

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 (approximately \$3 million) Elder Justice Innovation Grant. Pennsylvania is one of three states to receive a portion of the funds awarded by the federal Administration on Community Living through a competitive process. The funding is being 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 is being overseen by the Office of Elder Justice in the Courts (OEJC). The grant, which runs from September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2025, has three overarching goals: (1) assure due process for the alleged incapacitated person; (2) improve guardianship monitoring capabilities to prevent abuse and exploitation; and (3) promote alternatives to guardianship.

Among the projects being implemented by the OEJC and Advisory Council on Elder Justice are:

A second statewide interdisciplinary guardianship summit to be held in May 2025. The first summit, which was held in September 2023, provided 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. The second summit will build upon the work accomplished during the next year.

A pilot legal services project that launched in Dauphin County in December 2023 to provide representation to alleged incapacitated persons and incapacitated persons aged 60+ at all guardianship proceedings in which private counsel has not been retained. Watch the Dauphin County & MidPenn Legal Services Project Kickoff [here](#). Since its launch, the pilot project has expanded to Berks, Cumberland, and Perry Counties.

A pilot guardianship monitoring project that will be conducted with orphans' courts in all judicial districts.

The development and presentation of 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.

Outreach to and the creation of educational programs for hospitals, nursing homes and other residential settings, protective services agencies, and families/caregivers to encourage consideration of alternatives to guardianship.

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

The development of a web-based resource for alternatives to guardianship, in conjunction with a redesign of the OEJC's webpage, to provide the public with valuable information in a user-friendly format.

The publication of the Pennsylvania Guardian Handbook to educate and guide family/lay guardians. This resource is available [electronically](#) and in hard copy free of charge. A [Spanish language](#) version of the handbook is also available.

Focus groups comprised of volunteers with guardianship experiences including non-guardian family members, family/lay guardians, and professional guardians. Data captured in these focus groups will inform future efforts to improve the guardianship process.

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