

ABA Commission Makes State Awards For WINGS Guardianship Court-Stakeholder Partnerships

The American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging (ABA Commission) is pleased to announce eight awards of funding and technical assistance to state courts to establish or expand innovative, consensus-driven Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS).

Funding for these awards is made possible by an Administration on Community Living (ACL) Elder Justice Innovation Grant to the ABA Commission, in collaboration with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), to support multidisciplinary efforts that advance guardianship reform, address abuse, and promote less restrictive decision-making options.

By combining the efforts of all stakeholders into WINGS, states can engage in joint problem-solving and collaboratively drive changes affecting guardianship policy and practice.

Five states will receive \$20,000 to establish new WINGS partnerships, in some cases building on existing stakeholder groups:

- Alabama Administrative Office of the Courts
- Alaska Court System
- Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator
- Idaho Supreme Court
- New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts

Three states with existing WINGS will receive \$30,000 as “Focus WINGS” to enhance and expand their stakeholder group, and also to make an intensive targeted effort in one of two reform areas: (1) promotion of less restrictive options to avoid the need for guardianship, and (2) court oversight practices to address abuse, neglect and exploitation:

- Indiana Supreme Court, to focus on less restrictive options
- Oregon Judicial Department, to focus on less restrictive options
- Utah Administrative Office of the Courts, to focus on court oversight.

A total of 18 states already have WINGS or similar guardianship problem-solving groups in place. The National Guardianship Network provided WINGS awards to four states in 2013 and

five states in 2015, with funding from the State Justice Institute, the Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging, and additional sources. Eight states convened ongoing groups of guardianship stakeholders on their own. In May 2017, Montana became the first state to legislatively create and fund a WINGS group, with members to be appointed by the state chief justice.

State WINGS groups bring together stakeholders from judicial, legal, aging, disability, health and mental health, and guardianship entities to find solutions for “on the ground” guardianship problems, foster education and training, and change practices that touch lives. WINGS groups forge communication paths among stakeholders, reducing silos among entities serving the same populations and opening doorways to communication.

Under the ACL Elder Justice Innovation Grant, the ABA Commission and NCSC will provide the WINGS grant recipients with technical assistance and support on strategic planning, data collection and outcome measurement, key areas of reform – and will facilitate cross-state exchanges of information on promising practices and lessons learned. The project will test WINGS as a replicable model for making improvements in guardianship, avoiding over-broad or unnecessary guardianship, and addressing abuses.

For more information on the new WINGS awards and on WINGS activities and resources, see the ABA Commission’s webpage on WINGS Court-Stakeholder Partnerships at <http://ambar.org/wings>.