
2021 ANNUAL REPORT

PROTECTING NEBRASKA'S
MOST VULNERABLE



STATE OF
NEBRASKA
JUDICIAL BRANCH

Office of Public
Guardian

CONTENTS

- 2021 Highlights 2
- OPG Staff..... 3
- COVID-19 Pandemic..... 4
- Arthur’s Story 6
- Service Areas..... 7
- Statutory Duties..... 8
- Nominations..... 9
- Case Distribution..... 10
- Case Disposition 11
- Waiting List..... 12
- Anthony’s Story 14
- Ward Conditions 15
- Systems Issues..... 16
- Katie’s Story 18
- Financial Operations..... 19
- Legal Counsel..... 20
- Successor Guardian 21
- Court Visitor/GAL 22
- Derek’s Story 23
- Private Guardian Education 24
- Private Guardian Support 25
- Advisory Council 27

2021 PUBLIC GUARDIAN HIGHLIGHTS

Nebraska Revised Statute §30-4111 requires the Nebraska Office of Public Guardian (OPG) to report to the Chief Justice and the Legislature on, or before, January 1st of each year. This is the OPG’s seventh report, with information covering November 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021. This year, **COVID-19 continued to challenge the OPG**, as it has for so many others. The OPG has continued to be available for COVID-19 related decisions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, over the past year. This year 137 wards tested positive for COVID-19, necessitating intensive APG oversight and medical decision-making to ensure wards’ health and to protect their lives. Since the beginning of the pandemic, thirty-five of our wards required hospitalization and, tragically, nine individuals served by the OPG have died.

Throughout 2021, the OPG was at the maximum ward-to-staff capacity in most OPG service areas. Hospitals and other facilities with incapacitated residents in need of guardians faced the greatest difficulties due to delayed patient discharges, exacerbating the hospital bed shortage from COVID-19. The OPG met with numerous stakeholders across Nebraska, including hospitals, nursing homes, Regional Centers, and Department of Health and Human Services administration, to discuss the challenges and desperate circumstances from the lack of guardians for incapacitated, vulnerable adults in Nebraska.

As a result of these discussions, and in collaboration with outside entities to address the problems, the Public Guardian provided information regarding options from other states to policymakers in a Legislative hearing. From serving as the guardian for over 475 vulnerable adults to interactions with thousands of private and family guardians across Nebraska since 2015, the Public Guardian provides two major observations regarding guardianship capacity in Nebraska.

First, the current, primary, driving pressure necessitating the need for guardianships (rather than less restrictive and successful early interventions other than guardianships) is the **lack of mental health care for individuals with severe, pervasive, mental illness.**

Second, to meet the needs for guardians in Nebraska, now and in the future, actions should include:

- Early intervention, education, and planning to reduce the need for guardianship
- Support and resources for private/family guardians
- Evaluation of OPG utilization and funding



MICHELLE CHAFFEE
PUBLIC GUARDIAN

OPG STAFF



Michelle Chaffee
Public Guardian



Marla Fischer
Deputy Public Guardian



Michelle Moore
Financial Operations Manager



Erin Wiesen
Education and Outreach Coordinator



Lisa Meyer
Legal Counsel



Jeff Heineman
Legal Counsel



Jacey Gale
Administrative Assistant - Intake



Sarah Herrera
Administrative Assistant - Case Aide



Michelle Ging
Administrative Assistant - Case Aide



Jill VanDusen
Administrative Assistant



Stacy
Associate Public Guardian



Jana
Associate Public Guardian



Glenda
Associate Public Guardian



Kelly
Associate Public Guardian



Missy
Associate Public Guardian



Lisa
Associate Public Guardian



Joe
Associate Public Guardian



Jena
Associate Public Guardian



Candice
Associate Public Guardian



Ali
Associate Public Guardian



Emily
Associate Public Guardian



Kimmie
Associate Public Guardian



Susan
Associate Public Guardian



Martha
Associate Public Guardian



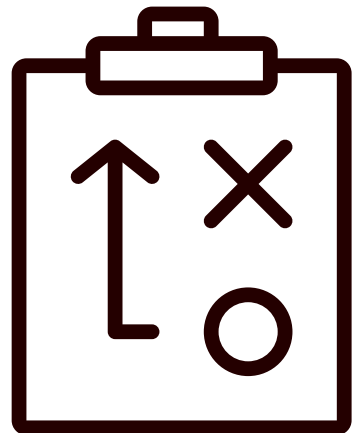
Janelle
Associate Public Guardian

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As reported in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the work of the Office of Public Guardian. Throughout this reporting year, Associate Public Guardians (APGs) have continued to advocate for the safety and wellbeing of persons under guardianship and/or conservatorship. Though the total number of hours dedicated to COVID-19 specific activities decreased significantly, the number of entries in case management software decreased only slightly. The decrease in time can likely be attributed to having pandemic plans already in place for each ward or protected person, while the steady number of case management entries can likely be attributed to the integration of COVID-19 related conversations becoming part of routine APG activities. Upon reflection, completing robust pandemic planning appears to have been a vital strategy to ensure that all OPG wards and protected persons have uninterrupted access to food, shelter, medical care, transportation, and personal needs spending funds.



