

State of Montana Guardianship Priorities
Suggested by the Voices for Seniors Coalition Guardianship Committee
Billings, MT

The Voices for Seniors Coalition is a multi-agency coalition created in 2014 to address community-wide concerns for Yellowstone County seniors. The participants come from legal, medical, and social services agencies from Yellowstone County and surrounding areas. In addition to the Guardianship issue the group also has committees working on issues regarding Transportation, Home Assistance, Legislative, Pet Respite, and Senior Hunger. The Guardianship committee has representation from several legal firms, both Billings Clinic and St Vincent Healthcare, Skill Nursing and Assisted Living facilities, Prevention of Elder Abuse, Montana AARP, and current guardians and conservators with Yellowstone Guardianship Counsel and the Area II Agency on Aging Guardianship program. Adult Protective Service also advises the committee on policy and current shortage in available guardians.

The Voice for Seniors Guardianship committee feel the top priority is to establish a statewide Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) committee. This group would be drawn from state and local agencies with interest in best guardianship practices and improving the quality and availability of guardianship throughout Montana.

To accomplish this goal we would want the legislature to fund at the necessary level this committee and their projected work.

The work would include:

- Education
 1. Educating the public to the importance of guardianship, its responsibilities and its role in legal and community service for individuals that lack capacity. Hopefully also using this educational opportunity to address the need for volunteer guardians for those individual who have no one to step in when they lose capacity.
 2. Educating law enforcement and judiciary to best practices and information on what guardianship can and can't do.

- Develop Guardianship:
 1. Standards and Ethics for the State of Montana
 2. Protocols for a standard training for Montana guardians
 3. Working with appropriate state agencies to standardize monitoring and reporting to the courts for guardianships.

- Dispense state grant funds to:
 1. Support existing community guardianship program – both volunteer driven and agency driven models
 2. Creating additional local guardianship services throughout Montana

For more information please contact Denise Armstrong, with Big Sky Senior Service at 259-3111 or Sue Bailey with Adult Resource Alliance of Yellowstone County at 259-5212

We would like to thank the Interim Committee for their efforts regarding this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sue Bailey, Chair of Voice for Senior Guardianship Committee