

Elder Justice Innovation Grant - Improving Guardianship and Promoting Alternatives to Guardianship in Pennsylvania

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) is the recipient of a three-year Elder Justice Innovation Grant. Pennsylvania is one of three states to receive a portion of the nearly two million dollars awarded by the federal Administration on Community Living through a competitive process. Approximately \$1 million (for the first year) will be used by the AOPC to further its work to protect older adults through assessing and implementing improvements in the handling of adult guardianship cases in the Pennsylvania courts. The work will be overseen by the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts (OEJC). The grant, which runs from September 1 through August 31, 2022, has three overarching goals: (1) assure due process for the alleged incapacitated person (AIP); (2) improve guardianship monitoring capabilities to prevent abuse and exploitation; and (3) promote alternatives to guardianship.

Among the projects planned, the OEJC and Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts intend to:

Plan and host Pennsylvania's first statewide, interdisciplinary guardianship summit to provide education about improving the fairness, effectiveness, and assurance of due process in guardianship proceedings; advance improvements in monitoring guardians; promote alternatives to guardianship; and increase the development of collaboration between state and local organizations. A second guardianship summit will be held two years later.

Launch two pilot projects. One will focus on providing public interest legal services counsel to represent older adults (age 60 and over) who are alleged incapacitated in guardianship proceedings. The other will utilize court-appointed special volunteer advocates to visit the alleged incapacitated person before, during, and after the appointment of a guardian.

Develop and present live educational programs and online video education modules to guardians, attorneys, judges, and court personnel on a wide range of guardianship topics, including alternatives to guardianship.

Conduct outreach to, and education to hospitals, nursing homes and other residential settings, protective services agencies and families/caregivers to encourage consideration of alternatives to guardianship.

Analyze data collected through Pennsylvania's Guardianship Tracking System (GTS) and make modifications and enhancements to GTS to expand its efficacy and increase its functionality.

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