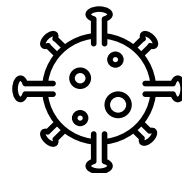
4,566 ENTRIES IN CASE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE (EMS) SPECIFIC TO COVID-19



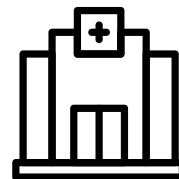
411 HOURS DEDICATED TO COVID-19 RELATED ACTIVITIES BY OPG STAFF



230 WARDS TESTED FOR COVID-19 AT LEAST ONCE



79 WARDS TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AT LEAST ONCE



18 WARDS REQUIRED HOSPITALIZATION FOR COVID-19 (LAST YEAR: 17)



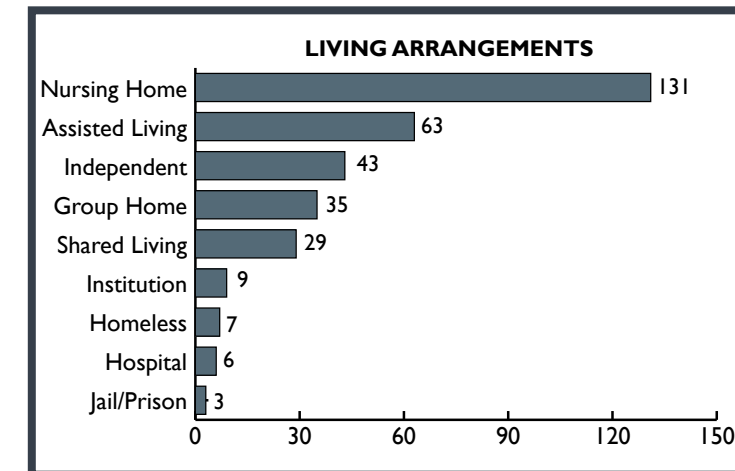
188 WARDS LIVED IN A FACILITY WITH AN ACTIVE COVID-19 OUTBREAK (LAST YEAR: 156)



3 WARDS BEGAN HOSPICE CARE DUE TO COVID-19



6 WARDS DIED DUE TO COVID-19 (LAST YEAR: 3)



ARTHUR'S STORY

The Office of Public Guardian became the guardian for 80-year old Arthur in August of 2021. With a history of wandering due to dementia and diabetes, Arthur had around-the-clock (24 hour) in-home healthcare. Just two weeks after the OPG was appointed, Arthur was diagnosed with COVID-19. His in-home healthcare providers refused to provide care after learning of his diagnosis. Further, the state-contracted agency in charge of overseeing the in-home healthcare company also initially refused to take any action to replace the workers, thus placing Arthur in an increasingly dangerous situation.

Over the course of the next 13 hours, Arthur's Associate Public Guardian (APG), Janelle, relentlessly advocated for him to receive medically necessary care. After exhausting all options with first responders, local nursing homes, his primary care physician, his insurance company's case management program, administrators within the Department of Health and Human Services, and others. Janelle knew that the risk of harm was intensifying with each passing hour, and she later remarked that **"the fear of failing at that point was not an option with someone's life on the line."** Finally, the oversight agency's supervisor intervened and agreed to contact 911 again.



