

Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Program Newsletter

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

Dear Volunteer Guardians,

We hope that your summer has been filled with laughter, health and sunshine! The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed and to help support you all during your volunteer time. We want to ensure that you feel supported and educated as you actively serve as Volunteer Guardians with the Medina County Probate Court. Our program remains successful in serving the vulnerable population in our Medina community. Without you, many of these vulnerable adults would have no one to visit, manage their medical care, and provide purpose in their days.

As we have all heard in our lives, both personally and professionally, change is always occurring, but it does not need to be viewed as a negative. Our Volunteer Guardianship Program is primarily managed by Nicki Shook, the Court

Investigator and Program Coordinator. Mrs. Shook has the privilege of working alongside an extensive, experienced Board panel consisting of multiple interdisciplinary professionals that

work in our community in various capacities. Recently, our Board has voted to no longer host the yearly appreciation picnic. This decision was made due to many various factors, and due to COVID-19, we have had to suspend our in-service trainings. We are working to find a solution to move forward with our three in-service trainings throughout the year to keep us all connected. We want to ensure that you feel appreciated, always, all year long, for your

time, dedication and loyalty to this program. Again, without you, vulnerable individuals would have no one sitting at their bedside when medical decisions or compassion is needed.

Our mission remains the same, "We have no greater responsibility than to protect and care for our precious elderly. Volunteer guardians greatly improve the quality of life for their wards." We thank you deeply for our mission to be carried out. We thank you for your patience, your dedication, the hard decisions that you make on behalf of someone else, and your time. If at any time you need support, please never hesitate to contact us.

-Volunteer Guardianship Coordinator
Nicki Shook



"VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT PAID; NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE WORTHLESS, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE PRICELESS".

-SHERRY ANDERSON

A MESSAGE FROM JUDGE KEVIN W. DUNN



"I have no greater responsibility than to protect and care for our precious elderly. Volunteer guardians greatly improve the quality of life for their wards."

2019 A YEAR IN REVIEW



Resignation of guardians: **3**

Resignation of new volunteers assigned: **4** total wards that were assigned to new volunteers

TRAINING DATES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

DUE TO COVID-19

ALL FUTURE IN-SERVICE TRAININGS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED OF ANY CHANGES OR PLANS FOR FUTURE TRAININGS.

In the meantime, we've rounded up a list of resourceful websites and online classes that offer insightful tips to improve the lives of both caregivers and their loved ones.

1. **Alzheimer's Association Care Training:** training.alz.org
2. **Family Caregiver Alliance Learning Center:** www.caregiver.org/caregiver-learning-center
3. **Caregiver Action Toolbox:** caregiveraction.org/family-caregiver-toolbox
4. **Home Sweet Home Care's Family Caregiver Education:**
flc.ipced.com/HomeSweetHomeCareInc#
5. **MMLearn Training Course:** training.mmlearn.org/caregiver-training-videos
6. **Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities:** dodd.ohio.gov

IMPORTANT NOTICE—PLEASE READ AND RESPOND

Per Ohio Revised Code §2111.011, all guardians must review a Guardianship Guide, which is available on the Court's website: www.MedinaProbate.org. Within 30 days, each guardian shall then file with the Court the acknowledgment form found at the end of the guide. If you have any further questions or don't have access to a computer, please call the Probate Court at (330) 725-9704. Please note, you only have to do this **one time**—it is not an annual requirement.




THANK YOU!

Thank you to the following hosts and facilities who provided the locations and generous donations for our 2019 events and training sessions:

- **BRUNSWICK POINTE**
- **WESTERN RESERVE MASONIC COMMUNITY**
 - **LIBERTY RESIDENCE**
- **WAITE AND SONS FUNERAL HOME**

And thank you to the NALS of Northeast Ohio for their generous donation and continued support with our program!



Even though in-service trainings are temporarily on hold, we want you, our committed volunteers, to know that you can reach out to Nicki with any ideas for topics you have an interest in learning about. We will be compiling a list and will do our best to cover these topics when it is safer for us to all be together again.

