

STATE OF TEXAS

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COUNTY OF GALVESTON

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**Agreement by and between Galveston County and Friends for Life
for Guardianship Services**

Article I. Parties

This Agreement by and between Galveston County and Friends for Life for Guardianship Services (Agreement) is entered into by and between the County of Galveston (County) and Friends for Life (Contractor), each of whom is a Party hereto and who are collectively referred to herein as the Parties.

Article II. Preamble

1. The County is a political subdivision of the State of Texas and is acting by, under, and through its governing body, the Commissioners Court of Galveston County, Texas;
2. The County conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP), **RFP #25-057**, entitled Galveston County Guardianship Program, in compliance with the County Purchasing Act, codified as Subchapter C of Chapter 262 of the Texas Local Government Code, seeking a vendor to provide guardianship and related services for Galveston County;
3. Contractor herein submitted a proposal in response to **RFP #25-057**. Subsequent to opening in **RFP #25-057**, the Commissioners Court authorized negotiations with Contractor on or about October 13, 2025;
4. The County has complied with all competitive procurement requirements established by law;
5. The County is authorized to fund a guardianship program in accordance with State law, including without limitation, Tex. Gov't Code § 155.001, 155.105, and/or Tex. Est. Code §§ 1002.016, 1155.002, 1155.052, 1155.054, 1155.101, and/or 1155.151;
6. A guardianship program is eligible for appointment as a guardian in a guardianship proceeding in accordance with State law, including without limitation, Tex. Est. Code § 1002.012, 1002.016, 1101.001, 1104.251, 1104.254, 1104.255, 1104.301, 1104.359, and/or 1105.107, and/or Tex. Gov't Code §§ 155.001, 155.101, 155.102, 155.106, and/or 155.153;
7. The Statutory Probate Court of Galveston County, Texas (Probate Court), is obligated to appoint guardians for residents of Galveston County who are incapacitated under State law and when there are no relatives or friends of such incapacitated persons who are willing and qualified to serve as guardians, the Probate Court may appoint a guardianship program as guardian;

8. County and Contractor wish to enter into a contract for the provision of guardianship and related services to incapacitated persons or other persons who need assistance in making decisions concerning the respective persons' own welfare or financial affairs in the Guardianship Program, with such services and eligibility to be in compliance with requirements of State and Federal law, rule, or regulation, which include, inter alia, the Estates Code, Chapter 155 of the Government Code, any applicable order of the Statutory Probate Court of Galveston County, Texas, and any applicable rules and/or standards of the Guardianship Certification Board or the Texas Supreme Court; and
9. The establishment and continued funding and operation of the Guardianship Program and the performance of the services pursuant to this Agreement for such program serve a public purpose.

Now therefore, for and in consideration of the covenants and agreements contained herein, the Parties agree as follows:

Article III. Terms and Conditions

1. Scope of Services.

- a. Guardianship Services. Contractor shall provide guardianship and related services to incapacitated persons in Galveston County or other persons in Galveston County who need assistance in making decisions concerning the respective persons' own welfare or financial affairs (collectively, Guardianship Services) in accordance with requirements of State and Federal law, as described in **RFP #25-057**, as described in Contractor's response to **RFP #25-057** (i.e., Proposal), and as described in this Agreement. Thus, for purposes of this Agreement, Guardianship Services include serving as guardian with limited or full authority over a ward, depending upon the extent of incapacity and in accordance with the order of the Probate Court, for an indefinite term, and providing representative payee services for individuals in Galveston County, Texas. Contractor's Guardianship Services shall comply with all applicable statutes, rules, and standards of practice. Such statutes, rules, and standards include, but are not limited to:

Texas Estates Code, as applicable;
Texas Government Code, Chapter 155, as applicable;
Rules, standards, and/or requirements of the Texas Judicial Branch Certification Commission;
Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services adopted by Order of the Texas Supreme Court, August 27, 2021; and
Texas Supreme Court Rules Governing Guardianship Certification.

A copy of the Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services adopted by Order of the Texas Supreme Court on August 27, 2021, is attached hereto as **Exhibit No. 1** and is incorporated herein for all purposes.

The Texas Judicial Branch Certification Commission Rules are accessible online at <http://www.txcourts.gov/jbcc/jbcc-statutes-rules-policies/#JbccRules>. The Texas Judicial Branch Certification Commission Rules, Section 7 are available online at <http://www.txcourts.gov/jbcc/jbcc-statutes-rules-policies/#Sec7.0>.

Contractor acknowledges and agrees and shall comply with all applicable laws, orders, rules, and standards as such exist now and as they may be amended in the future.