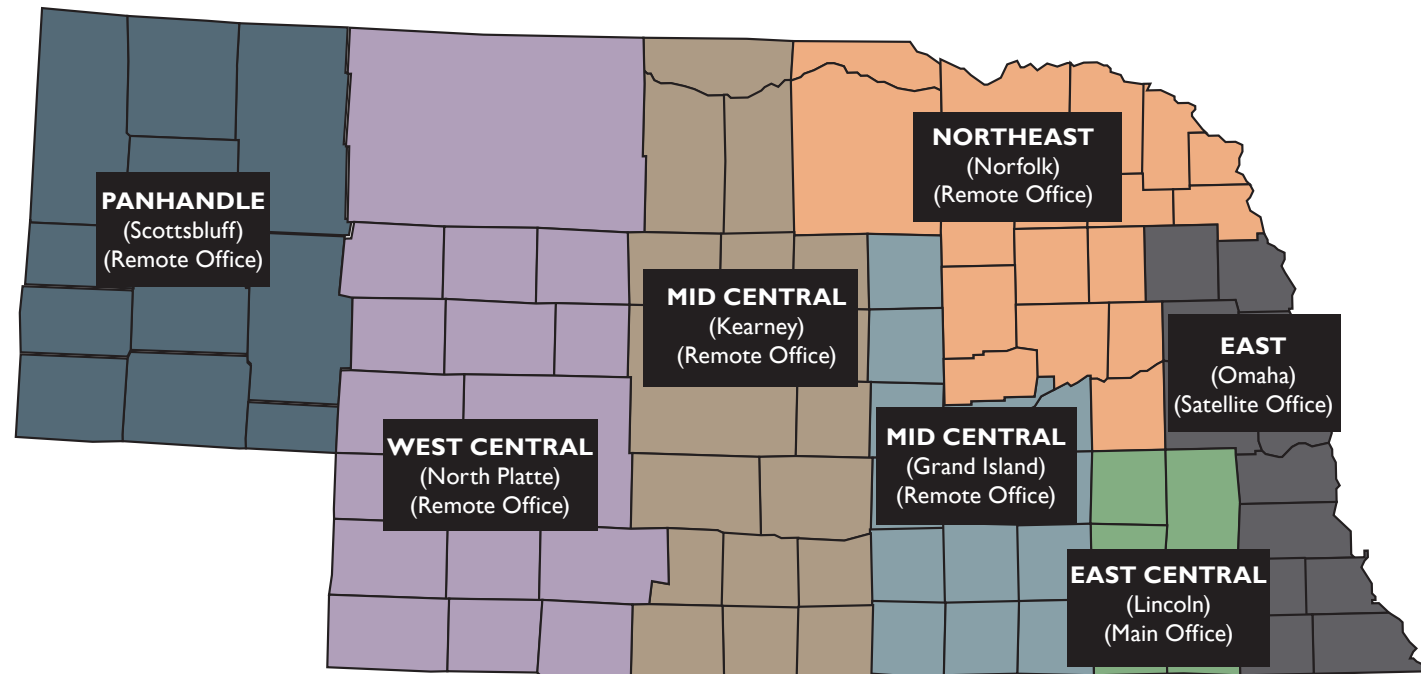
Janelle

The responding Omaha Police officer, Ruteena Alcantara, listened to Janelle's rapidly increasing concerns about the situation, and they worked collaboratively to get Arthur placed under Emergency Protective Custody (EPC). This was a unique strategy, but all other options had been exhausted. Officer Alcantara understood the severity of the situation and detailed she would transport Arthur to the ER herself if necessary. By the time Arthur arrived at the hospital, the ER was full, as were most inpatient beds. Arthur's blood glucose was dangerously low because no one had been in his home to assist with lunch or dinner. He again tested positive for COVID-19 but was also diagnosed with RSV. Had the officer not taken Arthur's situation seriously and provided the necessary assistance, he surely would have died.

Arthur's story was featured in the Omaha World Herald. Scan the QR code to access the article.



SERVICE AREAS



PANHANDLE	WEST CENTRAL	MID CENTRAL	MID CENTRAL	EAST CENTRAL	NORTHEAST	EAST
Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, Sioux	Arthur, Chase, Cherry, Dundy, Frontier, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow, Thomas	Blaine, Brown, Buffalo, Custer, Dawson, Franklin, Furnas, Garfield, Gosper, Harlan, Kearney, Keya Paha, Loup, Phelps, Rock, Sherman, Valley	Adams, Clay, Fillmore, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick, Nance, Nuckolls, Polk, Thayer, Webster, Wheeler, York	Gage, Jefferson, Lancaster, Saline, Seward	Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Butler, Cedar, Colfax, Dixon, Holt, Knox, Madison, Pierce, Platte, Stanton, Thurston, Wayne	Burt, Cass, Cuming, Dakota, Dodge, Douglas, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Sarpy, Saunders, Washington
(1 Associate Public Guardian)	(1 Associate Public Guardian)	(1 Associate Public Guardian)	(2 Associate Public Guardians)	(4 Associate Public Guardians)	(2 Associate Public Guardians)	(6 Associate Public Guardians)

STATUTORY DUTIES

DIRECT SERVICES

- Serve as court-appointed guardian and/or conservator
- Respond to emergency needs for all wards and/or protected persons
- Maintain an average caseload of 20 wards per APG
- Model best practices in guardianship and/or conservatorship
- Visit wards in-person monthly in their residential setting
- Communicate regularly with service providers
- Maintain records of financial and case management services provided
- Develop and maintain a sliding fee scale

PUBLIC GUARDIANSHIP ACT



PUBLIC EDUCATION

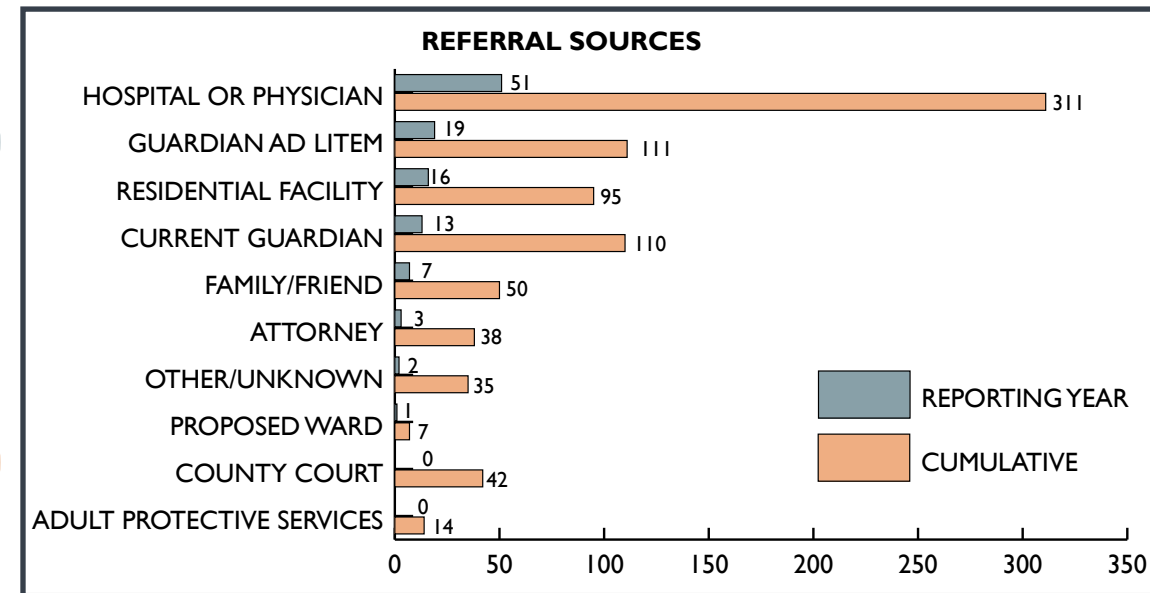
- Support and train private guardians and/or conservators in Nebraska
- Develop and maintain curricula for private guardians and/or conservators
- Support private guardians in promoting the dignity and autonomy of their wards and/or protected persons
- Collect and report statistical data on guardianship and conservatorship in Nebraska

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

- Make reasonable efforts to recruit volunteer successor guardians and/or conservators
- Encourage more people to serve as private guardians and/or conservators
- Develop programs to enhance the quality of life for OPG wards and protected persons
- Safeguard the rights of individuals by supporting least restrictive alternatives and full guardianship as a last resort

