



Moonrise in Prince William Sound

WINGS ALASKA FIRST YEAR REPORT



ALASKA

Mission: Design an effective system of processes that maximizes the support of vulnerable adults in Alaska.

Vision: To ensure a functional and responsive adult guardianship system that maximizes self-determination, avoids unnecessary guardianships using less restrictive alternatives and prevents and addresses abuse through monitoring and education.

Brief History and Purpose of WINGS:

The Third National Guardianship Summit in 2011 resulted in a core recommendation for the creation of **WINGS**, a court-community collaboration. The primary goals are to improve the adult guardianship system and seek less restrictive decision-making alternatives. Hallmarks of WINGS groups are to:

- 1) *be ongoing and sustainable*
- 2) *include broad-based interdisciplinary stakeholder, including nonprofessionals*
- 3) *use a problem solving approach*
- 4) *change practices and not depend on legislative changes*
- 5) *begin with short term solutions to gain momentum*
- 6) *promote public input and be transparent*
- 7) *collect data, evaluate and adapt*
- 8) *focus on person-centered planning*
- 9) *be part of a national network*
- 10) *mutually reinforce activities for trust and communication among stakeholders*

According to the American Bar Association's website, 29 states have a WINGS or WINGS-like program in various stages of development. The National Guardianship Network encourages all states to have a WINGS program that continually addresses needed improvements in the guardianship system.

Brief Alaskan Timeline of WINGS

- May/June 2017 – The Alaska Court System with assistance from community stakeholders applied for WINGS funding from the Administration for Community Living, which was approved in the amount of \$20,000 with a \$10,000 match from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.
- July 2017 – The Alaska Court System hired a part-time WINGS Coordinator who began interviewing various stakeholder entities.
- August 2017 – The Coordinator planned community forums throughout Alaska to gather public input on guardianship issues. In additions, various stakeholders were invited to join the WINGS initiative.
- September 2017 – The first WINGS stakeholder meeting was held. The stakeholders approved the mission and vision statements. Five committees were formed based on information gathered during previous coordinator outreach, including: the Steering Committee, Alternatives to Guardianship, Court Improvement, Monitoring and Education. Minutes are available on the WINGS webpage (<http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/guardian-conservator/wings.htm>).
- September/October/November 2017 – Community Forums were held in 13 locations including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Bethel, Dillingham, Ketchikan, Juneau, Soldotna, Homer, Kodiak, Mat-Su, Nome, Kotzebue and Valdez. An electronic survey to solicit public input and feedback was launched on the Alaska Court System website through June 2018. Common themes continue to emerge that validate the subject focus of the committees.
- October 2017 – the court system added a webpage for WINGS activities, linked from the self-help Guardianship and Conservatorship website: <http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/guardian-conservator/wings.htm>.

- December 2017 – The second WINGS stakeholder meeting occurred. Minutes are available on the website (<http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/guardian-conservator/wings.htm>).
- March 2018 - The third WINGS stakeholder meeting occurred. Minutes are available on the site listed above (<http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/guardian-conservator/wings.htm>).
- May 2018 – The Coordinator provided WINGS updates during basic guardianship trainings in four locations - Anchorage, Dillingham, Homer and Soldotna. More locations will follow this fall.
- June 2018 – The fourth WINGS stakeholder meeting occurred for fiscal year 2018. Stakeholder chairs provided an update on any accomplishments over the first year which are included in this report. The survey was removed from court website and replaced with contact information for public questions or concerns.

Common Themes from Interviews, Meetings, Survey and Public Forums

This list is a summary of many items indicated during the year.

- Significant inconsistencies in court practices around the state
- Delays in obtaining necessary court orders
- Confusion of when to petition, how to petition
- Concern over monitoring of existing orders regarding issues such as overstepping authority and financial exploitation
- Lack of consistent education for non-professional guardians
- Lack of community and provider education on guardianship
- Lack of training for professionals stakeholders such as Court Visitors, attorneys and judicial officers
- Need for alternatives to guardianship
- Significant concerns over very high state public guardian caseloads
- Lack of recourse for concerned individuals to raise concern about problematic guardianships
- Questions and concerns with the guardianship system and systems that affect guardians (benefits etc.)

Initial Committees and Goals

The goal of the five committees is to share information, coordinate and work together to further their identified goals. It is important to understand that WINGS does not advocate as an organization, but individual stakeholders work together through WINGS and advance initiatives externally as appropriate to their own missions and priorities.

1) Steering

- a. To ensure the sustainability and progress of the WINGS program in Alaska.
 - i. Discuss and plan for a sustainable WINGS program in Alaska
 - ii. Adhere to all WINGS mandates such as meetings, reports etc.

