

State of Iowa: Office of Public Guardian

About the Office of Public Guardian | The Office of Public Guardian is housed within the Iowa Department on Aging. It is governed by Iowa Code chapter 231E. The Office of Public Guardian provides the following services:

- Information about guardianship, conservatorship, and less restrictive alternatives for supporting older adults and adults with disabilities
- Education and resources for guardians and conservators
- Guardianship and conservatorship services of last resort

Eligibility for Public Guardianship Services | In order to be eligible for public guardianship/conservatorship services, a person must meet all of the following criteria:

- Is a resident of Iowa age 18 or older
- Meets the legal standard for appointment of a guardian or conservator
- Has needs that can be served by a guardian or conservator and that cannot be met with less restrictive alternatives
- Does not have an appropriate or responsible person available to serve as guardian or conservator
- Does not have resources to compensate a private guardian or conservator

Applying for Services | To apply for services from the Office of Public Guardian, you must submit both of the following documents.

- Application for Services
- Report of Decision-Making Capacities

You may also submit other information that helps explain the individual's needs and what options have been tried in the past. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

What to Expect after You Apply | The Office of Public Guardian will review the application. The application may be accepted, denied, or placed on a waiting list. Please allow up to sixty (60) days for a decision. Someone from the Office of Public Guardian may contact you during that time to get more information.

If the Application is Accepted | If the application is accepted, it will be sent to the Local Office of Public Guardian that serves the county where the person resides. They will begin the court process to be appointed as guardian and/or conservator. The person who made the referral should be prepared to co-sign the petition, attend the court hearing, and provide testimony as needed.

The Local Office of Public Guardian cannot make any decisions for the person until they have been appointed by the court.

Keep in mind that it will take time for them to file the petition. After the petition is filed it can take weeks or even months before the court case is finished.

Sometimes the Local Office of Public Guardian does not end up being appointed as the person's guardian/conservator. The court might find that the person does not need a guardian/conservator or that someone else should serve. Occasionally, the Local Office of Public Guardian will discover that the person is not actually eligible for public guardianship.

If the Application is Placed on a Waiting List | If the application is placed on a waiting list, you will receive a letter by email explaining the decision. There may be other alternatives you can pursue to help the person on whose behalf you applied. You will be contacted when the person's name comes to the top of the waiting list.

Please notify the Office of Public Guardian of any changes in the person's circumstances, such as:

- Change of residence
- Change of referral contact
- Allegations of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation
- Critical medical decision that needs to be made
- No longer in need of public guardianship services

If the Application is Denied | If the application is denied, you will receive a letter by email explaining the decision. There may be other alternatives you can pursue to help the person on whose behalf you applied. You can reapply in the future if the person's circumstances change.

Important Contacts:

[Office of Public Guardian](#)

510 E 12th St

Des Moines, IA 50319

515.725.3333

800.532.3213

575.725.3322 (fax)

opg@iowa.gov (email)

To access services and programs for older adults and people with disabilities:

[LifeLong Links](#)

866.468.7887

[Iowa Compass](#)

800.779.2001

lowacompass.org

To report suspected dependent adult or elder abuse:

[Iowa Department of Human Services](#)

800.362.2178

[Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals](#)

877.686.0027

[Local Law Enforcement](#)

Call 911 in an emergency, or call the non-emergency number in other situations

To access free or low-cost legal assistance:

[Iowa Legal Aid](#)

1.800.572.1275

[Hotline for Older Iowans](#)

1.800.992.8161

[Iowa State Bar Association](#)

www.iowafindalawyer.com