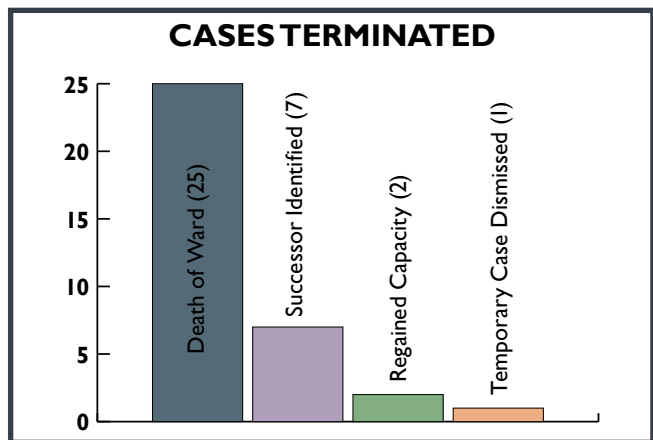
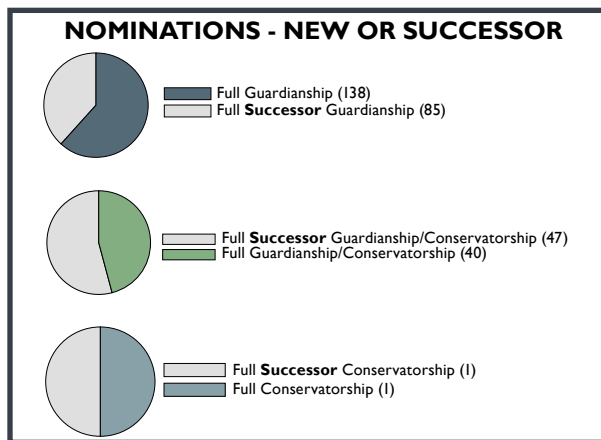
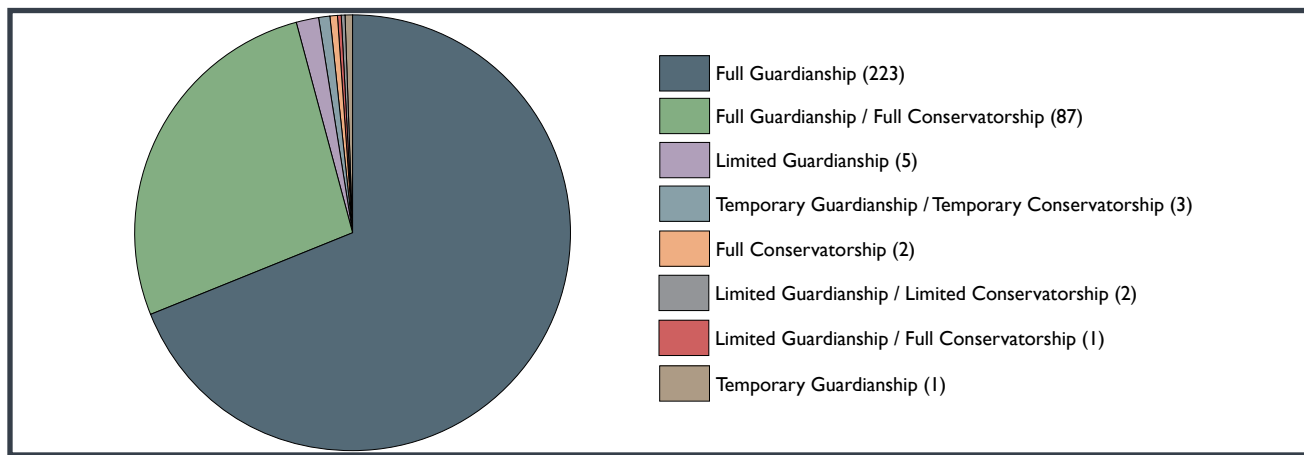
NOMINATIONS

The Office of Public Guardian began accepting nominations in December 2015. As of October 31, 2021, the OPG has been nominated **813** times. During this reporting year, the Office of Public Guardian was nominated **112** times. Nominations come from a variety of referral sources, including hospitals, attorneys, courts, residential facilities, and others. During this reporting year, hospital nominations (47) continued to heavily outweigh physician nominations (4), and of the 21 new cases accepted by the OPG in 2021, 15 were from hospitals. Accordingly, despite a 71% hospital nomination acceptance rate by the OPG, 68% of potentially incapacitated patients nominated by hospitals were unable to be accepted due to the OPG's lack of capacity for new cases. Additionally, the OPG received zero referrals from courts or Adult Protective Services (as direct petitioner) this year.



Reporting Period: November 1, 2020 - October 31, 2021

CASE DISTRIBUTION



Reporting Period: November 1, 2020 - October 31, 2021

CASE DISPOSITION

During this reporting period, the Office of Public Guardian (OPG) was nominated **112** times. The OPG accepted **21** new cases. Of the 112 nominations, the OPG did not initially accept **91** cases for the following reasons:



OPG had no capacity to serve and case was referred to the Waiting List (**64**)



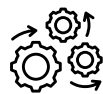
OPG had no capacity to serve and case is awaiting further court action (**12**)



The proposed ward regained capacity and the case was dismissed (**8**)



An alternative to the OPG was identified and pursued (**4**)