ANNUAL CHECKLIST FOR NEW GUARDIANS

Serving as a Volunteer Guardian can be very fulfilling, but also very overwhelming. That's why we've created this simple checklist to help remind you of your responsibilities each year. Annually, you are required to file the following reports with the Medina County Probate Court.



GUARDIAN'S REPORT

Form 17.7 is needed to track the ward's current living environment, proof of contact with your ward, and to report any **major** changes in your ward's mental or physical condition.



GUARDIANS ANNUAL PLAN

This plan, found on www.MedinaProbate.org as *form 17.8*, is used to notify the Court of any changes in providers or agencies, changes to placement, status of ward's employment or social/recreational activities, and plans to address financial needs in the coming year.



EXPERT EVALUATION

With the Guardian's Report, you must submit a statement by a licensed physician, licensed clinical psychologist, licensed social worker, or a developmental disability team, that has evaluated the ward within three months prior to the date of your annual guardian's report regarding the need for continuing the guardianship.

"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong, because someday in life you will have been all of these."

GUIDANCE FOR GUARDIANS DURING COVID-19

The National Guardianship Association, along with the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging and the National Center for State Courts, recognizes that guardians have many questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting their responsibilities. Together they have developed some answers to questions they are hearing from guardians, providing suggestions and resources to help you navigate through this pandemic.

Below are some key points we wanted to share with you as a volunteer guardian in Medina County. If you have any additional questions you would like answered or wish to seek more information, feel free to send them to info@guardianship.org.



CONTACT WITH MY WARD OR LOVED ONE

You have an ongoing duty to maintain contact with your ward, even if face-to-face visits are restricted. Nothing about the current pandemic decreases your responsibilities to oversee the well-being of those you are appointed to serve. The current conditions just make your job harder.

- The National Center for State Courts is recommending that, in addition to regular annual reports, all guardians conduct an immediate well-being assessment of each client's circumstances including the following:
- Current stability of living arrangement
- Health risks due to COVID-19 in current living arrangement, including to any caregivers
- Plans for backup guardian
- Current contact information for you, your ward, including the backup or standby guardian
- Continuing availability of necessary in-home services when applicable
- Appropriateness of current services or need for services
- Education continuity and enrichment for children with guardianships who are currently out of school

exceptions. While not mentioned specifically, the limitation applies to guardians and family members.

However, under the Federal Guidance, visits are allowed for "compassionate situations," which include but are not limited to end-of-life care. Facility decisions about these visits are to be made on a case-by-case basis, with careful screening for COVID-19 symptoms. If a state has stricter requirements for nursing homes beyond the federal guidance, such as allowing no exceptions, guardians must follow the state law.

The Federal Guidance also encourages nursing homes to facilitate contact with residents through alternative means of communication. Nursing homes "need to facilitate resident communication" with the ombudsman and other patient representatives important in safeguarding resident rights, including guardians, conservators, agents with a power of attorney, and representative payees. If a nursing home is slow to assist you, refer staff to the Federal Guidance.



ACCESS TO NURSING HOMES

According to the Federal Guidance, facilities should restrict "all visitors and non-essential health care personnel" with very limited



ACCESS TO RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS AND HOSPITALS

Unlike nursing homes, there is no federal regulation of residential housing and care settings such as adult foster homes, assisted living, group homes, or other similar models. Check with your state agency on disability, aging and/or health and human services for state-specific pandemic restrictions.

In regards to hospitals, Federal guidance by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) says hospitals

▶ should set limits on visits to patients. Hospitals should use the same screening protocol for visitors that they use for patients, such as asking about the visitor's symptoms, travel, and contact with someone with known or suspected COVID-19. Limitations may include restricting the number of visitors per patient, limiting visitors to only those who provide assistance to the patient, or limiting the visitor's movement within the facility.