The Contractor shall complete and file in a timely manner any reports, records, or documentation required by the County and/or the Probate Court.

- b. Persons served. Contractor shall provide Guardianship Services to serve up to 200 wards and representative payee clients in Galveston County.
- c. Certification required for performing services as guardian. Contractor acknowledges and agrees that the Guardian Program may be appointed as the Guardian in a guardianship proceeding in accordance with State law. Contractor further acknowledges and agrees that it shall only utilize employees with the certification required by the Texas Supreme Court, the Estates Code, and the Texas Judicial Branch Certification Commission to perform guardian services for a ward.
- d. Notification of Appointment as Guardian. Contractor shall provide notification to the Legal Services Manager of each prospective guardianship prior to accepting the appointment as guardian. Such notification shall include providing the Legal Services Manager with a copy of the application for guardianship or other filings with the Probate Court antecedent to such appointment. Contractor shall provide the Legal Services Manager with a copy of each letters of appointment issued by the Probate Court. Additionally, subsequent to this Agreement, in the event the Probate Court issues new letters of appointment for all wards presently served through the Guardian Program, then Contractor shall provide the Legal Services Manager with a copy of the letters of appointment. Contractor shall also notify the Legal Services Manager in the event of the death of a ward. Friends for Life shall also serve as the designated agent for the disposition of deceased wards under its guardianship, in accordance with the 'Designation of Friends for Life as Responsible Agent for Disposition of Deceased Wards,' attached hereto as **Exhibit No. 2** and incorporated herein for all purposes.

2. **Representations.** Contractor represents and warrants that:

- a. Contractor shall not use subcontractors to perform any services under this Agreement unless and until it has obtained the written consent of the County, acting by and through its Commissioners Court, to do so;
- b. Contractor is duly registered with and in good standing with the Secretary of State of the State of Texas and is authorized to conduct business in the State of Texas;

- c. Contractor has received all required approvals to execute and deliver this Agreement and the individual executing this Agreement on behalf of the Contractor has the full power and authority to do so and to bind the Contractor to the terms of this Agreement and this Agreement constitutes a legal, valid, and binding obligation of the Contractor;
- d. Neither Contractor nor any firm, corporation, or institution represented by Contractor, or anyone acting for the Contractor has: (1) has violated the antitrust laws of the State of Texas, Chapter 15, Texas Business and Commerce Code, or federal antitrust laws; or (2) has communicated directly or indirectly the content of Contractor's response to the RFP to any competitor or any other person engaged in a similar line of business during the procurement of this Agreement;
- e. Contractor has the skills, qualifications, financial resources, and experience necessary to timely perform the services described in the RFP (including all addenda), the proposal, and this Agreement, and has performed similar services for other public and other private entities;
- f. Contractor shall maintain properly trained, certified, and experienced personnel to ensure satisfactory performance under this Agreement;
- g. Contractor shall perform all services described in RFP #25-057, Contractor's response (i.e., proposal), and this Agreement. Contractor shall use its best efforts to perform the services in accordance with the highest standards of Contractor's profession or business, and all services shall be performed with the quality prevailing among similar businesses of superior skill engaged in providing similar services under the same or similar circumstances. Contractor's services shall be accurate. Contractor acknowledges that the County is at all times is relying upon Contractor's skill and knowledge in performing the services; and
- h. Neither the execution of this Agreement nor the performance of Contractor's services under this Agreement will (1) result in the violation of any provision, if a limited liability company, of its articles of organization or regulations; (2) result in the violation of any provision of any agreement by which Contractor is bound; or (3) to the best of Contractor's knowledge and belief, conflict with any order or decree of any court or other body or authority having jurisdiction.

3. **Compensation and Records.**

a. Compensation.

- 1.) **Monthly Invoicing.** Contractor shall submit invoices with supporting documentation in a timely manner to the Legal Services Manager, at 722 Moody, 2nd Floor, Galveston, Texas 77550. Contractor shall submit invoices on a monthly basis, following the close of month during which services were performed. All invoicing shall be based on actual services

performed. Supporting documentation shall, list each individual served and whether services performed for such individual by Contractor were as a guardian or as a representative payee. In the event of the death of any individual served or of the restoration of capacity in the event of a ward, Contractor shall also include such information in the supporting documentation. The County shall make payment in accordance with Chapter 2251 of the Government Code, which is known as the Texas Prompt Pay Act.