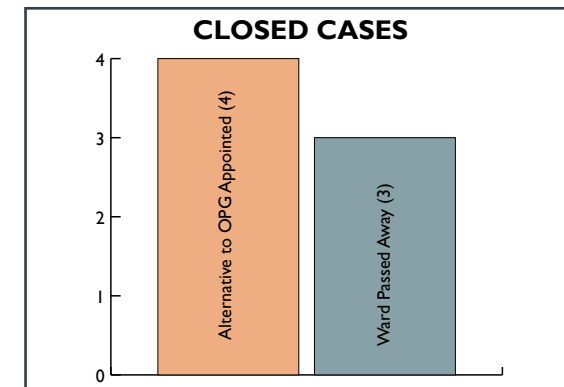
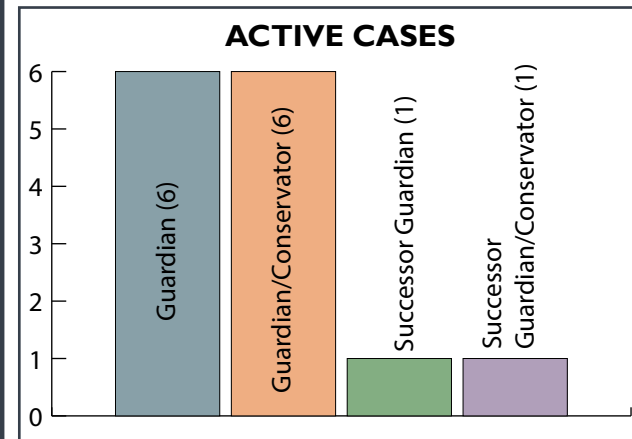


The case was dismissed by the court (**1**) or petitioner (**2**)



The proposed ward passed away (**1**)

DISPOSITION OF ACCEPTED CASES (21)

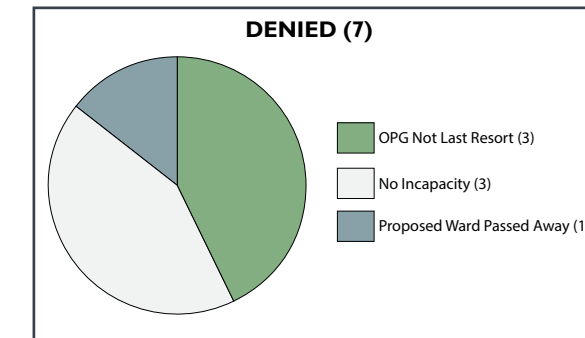
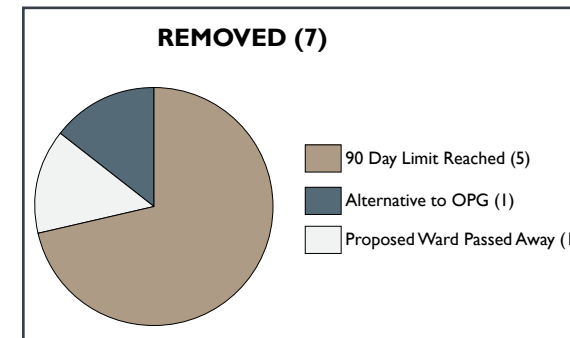
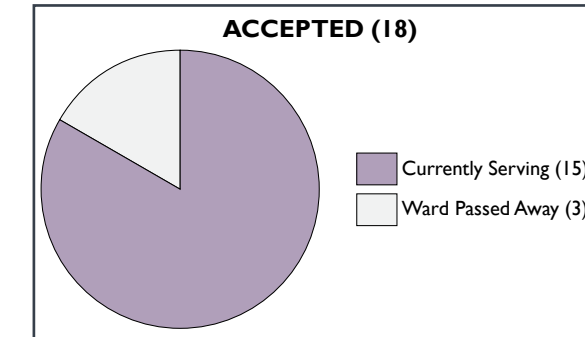
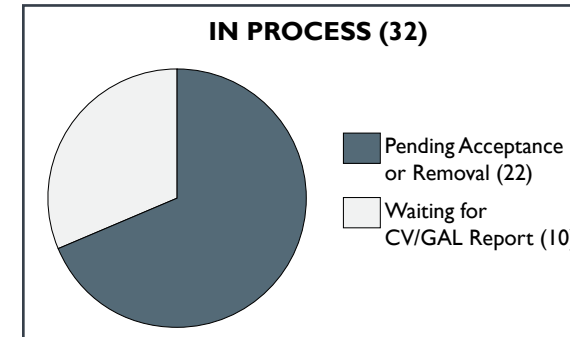
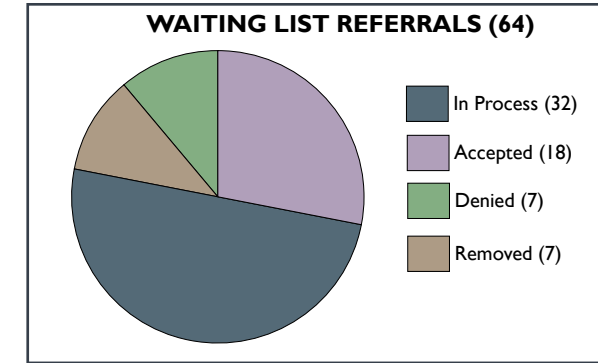


WAITING LIST

The Office of Public Guardian (OPG) may accept appointments not to exceed an average ratio of 20 cases per multidisciplinary team member. Neb. Rev. Stat. §30-4115(2). When the average ratio is reached, the OPG shall not accept further appointments. Neb. Rev. Stat. §30-4115(3). During this year's reporting period, the OPG continued to operate at capacity in most of its service areas. Referrals to the OPG Waiting List (WL) continued with 64 referrals this reporting year.