PROTECTING THEIR RIGHTS & WELL-BEING

SHOULD I STOP MY CLIENT OR LOVED ONE FROM INTERACTING WITH OTHERS?

While every situation is unique, yes, if the interaction puts the individual and others at risk. This is a hard question, because your client or loved one may suffer without person-to-person contact. You can try to explain that you did not decide to enforce this separation, you are following the state's social distancing rules. Share a plain language resource such as COVID-19 Information By and For People with Disabilities from the Self-Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center (SARTAC). If your client or loved one continues to see others, or other individuals insist on visiting, consider contacting the court for an order restricting visitation.

HOW CAN I CHECK IF A RESIDENTIAL FACILITY OR A NURSING HOME IS FOLLOWING PRACTICES AND PROTOCOLS TO PROTECT MY CLIENT OR LOVED ONE?

Ask the facility to share memos or documentation on plans for preventing and controlling COVID-19. The facility should have a plan for frequent communication with residents and family about conditions and individual updates. Contact staff as often as you can. If possible, request that your client or loved one has a private place to talk to you. Ideally request video conferences so you can observe your client or loved one.

MY CLIENT OR LOVED ONE IS DEMONSTRATING ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, AND OTHER CONCERNING BEHAVIORS. WHAT CAN I DO?

If your ward receives mental health, substance abuse, or any other kind of therapy, check whether you can make a virtual appointment with their mental health treatment provider. If your ward resides in a supervised living arrangement, such as a nursing home, assisted living or other congregate setting, confirm that he or she continues to receive any previously prescribed psychotropic medications. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) offers several COVID-19 related resources.

MY CLIENT OR LOVED ONE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHY LIFE HAS CHANGED IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19. HOW CAN I EXPLAIN CURRENT EVENTS?

Consistent and clear communication is important. Try different forms of communication, including phone calls, videoconferencing, pictures, and letters. Be prepared to repeat this explanation multiple times. For a ward or loved one with dementia, see Coronavirus (COVID-19): Tips for Dementia Caregivers by the Alzheimer's Association.

DO I NEED TO HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN IF I SHOULD NEED TO SELF-QUARANTINE, BECOME ILL, OR OTHERWISE TEMPORARILY UNABLE TO CARRY OUT MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Yes, you should have in place a backup plan for who is going to take over your guardianship responsibilities if you should become unable to do so. The steps you need to take depends on your state's laws. Some states provide for the court's appointment of a "stand-by" guardian to step in when a guardian can no longer serve.
- If you don't have a plan in place and suddenly become unable to carry out your responsibilities, notify the court promptly, so the judge can order a temporary substitute.

COURT PROCEDURE DURING COVID-19

CAN I FILE A PETITION OR MOTION IN A GUARDIANSHIP CASE? IS THE COURT HOLDING HEARINGS?

Medina County Probate Court has placed a high priority on keeping the courts open for cases involving the protection of vulnerable people, including elders, children, and individuals with disabilities. You may contact the Court at any time during regular business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

SHOULD I SUBMIT A GUARDIAN REPORT IF I CANNOT VISIT MY WARD?

Medina County Probate Court continues to require well-being, accounting, and other reporting even if hearings are delayed. Even if your deadline for filing a report is extended, prepare the report to ensure you are up to date on important information and to document your contacts with your ward.

WHAT PRECAUTIONS ARE COURTS TAKING TO PROTECT US FROM BEING EXPOSED TO COVID-19 IF WE NEED TO APPEAR IN COURT?

We are using technology to conduct hearings remotely and/or enforcing social distancing and other precautions. We wipe down all high touch surfaces multiple times throughout the day, and staff members are wearing masks in all public spaces.

IS THE COURT CONTINUING TO REQUIRE THAT I MAKE FACE-TO-FACE VISITS WITH MY WARD?

Whether or not you can have face-to-face visits with your client or loved one, your duty to continue contact remains. See page __ for tips on alternate communication with your ward.

