user experiences in local jurisdictions, and give input about GMSI materials under development. To increase participation and improve engagement, GMSI merged the two groups and renamed the new group the GMSI Advisory Group. The first GMSI Advisory Group meeting was in August 2023, and subsequent meetings commenced quarterly.

GMSI staff continued meeting with Clark County and Pacific & Wahkiakum Counties to establish expectations, deliverables, and conduct case reviews. Pacific & Wahkiakum Counties also allowed GMSI staff to attend guardianship hearings via Zoom to observe and understand court proceedings. Development meetings continued with the Spokane County Guardian Monitoring Program (GMP) Coordinator. The Whitman County Deputy Clerk met with GMSI staff to give insight into launching GMSI initiatives with clerk's offices throughout the state.

Volunteer Operations/Community Engagement staff met with other guardianship monitoring programs outside Washington State to learn about their processes for developing monitoring programs, the best practices and risks they've identified, and requirements for timelines and staffing. Understanding how other states with non-unified court systems developed their guardianship monitoring programs allowed GMSI staff to adapt tested processes to the GMSI model. Many state-run guardianship monitoring programs have their own monitoring systems, and in some instances, AOC IT staff joined these discussions to further the development of the GTMS.

GMSI staff met with both state and national guardianship professionals, advocates, and court stakeholders throughout 2023. Staff continued attending subject matter expert meetings hosted by the Alaska State Association of Guardianship and Advocacy and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Additionally, an invitation to a series of Washington DSHS roundtable meetings was extended to GMSI staff during the summer. GMSI staff participated in the Washington State Hospital Association Difficult to Discharge Workgroup in August 2023.

Introductory meetings to the Pro Bono Council, the Washington State Association of Clerks, and the University of Washington occurred in the first half of 2023. GMSI staff met the Section Manager of Medicaid Contracts and Compliance/Medicaid Programs to discuss GMSI and other AOC initiatives to address guardianship barriers in the summer.

In August 2023, GMSI staff conducted a focus group in partnership with AARP-Washington. The focus group participants were lay guardians in the senior community. The focus group was an in-person and virtual event at the AOC Sea-Tac offices.



In 2023, the GMSI worked with 17 Washington State counties



In 2023, the GMSI worked with guardianship programs in 11 states

In the second half of 2023, GMSI staff shifted focus to internal projects and meetings. In September 2023, GMSI staff presented to the Management Services Division Director about the GMSI, CE initiatives, and answered questions about the state of guardianship.

After transitioning from volunteers to interns, Community Engagement staff met with the Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to discuss internship programs and practices. Toward the end of 2023, GMSI staff met with the Washington State Court Center of Research (WSCCR) team to discuss their experience and successes with interns at AOC. GMSI staff also participated in WSCCR's brainstorming sessions, Work-It-Out Wednesdays, to troubleshoot data analysis and management issues. CE staff conducted research and initiated a partnership with Pacific Lutheran University to recruit interns.

Based on recommendations from GMSI Advisory Group members, GMSI staff began the process for OGES website improvement via meetings with an AOC Digital Content Specialist. GMSI staff became the point persons for the website improvement project. Meetings with AOC IT, IT Security, and the Digital Content Specialist continued through the end of the year. GMSI staff also provided updates about this project to the OGES team and worked together to gather their feedback for content and user improvements.

GMSI Projects

Many months of meeting with guardianship stakeholders, conducting research, and sharing information created many projects for GMSI staff. During the first half of 2023, the GMSI business model continued to be county-centric, with a focus on the unique monitoring needs of each potential partner county. Initially, individual Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were established with each partner county. It became clear, however, that maintaining individual MOUs statewide would not be sustainable for GMSI and the AOC Contracts staff.

GMSI's initial piloting efforts exposed the difficulty of tailoring the program's products and services to the needs of each individual court. To more effectively serve partnering counties, the GMSI created a catalog of products and services to offer to courts. This approach allowed counties to opt into GMSI processes, make better use of existing resources, and improved the consistency of GMSI's products and services. GMSI staff felt this model better reflected the commitment to remain a person-centered initiative.

With this change, GMSI staff revisited foundational documents to ensure objectives and goals aligned with the new approach. Reassessing stakeholder outreach and the structure of the GMSI Workgroup and GMSI Subcommittee occurred at the same time.