During the OPG appointment process, a Court Visitor or Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is appointed to provide the court with a report detailing the qualifications of the case to be served by the OPG. The report form is standardized to provide consistent information in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §30-2619.01. Based on this report and other factors, the OPG will either approve or deny placement to the WL. If approved, the case remains on the WL for up to 90 days. If an opening becomes available during that timeframe, cases are selected based on a level of need determination. If the case is not chosen within the 90-day period, the OPG removes the case from the WL.

Difficulties with the process, as reported in previous years, have continued this reporting year. Obtaining updated GAL reports remains a serious issue as the lack of updated information affects the ability to make level of need determinations. Another issue is the lack of openings in service areas, which has resulted in cases being referred to the WL multiple times. The OPG continues to work with stakeholders and the courts to navigate this process.



ANTHONY'S STORY

The Office of Public Guardian became the successor guardian and conservator for Anthony* in February of 2018. At the time, Anthony was living at the Grand Island Veterans Home. Anthony longed to become more independent and live in his own apartment. The OPG worked with the facility and Anthony to allow him some more independence. He could leave the facility and do his own shopping and food preparation. The facility in Grand Island had a woodshop that Anthony would visit often, and he learned how to use many of the tools available at that time. Then in January of 2019, the Central Nebraska Veterans Home opened in Kearney and Anthony moved into one of the neighborhoods there. The CNVH is a state-of-the-art facility where Anthony continues to be very independent but has the support of facility staff when needed. The new woodshop, however, is Anthony's favorite place to be. Anthony describes working in the woodshop as the best therapy available to him. He makes many projects and sells them for spending money. He has also entered several of his projects in the state fair. He is very proud of himself when he finishes a project and was so excited to share some of his work for the OPG's annual report. See page 26 for additional photos of Anthony's work.



*Name has been changed to protect identity

WARD CONDITIONS

During the reporting period (November 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021), the Office of Public Guardian served as guardian and/or conservator for **333** individuals. These individuals collectively experienced **1,085** complex medical issues and social conditions, an increase of 23 people, and 125 conditions from last year's report.



223
MEDICAL CONDITION



244
COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT



277
MENTAL HEALTH
DIAGNOSIS



98
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITY



48
HISTORY OF MENTAL
HEALTH BOARD
COMMITMENT



88
HISTORY OF CRIMINAL
INVOLVEMENT



108
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
DIAGNOSIS

1,085
COMPLEX MEDICAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL
CONDITIONS EXPERIENCED BY OPG WARDS

SYSTEMS ISSUES

BANKING AND FINANCE

- Banks refusing to provide access despite court orders
- Difficulty obtaining credit reports and credit freezes to protect ward's credit
- Joint bank accounts held by OPG wards and perpetrators of financial exploitation resulting in continued exploitation with no recourse
- Pension deposits into widowed ward accounts and access to those accounts despite court orders
- Security questions, including PIN, are difficult to obtain from wards to bring assets under the control of the guardian and/or conservator
- Lack of entities willing to serve as Representative Payee only, limiting a lesser restrictive option for wards who only need assistance with finances

MEDICAL CARE

- Lack of service options for wards who meet eligibility definitions for both a developmental disability services and behavioral health services
- Lack of mental health treatment options across all levels of care (inpatient, outpatient, community based, etc.)
- Hospitals and inpatient facilities admitting wards under observation status to circumvent discharge planning requirements
- Medical treatment and discharge without consent of the guardian/conservator, resulting in lack of wraparound services coordination and increased risk of re-hospitalization
- Difficulty obtaining medical and mental health evaluations
- Difficulty in discharging wards to appropriate levels of care due to overcrowding of hospitals and post-acute care facilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

- Refusals to admit wards with mental health diagnoses
- Lack of mental health assessment and treatment options across all levels of care
- Hospitals and inpatient facilities admitting wards under "observation status" to circumvent federal and state-mandated discharge planning
- Medical treatment and discharge of wards without the consent of the guardian/conservator, resulting in lack of wraparound services coordination and increased risk of re-hospitalization
- Difficulty in discharging wards to appropriate levels of care due to overcrowding of hospitals and post-acute care facilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

NEBRASKA GUARDIANSHIP ISSUES

- Lack of legal representation for potentially incapacitated persons and persons under guardianship/conservatorship
- Petitions with incomplete medical information regarding functional capacity limitations, resulting in full guardianship rather than appropriately limited and lesser restrictive options
- Lack of community awareness on supported decision-making and other lesser restrictive alternatives to guardianship/conservatorship, including Representative Payee services for Social Security beneficiaries

OFFICE OF PUBLIC GUARDIAN CHALLENGES

- Appointments as successor guardian where the prior guardians and/or family members attempt to direct/challenge OPG decisions
- Lack of updated, accurate CV/GAL report information for waiting list cases makes it difficult to identify the risk of harm and make a level of need determination
- Increasing numbers of former foster care youth appointed as wards of the OPG
- Appointment to cases originating out of hospitals where the ward has discharged and cannot be located

KATIE'S STORY

Katie* is a woman in her 20s who has been under guardianship with the Office of Public Guardian since 2016. She has diagnoses of borderline personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizoaffective disorder, anxiety disorder, and substance abuse disorders. Katie has experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Her behavioral needs are significant and she needs a high level of support to manage her “day-to-day” needs, including medication management, transportation, and appointments.