CAN I ASK FOR A COURT ORDER EXEMPTING ME FROM STATE RESTRICTIONS ON VISITS TO RESIDENTS IN AN ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY OR SIMILAR CONGREGATE SETTINGS?

You can ask for a court order, but these factors are important to consider:

- Is the court hearing non-emergency matters?
- Does the court have jurisdiction? For example, a state court may not have authority over visitation in a federally regulated facility such as a nursing home.
- Are there other ways to maintain contact? Courts may consider what alternatives forms of contact (e.g., videoconferencing, telephone, etc.) are available.

FINDING ALTERNATE MEANS OF CONTACT

If you cannot visit your client or loved one in person, you still have a duty to maintain contact and be as up to date as possible on his or her condition, needs, and concerns. Check with your court to see if it has issued any guidance for guardians on alternative means of maintaining contact.



REMOTE ACCESS TECHNOLOGY

Try phone calls, texts, video chats or email. Does the resident have access to a landline, cell phone, computer or tablet? Adjust the number and length of contacts when necessary. For example, 3-4 short phone calls may take the place of one longer in person visit.

WHAT ARE THE CONFIDENTIALITY CONCERNS IN COMMUNICATING VIA TECHNOLOGY WITH MY WARD?

Having nursing home staff help in your contact with your ward may be necessary but can compromise confidentiality. Ask for some private time to talk with your ward alone – which may or may not be possible, given hearing or vision loss, physical impairments and dementia, unfamiliarity with technology, and uneven Internet connections. It is a challenge, but making the effort to protect your client's or loved one's privacy during your communications is important.

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care (Consumer Voice) has more ideas on maintaining contact from a distance at COVID-19 and Nursing Homes, What Residents and Families Need to Know.



FACILITY STAFF & RECORDS

Talk with all facility staff with direct access to the person. Be sure to participate by phone or video in care planning meetings. Inquire frequently about COVID-19 screenings and symptoms. If facility records are available electronically, ask to review them periodically.



"THROUGH THE WINDOW"

Plan ahead with staff to arrange a meeting with the person though a window, door or other reasonable barrier. Your physical presence may provide some measure of comfort, and you will be able to at least see the individual in person.

HEALTHY COPING SKILLS FOR UNCOMFORTABLE EMOTIONS

Whether you're dealing with the loss of a loved one, having a rough day, or just trying to manage getting through quarantine, coping skills can help you get through tough times. Managing your stress well can make you feel better emotionally, physically, and psychologically, since it can impact your ability to perform your best. However, it is important to know that not all coping mechanisms are created equal. It may be tempting to immediately engage in strategies that may provide quick relief, but unfortunately those strategies may cause bigger problems for you down the road.

There are two main types of coping skills: Problem-based Coping and Emotion-based Coping. Problem-based coping skills may include activities, such as creating a to-do list, working on better time-management, establishing healthy boundaries, or simply asking for support. Emotion-based coping skills often include exercising, taking a relaxing bath, giving yourself a pep talk, or meditating. Find what works best for you! The coping strategies that work for someone else may not work for you. It is now more than ever important to recognize your mental health.

2019 GUARDIANS YEARS OF SERVICE



It takes a special person with a big heart to volunteer their time, energy, and compassion to serving vulnerable wards in our community. It doesn't matter if it's one year, or 15. We appreciate all of the heart you put into being a friend and decision-maker for others in need. Without you, we would not have a successful program or the ability to make good on our promise to protect and care for our precious elderly.

Below are the names of the amazing guardians who have volunteered their time over the years. We cannot thank you all enough!