- 2.) Payment. Subsequent to receipt of invoice, the County shall pay Contractor for Guardianship Services actually performed, and/or money management services actually performed subsequent to Probate Court and/or Adult Protective Services request, based on the number of individuals served (individuals served includes wards and individuals for whom Contractor serves as representative payee) in accordance with the Texas Prompt Pay Act and as follows:

Individuals Served	Cost
1 - 75	\$\$\$300.00 per month per individual served
76 - 125	\$\$\$275.00 per month per individual served

Additionally, Contractor as the Guardian appointed by the Probate Court is authorized to receive a percentage on certain transactions for estates of wards in accordance with the Estates Code and the power of the Probate Court. Contractor is authorized to retain such potential revenue. Contractor shall keep and retain detailed records showing its expenses and revenues, and shall allow representatives of the County access to such records. In the event of the death of a ward served under this Agreement, the Contractor may continue to bill for the period of time that services are necessary in accordance with the Estates Code following the death of a ward.

- 3.) Verification of Invoice. Galveston County Contract Services, as well as the Galveston County Auditor's Office, shall have the right to verify details set forth in Contractor's submitted claims and supporting documentation. Representative(s) from the Galveston County Contract Services, as well as the Galveston County Auditor's Office, shall have the right to inspect Contractor's books and records for this purpose at reasonable times during business hours of the County. In the event, the County disputes all or a portion of Contractor's invoice, the County shall timely notify the Contractor of the dispute. Any disputed amounts will be negotiated in good faith and in accordance with requirements of the Texas Prompt Pay Act.

- b. Records Retention and Right to Audit. Contractor shall keep and maintain all records associated with this Agreement for a minimum of five (5) years from the creation and use of such records, or as required by Federal or State law, including without limitation schedules promulgated by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission,

whichever period is longer. Contractor shall allow the County reasonable access to the records in Contractor's possession, custody, or control that the County deems necessary to assist it in auditing the services, costs, and/or payments provided hereunder.

- c. Annual Reporting. Contractor shall provide the Legal Services Manager with an annual report detailing the revenues and expenditures for all services performed and monies received for the services provided hereunder. If the Contractor has an external audit performed, it shall provide the Legal Services Manager with a copy of such external audit report no later than thirty (30) calendar days after Contractor's receipt of the external audit report.
- d. Nondisclosure/Confidentiality.
 - 1.) Access to Confidential Information. Contractor acknowledges and agrees that in the course of the performance of its services hereunder, Contractor may have access to information protected by State and/or Federal laws, rules, and/or regulations that protect the privacy interests of individuals receiving services from Contractor pursuant to this Agreement. Contractor shall safeguard and maintain the confidentiality of such information. Such confidentiality laws include, but are not limited to, provisions from the Texas Occupations Code (including without limitation, the Medical Practice Act), the federal Privacy Act, the federal Privacy Rule, the Transportation Code, the Health and Safety Code, the Family Code, and/or the Government Code.
 - 2.) Nondisclosure:
 - a.) Contractor shall not disclose, release, or otherwise share confidential information except as required by law and with other County employees and/or officials on a strict need-to-know basis for the performance of services under this Agreement.
 - b.) Contractor's impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing of confidential information, or misuse of confidential information shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement.
 - c.) Further, Contractor acknowledges and agrees that such impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing of confidential information or misuse of confidential information may constitute a criminal offense in accordance with State and/or Federal law.
 - d.) Contractor shall immediately notify the County, through notification to the County's Legal Services Manager, of any breach in the security of confidential information accessed and/or maintained by Contractor, or of the impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing of such

information, or of the misuse of such information. Immediate notification is necessary to facilitate swift corrective action and notification to any person to whom the confidential information relates. The County's Legal Services Manager shall provide their County phone number to the Contractor's designated person for this purpose. The County's Legal Services Manager shall then notify the General Counsel of Galveston County of the notice of security breach, impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing of such information, and/or misuse of such information. Contractor shall follow-up by providing written notice of the security breach, impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing of confidential information, or of the misuse of confidential information, no later than the close of business on the business day in which the security breach, impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing, or misuse occurred (or when the Contractor became aware of the breach/disclosure/release/ sharing/misuse if different). Provided however, that if the security breach, impermissible disclosure, release, or other sharing, or misuse did not occur on a business day, then Contractor shall follow-up by providing written notice no later than the close of business of the immediately following business day after the day of the security breach, impermissible disclosure, release or other sharing, or misuse of confidential information. For purposes of this Agreement, a business day means any Monday through Friday in which the County is open for business. Such written notice shall be provided to the Legal Services Manager.

4. Term and Termination.

a. Term.