The Associate Public Guardian assigned to Katie's case has advocated heavily for many years to obtain the appropriate level of care for treatment, but options are limited due to the lack of programs throughout the state. The programs that do exist do not provide higher levels of support that people like Katie need, and thus they are unsuccessful, ending up discharged by the facility with immediate effect. It becomes a cycle of homelessness, hospitalization, and placement without any continuity of care. Katie has lost nearly 20 placements this reporting year alone. She has also had four hospital stays of several weeks each in mental health units due to the lack of appropriate discharge and placement options. Katie has also had at least 28 visits to the emergency room for medication-seeking behaviors, and was discharged from two different primary care providers who refused to continue working with her because of her mental health needs.

The lack of services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and a continuum of care management continues to be significant barrier for Nebraskans in need of mental health care, including OPG wards like Katie.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

The Office of Public Guardian (OPG) utilizes a web-based case management system, EMS, in conjunction with an organizational collective account held with Union Bank & Trust. EMS continues to assist the OPG in managing ward finances including receipts, disbursements, and records maintenance for each person served. During this reporting period, Social Security continues to be the highest source of receipts for OPG wards. The OPG manages ward benefits coming from Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans benefits, state benefits such as AABD, and wages. During the pandemic, the OPG has also managed Economic Impact Payment (EIP) funds on behalf of OPG wards, including spend downs to maintain resource limits for SSI and/or Medicaid eligibility, if applicable. The OPG also continues to receive guardianship fees from its sliding fee scale, totaling just over \$35,000 this reporting period. The Nebraska Public Guardianship Act requires the use of a sliding fee scale, which allows the OPG to collect fees from wards and protected persons who meet criteria. Wards or protected persons with over \$5,000 in liquid assets are assessed a monthly fee at the time of their annual court report.

 **19,400+ TRANSACTIONS** 



5,900 RECEIPTS TOTALING MORE THAN **\$4.1 MILLION**



13,576 DISBURSEMENTS TOTALING NEARLY **\$4.1 MILLION**



8,200 PAYMENTS BY ACH
5,400 PAYMENTS BY CHECK

287 CASES WHERE OPG SERVES AS THE REPRESENTATIVE PAYEE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY AND/OR SSI BENEFITS

80 OPG WARDS WITH AN ENABLE SAVINGS PLAN ACCOUNT

96 OPG WARDS PAYING FEES VIA OPG SLIDING FEE SCALE TOTALING **\$35K**

LEGAL COUNSEL

Legal Counsel with the Office of Public Guardian (OPG) provides representation regarding ward issues involving the guardianship and conservatorship case, in accordance with the Public Guardianship Act. Legal Counsels have regular communication with stakeholders of OPG cases, including attorneys, Guardians ad Litem, Court Visitors, court staff, and interested parties. OPG Legal Counsels attend most court hearings involving OPG wards and their Associate Public Guardians (APG).

Legal Counsels attended 395 hearings throughout the reporting year, a 12.5% increase from the last reporting year. Appearances by phone or video conference remained higher than pre-pandemic levels. In-person hearings have gradually resumed but hearings attended by phone or video conference are still utilized. Hearings conducted by phone or video conference appear to be becoming more commonplace.

Legal Counsels continue to monitor policy and regulation issues affecting OPG wards, conducting legal research as necessary for specific circumstances. Legal Counsels review and approve all documents signed by APGs to ensure that those contracts, agreements, notices, consents, etc. are proper. This policy protects OPG wards as well as APGs in situations that involve potential liability. These situations can range from contract negotiations, resolving disputes, filing appeals, and consultation with Medicaid Estate Recovery.

The Public Guardian retains outside counsel as necessary to represent OPG wards in a variety of matters relating to divorces, child support enforcement, criminal charges, real estate transactions, personal injury, etc.



395

**HEARINGS ATTENDED BY
OPG LEGAL COUNSELS
THIS REPORTING PERIOD**



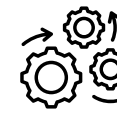
SUCCESSOR GUARDIAN

The Office of Public Guardian is charged with making reasonable efforts to locate a successor guardian for all cases in compliance with Neb. Rev. Stat. § 30-4114(I). Locating and recruiting successor guardians has been a substantial challenge due to the lack of natural supports in the lives of the people served. In addition, guardianship requires a high level of responsibility for complex decision-making and financial management. The OPG continues to pursue successor guardians for its wards through outreach, education, networking, and the case management process.



7

OPG cases transferred to volunteer successor guardians



3

cases transferred to volunteer successor guardians were reappointed to OPG



1,400

individuals educated on the need for successor guardians and/or conservators



6

OPG cases where potential successors are in the background check process



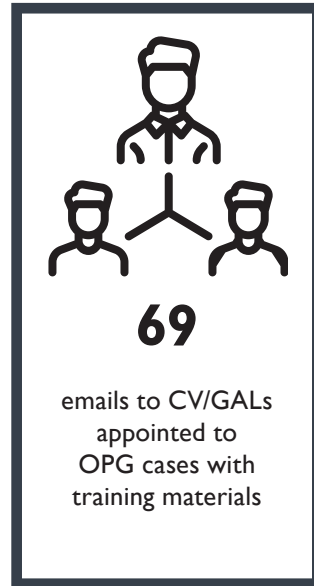
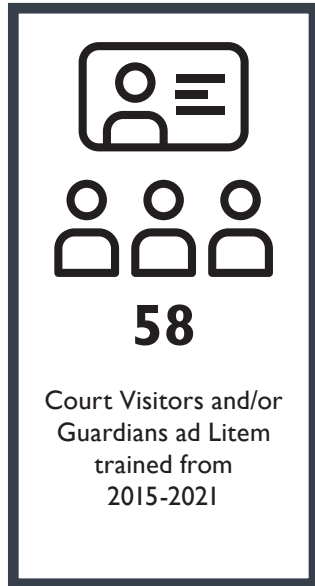
271 cases where all leads for potential successor guardians have been exhausted



