



Improving Access to Mental Health Services for Developmentally Disabled Adults in Guardianships

Next Steps for the Washington Certified Professional Guardianship and Conservatorship Board

Spectrum Institute made a presentation to the Certified Professional Guardianship and Conservatorship Board on June 13, 2022. Tina Baldwin and Tom Coleman discussed the Consequences Report and asked the board to develop standards to improve mental health access for protected persons in Washington State. At the conclusion of the meeting, Judge Diana Kiesel, chair of the board, asked Spectrum Institute to recommend steps the board could take to address this issue.

The following actions are recommended:

1. The board should identify certified professional guardians who currently have or have had clients with developmental disabilities and send the Consequences Report to those guardians.
2. The board should ask those guardians to share with the board the names and contact information of physicians, dentists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers who provide services to adults with developmental disabilities. Once a list of such providers is developed, the board should send the Consequences Report to them.
3. The board should ask the chief justice to Convene a Guardianship Mental Health Access Workgroup to identify goals, methods, resources, and timetables to develop a guidebook for guardians – whether certified or lay – to improve mental health access for developmentally disabled adults in guardianships. Members of the workgroup should consist of a judicial member of the board, a certified professional guardian, a lay guardian, an adult protective service professional, a primary care physician, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a social worker, a special education representative, a mental health advocate, and a representative from a developmental disability advocacy organization. All should have experience in interacting with adults with developmental disabilities. The Workgroup should hold online meetings each month and submit a report to the chief justice and the board within one year.
4. Within the next six months, the board should sponsor a webinar on *Abuse Awareness* to call attention to the rate and types of abuse of adults with developmental disabilities, the need to promptly identify and report such abuse, and the need to promptly secure effective mental health therapy for victims of abuse. Invitations should be extended to certified professional guardians, lay guardians, primary care physicians, dentists, judges, court-appointed attorneys, special education workers, service providers, and others who regularly interact with developmentally disabled adults in guardianships.