Loretta Turk
Caroline Kassouf

Catherine Tischler
Tim Kassouf

JoAnne Guay
Sylvia Miles

Bert Guay
Todd Bauer



Joanne Dyson



Rhonda Kocinski



Michelle Schaefer



Anthony Browning



Rosie Howard



Kim Koehring



Tim Borrer
Ashley Shelton
Pat O'Sullivan



Mary Keller
Lori Miner
Mary Vantz
Cathy Poest



Theresa Laffey



Joyce Davis
Judy Lucas
Lee McGough



Linda Darling



Lin Humpal
Dawn McGough
Melanie Kasten-Krause
Susan Squire
Lori Betz

FEEL GOOD MOMENTS

Stories courtesy of GoodNewsNetwork.org



89-YEAR-OLD SEWS 600 MASKS WHILE LISTENING TO THE BEATLES

An 89-year-old grandmother who lives alone in Chicago, Illinois had been cooped up all day with her TV, computer games, and, of course, her sewing machine.

So when the world was put on lockdown, the first thing that crossed Grandma Terry's mind was the safety of her family all over the country.

After grabbing all the fabric she could, Teresa Provo sewed a mask for every single one of her 50 family members and friends—and then mailed them all over Chicago, Wisconsin, Florida, Minnesota, and California.

Each mask was personalized for each person using fabric featuring their favorite sports teams, like the Chicago Cubs or Blackhawks, and included handwritten notes of encouragement.

All the while, this elderly get-er-done force-of-nature was listening to The Beatles. "She just likes the Beatles, cause who doesn't!" her granddaughter, Amy Szabo, told GNN.

When the word got out that she was busy at work, her "Red Hat Club", a group of elders who enjoy going to local performances and events, joined her to make more masks for the nursing home residents where Terry lives—over 600 masks.

"It took us two weeks, but we get 'em done," she says. "I'm still working on some."

DO RIGHT, NO MATTER THE MOTIVATION

People want to help each other, even when it costs them something and even when the motivations to help don't always align, a new study suggests.

In research published earlier this month in the journal *Science Advances*, sociologists found that people overwhelmingly chose to be generous to others—even to strangers, and even when it seems one motivation to help might crowd out another.

It is the first study to examine how all the established motivations to be generous interact with one another.

"We wanted to do an exhaustive study to see what the effects of those motivations would be when combined—because they are combined in the real world, where people are making choices about how generous or kind to be with one another," said David Melamed, lead author of the study and an associate professor of sociology at The Ohio State University.

The study involved more than 700 people, and was designed to help researchers understand prosocial behavior.

"It means doing something for someone else at a cost to yourself," Melamed said. "So one example would be paying for the person behind you's order at the coffee shop. Or right now, wearing your mask in public. It's a cost to you; it's uncomfortable. But you contribute to the public good by wearing it and not spreading the virus."

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Spring/Summer 2020

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), honors Veterans and their eligible family members with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our nation.

VA estimates that 553,000 Veterans in the United States and Puerto Rico died in 2016. Twenty percent of U.S. Veterans chose to be buried in a national or state Veterans cemetery in FY 2016. As new national and state Veterans cemeteries open, this percentage is expected to increase.

NCA maintains approximately 3.5 million gravesites at 135 national cemeteries, one national Veterans' burial ground and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 41 states and Puerto Rico, and has provided approximately 689,587 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased Veterans in FY 2016.

Since 1973, when VA managed 82 national cemeteries, annual interments in VA national cemeteries have increased by more than 262%, from 36,400 to 131,620 in FY2016.

Local National Cemetery Locations

CONFEDERATE STOCKADE CEMETERY
Johnson's Island
Sandusky, OH 44870

WOODLAND CEMETERY SOLDIERS' LOT
6901 Woodland Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44104

OHIO WESTERN RESERVE NATIONAL CEMETERY
10175 Rawiga Road
Seville, OH 44273



ALLEGHENY CEMETERY SOLDIERS' LOT
4734 Butler Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

NATIONAL CEMETERY OF THE ALLEGHENIES
1158 Morgan Road
Bridgeville, PA 15017

CAMP CHASE CONFEDERATE CEMETERY
2900 Sullivant Avenue
Columbus, OH 43204

To view locations of all National Cemeteries in the United States, visit data.va.gov

DO RIGHT, NO MATTER THE MOTIVATION

Scientists previously had determined that four motivators influenced people to behave in a way that benefited other people.