76 potential successors were unwilling to serve despite being appropriate options

COURT VISITOR / GUARDIAN AD LITEM

The Office of Public Guardian's court rules requires the appointment of a Court Visitor or Guardian ad Litem (CV/GAL) to each nominated case. The purpose of a CV/GAL appointment is to investigate the claims of the petition and to present the court with a report. The CV/GAL report provides information about the potentially incapacitated person, and must specifically demonstrate that the person requires guardianship, that less restrictive alternatives are not appropriate, and that no one else is available to serve (e.g. the OPG must be the last resort). Court Visitors are crucial volunteers that supplement the work of GALs within the courts. During this reporting year, the OPG trained one new Court Visitor. The OPG also sends training materials via email every time a new CV/GAL is appointed to an OPG case.



DEREK'S STORY

Derek* is a creative young man in his 20s who lives with peers in a group home with developmental disability services. Derek has diagnoses of autism, bipolar disorder, and ADHD, among others, and his behavioral needs necessitate 1:1 staffing at all times. His interests include photography, videography, writing music, and other artistic mediums. In early 2021, Derek purchased a camera to pursue photography. Pioneers Park in Lincoln is one of his favorite places to take photos. The Associate Public Guardian (APG) assigned has advocated with the provider to make Derek's pursuit of his creative endeavors a reality, especially in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the staffing shortages facing providers.

Thank you, Derek, for sharing your work with the OPG!



PRIVATE GUARDIAN EDUCATION

The Office of Public Guardian (OPG) provides training and support to new guardians and/or conservators in Nebraska. Survey data is gathered from participants to guide future training and support needs. During this annual reporting year, the OPG provided education to **1,400** people serving as guardians and/or conservators for children and incapacitated adults, with **94%** of participants taking the class online. The online Spanish class launched in March of 2021, with 53 participants by the end of the reporting year. The phone/conference call classes ended in June of 2021 as the OPG's partner venues across the state began allowing in-person events. In-person education resumed in July of 2021 with strict enforcement of local, state, and/or federal mandates.



67%

of new private guardians and/or conservators were women



641

people became guardian and/or conservator of an **incapacitated adult**



395

people became guardian and/or conservator of a **minor child**



91%

of new guardians and/or conservators were serving as volunteers



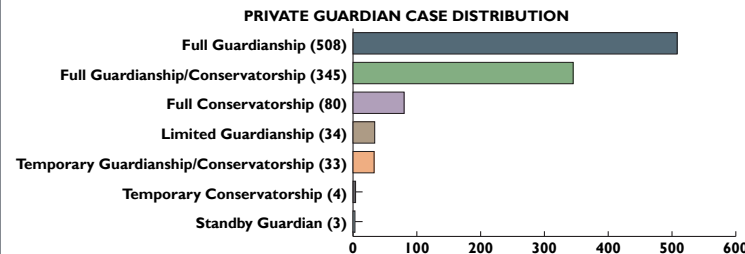
89%

of new private guardians and/or conservators felt prepared to serve after training



75%

of new private guardians and/or conservators reported they did not attempt less restrictive options



PRIVATE GUARDIAN SUPPORT

The Office of Public Guardian provides training and support to private guardians/conservators outside of the formal training process. Outreach continued this year with regular social media posts, a biannual newsletter, and a new webinar on the change of address process. The number of hours spent educating private guardians decreased, likely due to an increase in online class access as well as increased areas of support outside of the formal classroom setting. OPG staff also continued to provide 1:1 support and information to private guardians as well as community partners. Finally, the OPG provided staff training on guardianship for two human services organizations during the summer of 2021.

During this reporting period, OPG staff assisted private guardians in the following ways:



Assistance with initial, annual, and final accountings, or other court reports



Locating resources for housing, mental health, aging, and disability services



Support and resources for breaking through system access barriers



WEBINARS



FACEBOOK



NEWSLETTER

OPG staff hours spent educating private guardians in-person or by phone:

124

OPG staff hours spent supporting private guardians outside of a formal classroom setting:

39

ADVISORY COUNCIL



Thank you, Anthony*, for sharing your work with the OPG!

*Name has been changed to protect identity



Corey Steel
State Court Administrator



Dianne DeLair, JD
Attorney
(Council Chair)



Hon. Todd Hutton
County Judge



Lisa Line, JD
Attorney



Julie Masters, PhD
Professor of Gerontology



Amanda Duffy Randall, PhD
Professor of Social Work



Kevin Ruser, JD
Nebraska College of Law



Russ Leavitt
Member At-Large



Darla Schiefelbein
Clerk Magistrate



Beth Baxter
Behavioral Health Administrator

Members of the Advisory Council assist the Public Guardian in carrying out the Public Guardianship Act, meeting at least four times per year. The Advisory Council consists of professionals from a variety of disciplines, including law, social work, mental health, aging, developmental disabilities, and other related fields. Members of the Advisory Council are appointed by the State Court Administrator and serve three-year terms. Appointments to the Advisory Council are reflective of the geographical and cultural diversity of the state of Nebraska, including gender fairness.

The Office of Public Guardian would like to recognize and thank two outgoing members, Kevin Ruser and Amanda Duffy Randall, for their many years of service to the Office of Public Guardian's Advisory Council.

Office of Public Guardian
1540 S. 70th St. Ste. 202
Lincoln, NE 68506
Phone: 402.471.2862
Fax: 402.471.2870

Email: nsc.publicguardian@nebraska.gov

