

Guardianship is a legal process designed to protect vulnerable people from abuse, neglect (including self-neglect), and exploitation. Guardianship provides for a person's care and management of his or her money while preserving, to be the largest extent possible, the person's independence and right to make decisions affecting his or her life.

****If you suspect someone is in imminent danger, please call 9-1-1. If you suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation, call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at (800) 252-5400. Texas is a mandatory reporting state, however reporting is ALWAYS anonymous.****

Types and lengths of guardianships – A guardianship can be of the person or the estate. The guardianship can be, temporary or permanent. A temporary guardianship is limited to 60 days. A permanent guardianship lasts until the ward (1) passes away, (2) is found to have full capacity, (3) is no longer a minor, or (4) no longer must have a guardian appointed to receive funds due from a governmental source. A guardianship can be full or limited to the particular circumstances and condition of the ward.

How to know if someone needs a guardian – There are some indications that a person may be in need of a guardian. Does the person have problems in more than one of the following areas: language and communication, nutrition, personal hygiene, health care, personal safety, employment, independent living or financial matters? If yes, then guardianship may be an option. However, there are alternatives to guardianship that may be more appropriate.

- Conservatorship
- Contracts
- Durable Power of Attorney
- Medical Power of Attorney
- Finances
 - Representative Payee
 - Limited Bank Account (Co-Signers, Ceiling Limit Amount, Pour-Over Account)
- Person-centered planning
- Personal Advisors
- Power of Attorney
- Protective Orders
- Trusts
- Gonzales County Guardianship Referral Form

How does the Court protect Wards? The Court protects the Ward by making an informed and selective decision in the appointment of the Guardian. Further, the Court requires the Guardian to submit an Annual Report and/or Annual Accounting of the Ward.

What is the difference between a mental illness and intellectual disability? An intellectual disability is a lifelong condition of slow intellectual development, where medication has no effect. Intellectual disabilities can be caused by genetic factors, environmental factors, or problems affecting development before, during or the early years after birth. People with intellectual disabilities present a large variety of appearances and; degrees of intellectual disabilities. These differences require individualized forms and intensities of therapies and supports. An intellectual disability is permanent; there is no cure. People with intellectual disabilities need long-term developmental therapies, educational/vocational supports and life-skills training and reinforcements. A mental illness, on the other hand, can be treated with medication, psychotherapy or other supports. Mental illness can be caused by genetic issues, chemical imbalances or difficulties with coping, at any age. Mental illness can be a temporary condition caused by bereavement, loss of a job, anxiety at school, etc. Mental illness may occur periodically. People with mental illness need interventions of a medical nature which can be either short-term or long-term.