As a result of meetings with GMSI partners, Clark County and Pacific & Wahkiakum Counties, GMSI staff to researched potential business models for statewide guardianship case filing and tracking processes. Standards of Practice for tracking and monitoring guardianship cases, and guardianship monitoring and auditing checklists and guidelines were discussed to support partner counties. GMSI staff reassessed existing Situational Analysis documents conducted with partnering counties in 2022. As the GMSI model shifted, GMSI staff conducted and finalized a gap analysis in Clark County in autumn 2023.

Monthly meetings with Clark County strengthened GMSI's relationship with their court and clerk staff and allowed for clearer expectations on deliverables, like conducting a review of approximately 2,000 guardianship cases. The dataset and a guide for the methodology and findings were provided to Clark County by the end of the fourth quarter. This initial review with a partnering county provided insight into refining the case review process. Review of additional partnering counties is planned for 2024 as a result of completing this work.

Strategies to pilot in partnering counties were drafted and re-drafted throughout the year. Discussing guardianship needs during county meetings and surveys specific to court and clerk staff allowed the GMSI to create a Catalog of Products and Services for potential county partners. An introductory brochure for partners was created in summer 2023 to increase awareness about GMSI's work. GMSI staff stayed current with national guardianship initiatives and monitoring standards. Staff collected tools to aid tracking and monitoring such as bench review forms and bench cards, report auditing forms, and red flag indicator checklists. GMSI staff explored different channels of communication to stakeholders and created generic outreach correspondences to stakeholders about the GMSI and VO/CE.

AOC Business Analysts regularly met with GMSI staff to discuss the Guardianship Tracking & Monitoring System (GTMS), map system needs, define requirements, and move the GTMS forward for an ITG endorsement to proceed with development.

An Advisory Group member recommended GMSI staff apply for the opportunity to present at the 2024 Superior Court Judges Association (SCJA) Spring Conference. GMSI staff created and presented their proposal and were accepted to speak at the SCJA Spring Conference in April 2024.

In the last quarter of 2023, GMSI staff became project leads for the guardianship website improvement project. GMSI staff compiled current website content, edited and condensed existing materials, and began meeting with OGES program staff about updates and needs each program had for their users and webpages. OGES staff were regularly updated on the website improvement project to maintain deadlines with AOC departments providing support. The AOC Digital Content Specialist provided a timeline for the project in November 2023. Content edits continued through the end of the year and into the beginning of 2024 with the goal for launch in April 2024.

GMSI Volunteer Operations/Community Engagement

The GMSI Volunteer Operations (VO) program was primarily focused on development in 2023. There were notable changes in the program's approach and focus, and changes in GMSI staff that forced the program to halt some operations or pivot the main focus.

While meeting with county stakeholders, it became clear that counties preferred working with students as opposed to community volunteers. GMSI staff responded by changing the structure of Volunteer Operations and began drafting a structure to engage students. The VO changed its name in August 2023 to Community Engagement (CE) to better reflect the program's goals.

VO/CE staff worked on revising the foundational aspects of their program throughout 2023. Staff conducted research on processes, procedures, policies, and resources to support the volunteer model, then modified the research and work completed to support a student-centered model.

Both the volunteer and student models required VO/CE staff to develop a number of policies, determine onboarding processes, and obtain equipment for volunteers/students. After the decision was made to move to a student-centered model, meetings primarily centered around compensation, records retention, access, and defining tasks suitable for students.

GMSI Financial Report

GMSI staff salaries and benefits packages do not come directly from GMSI-specific funding, but from the Administrative Office of the Courts.

In 2022, GMSI staff submitted a concept paper proposing support for up to 100 volunteers under GMSI Volunteer Operations (changed to Community Engagement in 2023). The funding request was submitted to the Legislature and accepted under GMSI's former name "Guardian Monitoring Program" as outlined below:

"Guardian Monitoring Program: Funding is provided to support the Guardian Monitoring Program's ongoing volunteer activities. Funding will be used to recruit, train, support and retain approximately 100 volunteers. (General Fund-State) (Ongoing)"

The Legislature approved the requested funding beginning in fiscal year 2024 and ending in fiscal year 2027:

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Biennial	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$65,000	\$105,000	\$170,000	\$105,000	\$105,000	\$210,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$65,000	\$105,000	\$170,000	\$105,000	\$105,000	\$210,000

In 2024, GMSI staff will establish ways in which the funding will be used.