- 1.) Primary Term. This Agreement shall be effective beginning on October 1, 2025, and it shall remain continuously in effect thereafter through midnight of September 30, 2027, unless terminated earlier as provided herein.
- 2.) Option to Renew. This Agreement will automatically renew for a maximum of two (2) one (1) year terms after the Primary Term. In no event shall the total term of this Agreement, including any renewals as a result of exercising this option, exceed a total of four (4) years.

b. Termination.

- 1.) Termination for convenience. County may terminate this Agreement with or without cause or for convenience upon providing at least thirty (30) calendar days prior written notice to Contractor.
- 2.) Termination for cause. A Party may terminate this Agreement upon default by the other Party. Default by a Party shall occur if the Party fails to perform

its obligation(s) under this Agreement. Termination for cause hereunder may be issued effective immediately. Provided however, that the Party against whom the default occurred, at its sole option, may afford a cure period to the defaulting Party and if the defaulting Party cures the default within the cure period, then the termination shall be ineffective; or such termination may be stayed, at the sole option of the Party against whom the default occurred, pending cure of the default.

- 3.) No liability for early termination. In the event of early termination of this Agreement, the County, its agents or representatives shall not be liable for loss of any profits anticipated to be made by Contractor. Provided however, that Contractor shall be entitled to equitable and reasonable compensation for services performed and expenses incurred through the effective date of termination.
- 4.) Non-waiver. The waiver by a Party of a breach or violation of any provision of this Agreement shall not operate as, or be construed to be, a waiver of any subsequent breach or violation of the same or another provision herein. Failure of a Party to insist upon the strict performance of any of the provisions herein or to exercise any right or remedy accruing hereunder or failure of performance shall not be construed as a waiver of the right to insist on, and to enforce by any appropriate remedy, strict compliance with any other obligation hereunder or to exercise any other right or remedy occurring as a result of any future default or failure of performance.

5. Designated Contact Persons and Notice.

a. Designated Contact Persons.

County's Designated Contact Person. The County's Designated Contact Person with authority for administering this Agreement is the Legal Services Manager. Such position is presently held by Veronica Van Horn. Mrs. Van Horn's contact information is as follows:

Email Address:	veronica.vanhorn@co.galveston.tx.us
Work Phone:	(409) 770-5562
Work Address:	722 Moody, 2 nd Floor Galveston, Texas 77550

Contractor's Designated Contact Person. Contractor's Designated Contact Person with authority for administering this Agreement is its Executive Director, Inez Russell. Ms. Russell's contact information is as follows:

Email Address:	Inez@friendsforlife.org
Work Phone:	(254) 749-3000
Work Address:	5000 Lakewood

Waco, Texas 76710

- b. Notice. Any notice required or permitted under this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be delivered in person, or mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested with proper postage affixed, or may be transmitted by email transmission, to the addresses/email address listed herein. If mailed, the notice shall be deemed delivered when actually received, or if earlier, on the third day following deposit in a United States Postal Service post office or receptacle, duly certified, return receipt requested, with proper postage affixed. If delivered in person, notice shall be deemed delivered when receipted for by, or actually received by, the receiving Party. If transmitted by email, notice shall be deemed delivered when transmitted, provided that the transmission occurs during a day and time that the County is open for business. Any notice sent via email at a time that the County is not open for business (i.e., after business hours or on a day when the County is closed) shall be deemed delivered on the immediately following business day that the County is open for business. The County's business hours are generally Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (unless the County is closed in observance of a holiday or for some other reason).

To County:

Attn: Mark Henry,
County Judge of Galveston County, Texas
722 Moody Ave., 2nd Floor
Galveston, Texas 77550
Email: mark.henry@co.galveston.tx.us

With a copy to:

Attn:	Veronica Van Horn
Francisco Rodriguez,	Legal Services Manager
Purchasing Agent	722 Moody Ave., 2 nd Floor
722 Moody, 5th Floor	Galveston, Texas 77550
Galveston, Texas 77550	Email: veronica.vanhorn@co.galveston.tx.us
Email: francisco.rodriquez@galvestoncountytexas.gov	

To Contractor:

Attn: Inez Russell, Executive Director
Friends for Life
P.O. Box 23491
Waco, Texas 76702
Email: Inez@friendsforlife.org

- c. Notice in event of evacuation. In the event the County declares a disaster under Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code and a mandatory evacuation or voluntary

evacuation is issued by the County or any municipality within the County, Contractor shall provide notice to the Legal Services Manager of the names and phone numbers of its officers or employees to contact during continuation of the disaster and during recovery after the disaster. For purposes of this section, notice may be provided by electronic mail. The email address for Mrs. Van Horn is veronica.vanhorn@co.galveston.tx.us. Contractor shall provide its emergency contact information no later than fourteen (14) calendar days after the full execution of this Agreement; absent such occurring, Contractor's emergency contact information shall be with Inez Russell, at Inez@friendsforlife.org. The Legal Services Manager shall thereafter enter such information into the emergency notification system for furtherance of emergency planning and preparedness.