2) Court Improvement

- a. To address inconsistency and inefficiency within the court system regarding adult guardianship
 - i. Establish a uniform timeline for all courts to distribute orders

- ii. Provide for a uniform number of certified orders upon appointment
- iii. Notify OPA of potential appointment prior to hearing
- iv. Separate emergency and expedited petitions and clarify when each is appropriate to file
- v. Ensure emergency hearings are held within 72 hours
- vi. Create consistent practices about when to file for guardianship when a child who needs a guardian will be turning 18
- vii. Create consistent practices for court review of annual reports including notifying guardians whether reports are approved or require further action
- viii. Educating guardians about how to fill out annual reports
- ix. Update the annual report forms
- x. Establish consistent practice on how courts handle repeated petitions for reviews in a short amount of time

3) Alternatives

- a. To address the need for additional alternatives to adult guardianship in Alaska
 - i. develop Supported Decision Making Agreement (SDMA) legislation
 - ii. develop audience specific training content specifically on Alternatives and SDMA's
 - iii. improve systems for assisting individuals to restore their rights
 - iv. serve as the Advisory Council for pilot project being started at Hope Community Services on SDMAs

4) Monitoring

- a. To address the need for consistent, sustainable and necessary monitoring of current guardian and conservator orders
 - i. develop/simplify the annual report by eliminating redundant questions and discuss required attachments for accounting – long term goal of online reporting
 - ii. obtain more relevant information to be able to monitor for problem areas
 - iii. recommend consistent review of annual reports by courts

5) Education

- a. To address overall educational needs with regards to both the adult guardianship system and areas that affect guardians/conservators
- b. Alaska requires a sustainable entity/organization for the guardianship community that can function as 1) independent information center; 2) a provider of educational materials and supportive programs that promote compliance and best practices; 3) a liaison to the court system regarding issues of concern; 4) partner with other entities for comprehensive network/clearinghouse for information.

First Year Committee Accomplishments

Steering: To ensure the sustainability and progress of the WINGS program in Alaska.

- The coordinator has completed all reports and requirements for WINGS as required by the American Bar Association, including the initial funding report, participation at the WINGS forum in Washington DC in April 2018 and site visits.

- Voted to purchase thumb drives for the new on-line Guardianship and Conservatorship education course for communities with inadequate bandwidth capabilities for streaming it online.
- Voted to use any remaining funds not spent for WINGS on second phase of the online course which involves translating into Spanish and other languages.

Court Improvement: To address inconsistency and inefficiency within the court system regarding adult guardianship

- New administrative rule allows for all new guardians and conservators to obtain five certified copies once appointed.
- Probate rules committee formed to address court practice changes.
- Court personnel meet regularly to address a variety of issues such as court response time with new petitions, distribution of orders, better background checks during initial proceedings and training for guardianship professionals including judicial officers.
- Confirmed certified orders can be distributed electronically with water seal to reduce distribution time.
- Creation of a compliance manager position to review annual reports in Anchorage and provide technical assistance across the state.

Alternatives: To address the need for additional alternatives to adult guardianship in Alaska

- Supported Decision Making Agreement legislation proposed and passed by the Legislature during the most recent session and signed by the governor in September 2018.
- Working with a community provider on a pilot project on SDMAs.
- Committee chair has provided upwards of 25 trainings across Alaska and various populations on SDMA awareness.

Monitoring: To address the need for consistent, sustainable and necessary monitoring of current guardian and conservator orders

- Worked with Georgetown IronTech Law program to create 2 apps – (1) to streamline the annual report information and provide more options for responses which is also resulting in an improved form that follows the information in the app; and (2) financial tracker to collect information about expenses in real time, including the ability to take a photo of receipts and categorize them and attach the information to the annual report. Working with programmer to refine the apps.
- The Anchorage annual report review project has been collecting data about all of the reports reviewed in the last year to identify problem areas for reporting.
- Developed a new process in the Anchorage court to start monitoring initial implementation reports as a baseline for the information reviewed in later annual reports.
- The Anchorage compliance manager has been sharing information with judicial officers about what to look for when reviewing annual reports to create better judicial education for report reviews.

Education: To address overall educational needs with regards to both the adult guardianship system and areas that affect guardians/conservators

- a) A collaboration between ASAGA, the court system and three funders resulted in completion of an on-line guardianship course that includes 3 parts: (1) information for people considering guardianship, including alternatives; (2) information about the forms and court process to become a guardian; (3) required reports for guardians.
- b) Committee reviewing information on having a sustainable guardianship assistance program in Alaska and how to maintain such a program.
- c) Starting in FY2019, the Anchorage Court will be teaching two classes about guardianship each month with moving towards streaming them live statewide to make available to a statewide audience.

Next Steps for Second Year beginning 9/30/18

- 1. Steering Committee set to meet October 16th to determine next steps. Chairs are encouraged to meet with existing committees.
- 2. Full Stakeholder meeting set for January 15, 2019.

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