

Why Be a Volunteer

"I enjoy being a volunteer guardian because it gives me a feeling of satisfaction to be helping others. I like getting to know different people in the community who help me learn about the resources available to help my ward."

- Ann, Volunteer Guardian

"I became interested in being a volunteer guardian as an outgrowth of my work with people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. People who can not make decisions for themselves badly need someone to look out for them and for their best interests. If no one volunteers to do this, deserving people fall through the cracks and may not get the care and consideration they deserve. I have enjoyed the people I have represented."

- Marilyn, Volunteer Guardian

"When I was young, someone was there to help my father when he needed it. Now it is my turn to help others."

- Don, Volunteer Guardian

"Being a volunteer guardian is a very interesting way to give something back to your community. As a volunteer guardian I have enjoyed having relationships with interesting people, learning about different living situations, and making decisions to benefit my ward. The benefits of serving as a volunteer guardian include flexible hours, payment in the form of smiles and appreciation and satisfaction of knowing you make a positive difference in someone's life."

- Judy, Volunteer Guardian

Mission Statement

The mission of the Winnebago County Volunteer Guardianship Program is to recruit, train, match, monitor, support and recognize volunteer guardians. These volunteers are appointed by the Court to serve citizens of Winnebago County who are found to be vulnerable individuals and unable to protect their own best interests and/or exercise their legal rights.



The Winnebago County Department of Human Services provides equal opportunity for services and employment without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or mental or physical handicap.

Winnebago County

Volunteer Guardianship Program

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*Preserving another's dignity
and legal rights through
volunteer service.*

What is a Volunteer Guardian?

An individual is in need of a guardian when the Court deems that the person is not capable of making informed decisions and/or managing his/her finances. These individuals may be elderly or have developmental disabilities, mental illness, brain injury, or alcohol/other drug disabilities. A volunteer guardian is needed when an individual does not have a family member or friend who is able or willing to fulfill this role.



What are the Responsibilities of a Volunteer Guardian?

A volunteer guardian is responsible for making health, employment, housing, social, and financial decisions on behalf of the ward. A volunteer guardian is also responsible for acting as the ward's advocate ensuring that his/her legal rights, independence, and dignity are protected.

A ward does not need to live with the guardian, nor is the guardian personally responsible for financially supporting the ward. However, a personal relationship with one's ward is essential and face-to-face contact at least once per month is strongly recommended.

On an annual basis, a guardian is required to file a report with the Court noting the ward's physical/mental condition and current living arrangement. If one is serving as Guardian of the Estate, a financial report must be filed annually.

What Important Qualities Should a Volunteer Guardian Possess?

- A genuine desire to help others live a happy, healthy, and fulfilled life.
- The ability to guide one's ward using substitute judgment and the best interests standard so one's ward may achieve and maintain the highest level of independence possible.
- The dedication to thoroughly research issues and make various contacts prior to making a decision on behalf of one's ward.



- The assertiveness to ask questions, express concerns and request alternatives when discussing services, treatments, and potential changes that will impact one's ward.
- The skill and perseverance to apply for government benefits on behalf of one's ward and appeal negative decisions, if necessary.
- The organizational ability to maintain appropriate documentation and file reports to the Court in a timely fashion.

How do I become a Volunteer Guardian?

Prior to becoming a volunteer guardian, individuals are required to complete an application, participate in an interview and submit to reference and criminal background checks. Individuals must also be at least 21 y

years of age and agree to participate in ongoing training.

Once approved as a volunteer guardian, care will be taken to match you with a ward that you are best suited to serve. Consideration will be given to type of disability, level of involvement necessary to meet the ward's needs, and the unique experience or skills of the volunteer.

Call Program Supervisor, Nicole Davis-Dawald, at 920-236-4668 for more information or to apply.

Is there Liability for a Volunteer Guardian?

Guardians are not financially or civilly liable for their wards. According to Chapter 88.39 Wisconsin State Statutes, a guardian is immune from civil liability for his/her acts or omissions in performing the duties of the guardianship if he/she performs the duties in good faith, the best interest of the ward, and with the degree of diligence and prudence that an ordinarily prudent person exercises in his/her own affairs.

What Support is Available?

The Winnebago County Volunteer Guardianship Program was established with the intent of recruiting training and supporting dedicated, quality volunteer guardians in their court-appointed role. Support is offered by the Program Coordinator and the ward's case manager.