6. **Indemnification and Hold Harmless.** Contractor assumes all risks and responsibility for, and agrees to indemnify, defend, and save harmless, the County, its elected and appointed officials and department heads, agents, representatives, and employees from and against any and all claims, demands, suits, actions, recoveries, judgments, and costs and expenses including reasonable attorney's fees for the defense thereof in connection therewith on account of the loss of life, property or injury or damage to the person arising out of or occasioned by Contractor's operations under this Agreement, its use of County facilities and/or equipment, and/or from any other breach on the part of the Contractor, its employees, agents or assigns. Contractor shall pay any judgment with cost, which may be obtained against the County resulting from Contractor's operations under this Agreement.

Article IV. Non-Discrimination, Drug-Free Workplace, ADA, and Other Terms

1. **Section 231.006, Family Code/Delinquent Child Support.** Pursuant to Title 5, Section 231.006 of the Texas Family Code, as applicable, Contractor certifies that it, including all of its principals, is/are current in child support payments and therefore, that it is eligible to receive payments from State funds under a contract for property, materials, or services. Contractor acknowledges and agrees that this Agreement may be terminated and payment withheld if this certification is inaccurate. Finally, Contractor certifies that it has included the names and social security numbers of each person with at least 25% ownership interest in Contractor within its response to the RFP and that all such persons are current in child support payments.
2. **Equal Employment Opportunity.** Contractor agrees that it shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment; upgrading; demotion or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Contractor agrees to post notices, which set forth the provisions of this non-discrimination section, in conspicuous places available to employees

or applicants for employment. Contractor will, in all solicitation or advertisements for employees placed by or on behalf of Contractor, state that all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Contractor shall include the provisions herein in all subcontracts for any work to be performed under this Agreement, if any.

3. **Drug-Free Workplace.** Respondent shall comply with the applicable provisions of the Drug-Free Work Place Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-690, Title V, Subtitle D; 41 U.S.C. § 8102, et seq.) and implementing regulations thereunder and maintain a drug-free work environment.
4. **Americans with Disabilities Act.** Contractor shall comply with all applicable terms, conditions, and requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-136) and implementing regulations thereunder.
5. **Nondiscrimination.** Contractor acknowledges and agrees that neither it nor its subcontractors shall discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Respondent and its subcontractors shall comply with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination. These laws include, but are not limited to:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 503
The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504
The Age Discrimination Act of 1975
The Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972
The Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988

6. **Certification Regarding Lobbying.** Contractor certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief, that:
 - a. No federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the Respondent, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence a department or employee of an agency, a member of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any federal contract, the making of any federal grant, the making of any federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
 - b. If any funds other than federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence a department or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, a department or employee of congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the Contractor shall complete and submit Standard Form LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying", in accordance with its instructions.

- c. Contractor shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.
- 7. **Antitrust.** Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1, et seq., and Texas Business and Commerce Code, Chapter 15, Contractor certifies that neither Contractor nor any natural person, proprietorship, firm, corporation, partnership, association, or institution represented by Contractor or anyone acting for such natural person, proprietorship, firm, corporation, partnership, association, or institution has violated any Federal or State antitrust laws or communicated the nature of the offer, directly or indirectly, to any competitor or other person engaged in a similar line of business.
- 8. **Non-Collusion.** Contractor acknowledges and agrees that collusion is prohibited and is grounds for termination of this Agreement by the County. Contractor acknowledges and agrees that it has not engaged in collusion in the procurement of this Agreement. Contractor has executed the Non-Collusion Affidavit, which is attached hereto as Exhibit No. 3 and incorporated herein for all purposes.
- 9. **Title VI Assurances/TxDOT.** The County is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Federal and State laws and regulations of the United States Department of Transportation and TxDOT. Pursuant to these requirements, the County must have its contractors provide required assurances on compliance with non-discrimination by itself and its subcontractors. The Title VI Assurances within this Subsection are not exhaustive – whenever any Federal, State, or Local requirement requires additional clauses, this list shall not be construed as limiting. Contractor agrees as follows:
 - (1) **Compliance with Regulations.** The Contractor shall comply with the Regulations relative to nondiscrimination in Federally-assisted programs of the Department of Transportation (hereinafter, DOT) Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 21, as they may be amended from time to time (hereinafter referred to as the Regulations), which are incorporated herein by reference and made a part of this contract.
 - (2) **Nondiscrimination.** The Contractor, with regard to the work performed by it during the contract, shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability or Veteran status in the selection and retention of subcontractors, including procurements of materials and leases of equipment. The Contractor shall not participate either directly or indirectly in the discrimination prohibited by Section 21.5 of the Regulations, including employment practices when the contract covers a program set forth in Appendix B of the Regulations.
 - (3) **Solicitations for Subcontractors, Including Procurement of Materials and Equipment.** In all solicitations either by competitive bidding or negotiation made by the Contractor for work to be performed under a subcontract, including procurement of materials or leases of equipment, each potential subcontractor or supplier shall be notified by the Contractor of the Contractor's obligations under this contract and the

