



NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM GUARDIAN ASSISTANCE OFFICE



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About The Guardian Assistance Office

The **Guardian Assistance Office (GAO)** within the **Office for Justice Initiatives**, is a statewide, specialized court help center for persons appointed by the Supreme Court under Mental Hygiene Law (MHL) Article 81 as guardians of a family member or friend who has been declared incapacitated or consents to the appointment of a guardian. They are commonly referred to as “*lay guardians*”. GAO offers training, support, educational materials, court forms, and practical (not legal) advice to assist lay guardians in carrying out their duties and obligations required under the law.

GAO Services

The Guardian Assistance Office (GAO) provides statewide support to court-appointed lay guardians to help them understand and fulfill their responsibilities.

Our services include:

Training and Educational Opportunities

- **The Mandatory MHL Article 81 training.** This online course teaches you about your responsibilities as a guardian appointed under Article 81 of the Mental Hygiene Law. When you complete the training, you will get a certificate of completion.
- **Clear explanations of a guardian’s duties** under the Order and Judgment of Appointment, including marshaling (or collecting) income and assets, record-keeping, meeting deadlines, determining when court authorization is required, and planning for funeral and burial arrangements.
- **Workshops and presentations** on topics related to guardianship duties, including report preparation, medical insurance, home care, and more.

Guidance and Advice

- **Guidance with the first steps** after you are appointed guardian, including how to:
 - File an Oath and Designation
 - Obtain a Guardianship Commission
 - Obtain a bond

- Practical non-legal advice for **how to communicate with third parties when issues arise** related to a guardian's authority. Third parties may include:
 - Banks
 - Government agencies
 - Bonding companies
 - Health care providers
- Guidance on how to **ask the Court for approvals or changes** to Orders and Judgments.

Direct Support with Preparing and Submitting Court Papers

- Assistance with preparing and drafting **required guardianship reports**.
- Coordination with court examiners, judges, court attorneys, and other court personnel to support **compliance with reporting and legal requirements**.
- **Support with ending a guardianship**, including help preparing and submitting required closing forms and documents. This support is typically needed when the incapacitated person has died.

Court Forms and Resources

- **Providing court forms and instructions for various motions**, including motions to relocate an incapacitated person to a nursing home or out of state.
- **A website** offering a Guide to Guardianship, educational materials, sample report forms for various counties, a list of medical terms, and information on benefits and resources for older adults and individuals with disabilities.