One: The recipient of a kindness is inclined to do something nice for the giver in return. Two: A person is motivated to do something nice to someone that she saw be generous to a third person. Three: A person is likely to do good in the presence of people in their network who might reward their generosity. And four: A person is likely to “pay it forward” to someone else if someone has done something nice for her.

Those four motivators had all been studied isolated from one another, and some had been studied as a pair—but until this experiment, scientists had not conducted a comprehensive study about how the four motivators might affect one another in the real world, where the motivation to be kind to others might be influenced by multiple factors.

“In the real world, the conditions under which people are nice to each other are not isolated—people are embedded in their networks, and they’re going about their daily lives and coming into contact with things that will affect their decisions,” Melamed said.

“And these experiments show that all the motivations work. If you want to maximize prosocial behavior, it was a really great thing to see.”

For this study, which was done online,

participants had to decide how much of a 10-point endowment to give to other people. The points had monetary value to the participants; giving cost them something.

Then the researchers created different scenarios that combined one or all four of the potential motivators for giving.

Melamed said that prior to the experiment, he thought the motivations for kindness might crowd one another out. For example, a person may be less apt to indirectly reward another’s generosity toward a third person when he is focused on directly giving back help that he received.

“People have a self-bias,” he said. “If you do something nice for me, I may weigh that more than if I see you do something nice for someone else—but we found that all the motivators still show up as predictors of how much a person is willing to give to someone else, regardless of how the differing motivators are combined.”

This research helps us understand the remarkable quantity and diversity of prosocial behavior we see in humans, Melamed said.

“From an evolutionary perspective, it’s kind of perplexing that it even exists, because you’re decreasing your own

fitness on behalf of others,” Melamed said. “And yet, we see it in bees and ants, and humans and throughout all of nature.”

4 MOTIVATORS FOR KIND ACTS

- 1 The recipient of a kindness is inclined to do something nice for the giver in return.
- 2 A person is motivated to do something nice to someone that she saw be generous to a third person.
- 3 A person is likely to do good in the presence of people in their network who might reward their generosity.
- 4 A person is likely to “pay it forward” to someone else if someone has done something nice for her.

HOW TO REFER SOMEONE TO THE VOLUNTEER GUARDIANSHIP PROGRAM

If you know someone who may need a guardian, call the Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Program to discuss the need. To qualify for services from this program, an individual must be:

1. INDIGENT (MEETING MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY)
2. WITHOUT FAMILY TO PROVIDE THIS SERVICE
3. A RESIDENT OF MEDINA COUNTY

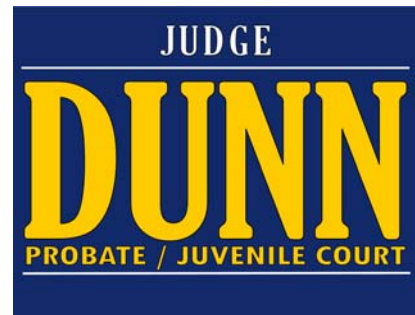
The Program Coordinator will then conduct a detailed phone assessment to determine the appropriateness of the referral. Once the eligibility has been established, program staff will complete an in-depth, onsite assessment of the individual. A physician and the Court Investigator will also examine the individual. The ultimate decision on the appropriateness of the proposed guardianship rests with the Probate Court.



Did you know that all volunteer guardians have been assigned a volunteer attorney? If you have any questions

legally that the Volunteer Guardianship Coordinator is unable to answer, a Volunteer Attorney has agreed to answer and help guide you.

When legal questions or a situation with your ward occur, please call Nicki Shook at (330) 725-9707 to find out which Volunteer Attorney has been assigned to the case.



VOLUNTEER GUARDIANSHIP BOARD MEMBERS



Nicki Shook
Medina County Probate Court

Nancy Likens
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Lin Humpal
Transitional Living Centers

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