Regulations relative to nondiscrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability or Veteran status.

- (4) **Information and Reports.** The Contractor shall provide all information and reports required by the Regulations or directives issued pursuant thereto, and shall permit access to its books, records, accounts, other sources of information and its facilities as may be determined by the Galveston County or the Texas Department of Transportation to be pertinent to ascertain compliance with such Regulations, orders and instructions. Where any information required of the Contractor is in the exclusive possession of another who fails or refuses to furnish this information the Contractor shall so certify to Galveston County or the Texas Department of Transportation as appropriate, and shall set forth what efforts it has made to obtain the information.
- (5) **Sanctions for Noncompliance.** In the event of the Contractor's noncompliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of this contract, Galveston County shall impose such contract sanctions as it or the Texas Department of Transportation may determine to be appropriate, including, but not limited to:
 - (a) withholding of payments to the Contractor under the contract until the Contractor complies, and/or
 - (b) cancellation, termination, or suspension of the contract, in whole or in part.
- (6) **Incorporation of Provisions.** The Contractor shall include the provisions of paragraphs (1) through (6) in every subcontract, including procurement of materials and leases of equipment, unless exempt by the Regulations, or directives issued pursuant thereto. The Contractor shall take such action with respect to any subcontract or procurement as Galveston County or the Texas Department of Transportation may direct as a means of enforcing such provisions including sanctions for non-compliance: Provided, however, that, in the event Contractor becomes involved in, or is threatened with, litigation with a subcontractor or supplier as a result of such direction, the Contractor may request Galveston County to enter into such litigation to protect the interests of Galveston County, and, in addition, the Contractor may request the United States to enter into such litigation to protect the interests of the United States.

Article V. General Terms

1. **Incorporation of Request for Proposal.** RFP # 25-057, including all addenda thereto, if any, is hereby incorporated into this Agreement for all purposes. Contractor's response to RFP # 25-057, its Proposal and any modifications made incidental with negotiations, are hereby incorporated into this Agreement for all purposes. In the event of any conflict between the terms of RFP # 25-057 and the Contractor's response, the terms of RFP # 25-057 shall control. In the event of any conflict between any of the foregoing documents and this Agreement, the terms of this Agreement shall control.

2. **Entirety of Agreement.** This Agreement contains the entire agreement of the Parties. Any prior agreement, promise, negotiation, or representation not expressly set forth in this Agreement has no force or effect.
3. **Amendment.** This Agreement may be amended only by written instrument duly authorized by each Party hereto and duly executed by each respective Party hereto.
4. **Independent Contractor.** None of the provisions of this Agreement create, are intended to create, nor shall be deemed or construed to create, any relationship between the County and Contractor other than that of independent entities contracting with each other solely for the purpose of effecting the provisions of this Agreement. In the performance of work, duties and obligations under this Agreement, the Contractor is at all times acting and performing as an independent contractor with complete control over the means, manner, and method by which services are rendered. The Contractor is not an agent or employee of the County for any purpose. The Contractor, its agents, employees or representatives may not speak/act on behalf of the Program. The Contractor and Contractor's employees are not eligible for, nor will be permitted to participate in, any employee benefit plans, which are normally provided to employees of the County, including vacation and sick leave, retirement plans, disability and worker's compensation. County assumes no liability to any third party for any actions, inactions or deeds taken in the performance of services by the Contractor, its agents, employees or representatives.
5. **Employment Taxes.** Contractor is an independent contractor and is solely responsible for all IRS tax reporting and quarterly payments of estimated tax, FICA payments, and any other tax withholding required by the State or Federal governments.
6. **Compliance with Immigration Laws and use of E-Verify.** Contractor agrees to comply with all requirements of the U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, as amended, and any implementing regulations thereto. Contractor further agrees to utilize the E-Verify system through the Department of Homeland Security on its employees. Contractor shall not employ unauthorized aliens, and shall not assign services to be performed to any supplier or subcontractor who are unauthorized aliens. If any personnel performing any services hereunder are discovered to be an unauthorized alien, then Contractor will immediately remove such personnel from performing services hereunder and shall replace such personnel with personnel who are not unauthorized alien(s).
7. **Subject to Availability of Funds and Subject to Grant Funding.**
 - a. Contractor acknowledges and agrees that this Agreement does not create a debt against the County and that this Agreement is subject to the appropriation of funds by the Commissioners Court, and that this Agreement does not constitute an obligation for such appropriation.
 - b. If this Agreement is subject to grant funding, then Contractor acknowledges and agrees that the obligations of the County hereunder are contingent upon the continued availability of grant funding to meet the County's obligations. If the grant to the County is reduced,

