

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court Department**

NOTICE

Probate and Family Court Partners With Non-Profit on Pilot Project to Create Massachusetts' First Public Guardian

The Probate and Family Court today announced that it is partnering with Public Guardian Services (PGS), a Massachusetts non-profit organization, to implement a pilot project for a public guardian in Massachusetts. The pilot is expected to begin in July and will be implemented in Suffolk and Plymouth Counties.

According to a [2016 study](#) by the Massachusetts Guardianship Policy Institute, it is estimated that there are between 3,200 – 3,800 adults statewide who have a surrogate need that is not addressed through a state funded program.

"I look forward to the Probate and Family Court's partnership with Public Guardian Services. I have no doubt that this pilot project will highlight the benefit of public guardianship services for incapacitated adults in Massachusetts," said Probate and Family Court Chief Justice John Casey. "The need for such services exists. We see it in the Probate and Family Court every day. The reality is that not everyone has a friend or family member who can act as guardian when needed. My hope is that this pilot project will not only demonstrate the need for a permanent solution, but will improve the quality of life for persons in Massachusetts who otherwise have no one to serve as guardian."

Under the pilot program, Public Guardian Services may be appointed as the guardian or conservator of last resort when there is no willing or suitable person to act as the guardian or conservator for an individual whom the Probate and Family Court has determined lacks sufficient decision-making capacity. PGS will accept referrals from the Probate and Family Court, private individuals, hospitals, nursing homes and other entities. All referrals will be screened by PGS before consenting to any appointment and PGS appointments will be capped at specific staff-to-incapacitated person ratios. Case Managers who are employees of PGS will act as the surrogate decision-makers for such persons and will be responsible for all statutory court reporting requirements.

The pilot will be led by Public Guardian Services Executive Director Sandy Hovey, a six-person Board of Directors, and a group of advisors. The pilot project is funded by a grant from Guardian Community Trust, a non-profit pooled trust organization based in Andover, Massachusetts.

"On behalf of the Public Guardian Services Board of Directors, we are thrilled to announce this very important pilot project," said PGS Executive Director Sandy Hovey. "For close to 30 years, a group of dedicated guardianship advocates have been working tirelessly towards implementing a public guardian program in Massachusetts and this pilot project truly is a tribute to their vision and dedication. The support of Paula Carey, Chief Justice of the Trial Court, and the exceptional Probate and Family Court Department staff, will certainly help to ensure PGS' success."

The pilot project will collect data, provide research, and form best practices to develop and evaluate the capacity of PGS to meet the need for a guardian or conservator of last resort. The pilot will also measure the need for a future expansion of the program across the state.

"I began working on guardianship reform and the need for a statewide guardianship oversight office 30 years ago in my role as Attorney General as part of our Elder Protection Priority, " said Scott Harshbarger, a former Massachusetts Attorney General and a PGS Advisor. "I am pleased with the multi-level progress being made on

this critical access to equal justice issue, and proud of the dedication, resilience and vision of my colleagues. We are excited to work with Suffolk and Plymouth Counties on this pilot project and look forward to what we believe will be very positive outcomes for those who without us may have no one.”

For more information on how to make a referral to PGS and the additional services they offer, please contact Public Guardian Services at info@publicguardianservices.org. For questions related to the Probate and Family Court’s partnership with PGS, please contact Evelyn J. Patsos, Esq., at evelyn.patsos@jud.state.ma.us.

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