de-obligated, or otherwise discontinued or terminated, the Contractor acknowledges and agrees that the County may immediately terminate this Agreement without penalty or any liability whatsoever on the part of the County, the State, or the respective granting entity.

8. **Covenant against Contingent Fees.** Contractor warrants that no person(s) or selling agency has been employed or retained to solicit or secure this Agreement upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage, or contingent fee, excepting bona fide employees or bona fide established commercial selling agencies maintained by the Contractor for the purpose of securing business. A breach or violation of this warranty constitutes a material default under this Agreement. For such default, the County shall have the right to immediately terminate this Agreement, or in its discretion to deduct from the price for consideration, or otherwise recover the full amount of such commission, percentage, brokerage, or contingent fee.
9. **Prohibition on Subcontracting or Assignment.** Contractor shall not assign, sell, or otherwise transfer this Agreement, in whole or in part, without the prior written permission of the County acting by and through its Commissioners Court. Such consent, if granted, shall not relieve the Contractor of any of its responsibilities under this Agreement. Failure to comply with this term shall be a material default under this Agreement and grounds for immediate termination of this Agreement.
10. **Change of Name or Ownership.** Contractor is responsible for the performance of this Agreement. In the event of any change of name or ownership, the County Purchasing Agent shall be notified immediately. No change in the obligation of the Contractor will be recognized unless and until such change is approved by Commissioners' Court.
11. **Force Majeure.** In the event that the performance by the County of any of its obligations or undertakings hereunder shall be interrupted or delayed by any occurrence not occasioned by its own conduct, whether such occurrence by an act of God or the common enemy or the result of war, riot, civil commotion, sovereign conduct, or the act or conduct of any person or persons not a party or privy hereto, then it shall be excused from such performance for such period of time as is reasonably necessary after such occurrence to remedy the effects thereof.
12. **Severability.** If a provision contained in this Agreement is held invalid for any reason, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions of the Agreement that may be given effect without the invalid provision, and to this end, the provisions of this Agreement are severable.
13. **Validity/Enforceability.** If any current or future legal limitations affect the validity or enforceability of a provision of this Agreement, then the legal limitations are made a part of this Agreement and shall operate to amend this Agreement to the minimum extent necessary to bring this Agreement into conformity with the requirements of the limitation, and as so modified, this Agreement shall continue in full force and effect.
14. **Governing Law and Venue.** This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Texas and venue shall lie exclusively in Galveston County, Texas. The Parties agree that all obligations under this Agreement are performable in Galveston County, Texas and that this

Agreement has been executed in Galveston County, Texas. Venue shall lie exclusively in Galveston County, Texas, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

15. **No Third Party Beneficiary.** This Agreement inures only to the benefit of Galveston County and Contractor. This Agreement does not create, is not intended to create, and shall not be deemed or construed to create, any rights in third parties.
16. **Authority to Bind.** Each Party represents and warrants for itself that the individual executing this Agreement on its behalf has the full power and authority to do so and to legally bind the Party to all the terms and provisions of this Agreement and that this Agreement constitutes the legal, valid, and binding agreement of each Party hereto.
17. **Immunity Retained.** The County does not waive or relinquish any immunity or defense on behalf of itself, its trustees, officer, employees, and agents as a result of its execution of this Agreement and performance of the covenants contained herein. The County specifically reserves any claim it may have to sovereign, qualified, or official immunity as a defense to any action arising in conjunction with this Agreement.
18. **Public Information Act.** The Parties agree that the County is a governmental body for purposes of the Public Information Act, codified as Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code, and as such is required to release information in accordance with the Public Information Act.
19. **Email addresses.** Contractor consents to the disclosure of its' electronic mail (email) addresses that are provided or disclosed to the County.
20. **Meaning of Words.** Except as provided otherwise, words shall be given their ordinary meaning. If a word is connected with and used with reference to a particular trade or subject matter or is used as a word of art, the word shall have the meaning given by experts in the particular trade, subject matter, or art. Words in the present or past tense include the future tense. The singular includes the plural and the plural includes the singular unless expressly provided otherwise.
21. **Headings.** The headings at the beginning of the various provisions of this Agreement have been included only in order to make it easier to locate the subject covered by each provision and are not to be used in construing this Agreement.
22. **Exhibits Follow.** The following Exhibits follow this Page 16 of the Agreement, and all such Exhibits have heretofore been incorporated herein for all purposes and thus are part of this Agreement:

Exhibit No. 1: Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services adopted by Order of the Texas Supreme Court on August 27, 2021.

Exhibit No. 2: Designation of Friends for Life as Responsible Agent for Disposition of Deceased Wards.

This Agreement is hereby **EXECUTED** by the Parties hereto, each respective Party acting by and through its duly authorized official as required by law to be effective on the date specified herein.

Galveston County,

By:


Mark Henry, County Judge

Contractor: Friends for Life

By:


Inez Russell, Executive Director,

Date Signed:

December 8th, 2025

Date Signed:

11/19/25



ATTEST:


Dwight D. Sullivan, Galveston County Clerk

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

Misc. Docket No. 21-9098

ORDER APPROVING AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES AND FEES OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH CERTIFICATION COMMISSION AND TO THE CODE OF ETHICS AND MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES

ORDERED that:

1. The Supreme Court of Texas approves the following amendments to the rules and fees of the Judicial Branch Certification Commission and to the Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services (“Code”).

2. The rule amendments incorporate changes to comply with the Act of May 31, 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., ch. 934 (HB 3774); Act of May 24, 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., ch. 382 (SB 1129); Act of May 5, 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., ch. 46 (HB 139).

3. The rule, fee, and Code amendments take effect September 1, 2021.

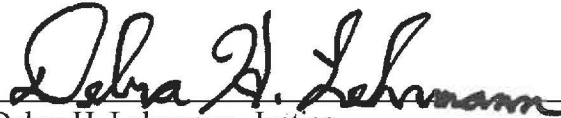
4. The Clerk of the Supreme Court is directed to:

- a. file a copy of this order with the Secretary of State;
- b. cause a copy of this order to be mailed to each registered member of the State Bar of Texas by publication in the *Texas Bar Journal*;
- c. send a copy of this order to each elected member of the Legislature; and
- d. submit a copy of the order for publication in the *Texas Register*.

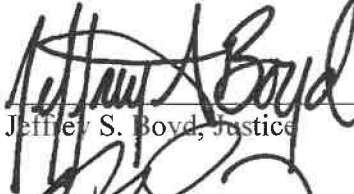
Dated: August 27, 2021



Nathan L. Hecht, Chief Justice



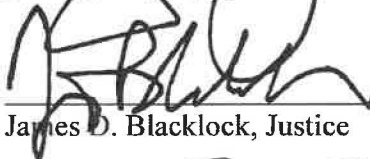
Debra H. Lehrmann, Justice



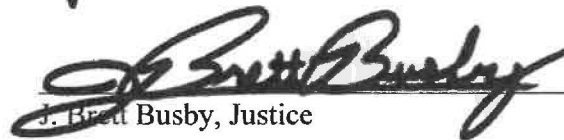
Jeffrey S. Boyd, Justice



John F. Devine, Justice



James D. Blacklock, Justice



J. Brett Busby, Justice



Jane N. Bland, Justice



Rebeca A. Huddle, Justice

RULES OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH CERTIFICATION COMMISSION

3.0 Certification, Registration, and Licensing

3.4 Alternative Application Procedure for Military Spouses, Military Service Member, and Veterans

(h) Military Spouse Temporary Authorization.

- (1) The Commission must issue a military spouse written confirmation that the military spouse may engage temporarily in a regulated practice without certification, registration, or licensure, upon:
 - (A) receipt of written notice from the military spouse of the intent to engage in the regulated practice in Texas;
 - (B) receipt of a copy of the military spouse's military identification card and proof of residency in Texas, including a copy of the permanent change of station order for the military service member to whom the spouse is married; and
 - (C) verification that the military spouse is certified, registered, or licensed in good standing in another jurisdiction that has certification, registration, or licensing requirements that are substantially equivalent to the Commission's requirements.
- (2) A military spouse engaging temporarily in a regulated practice is entitled to all the rights and privileges and subject to all the obligations and responsibilities of a regulated person, and may be sanctioned or disciplined in the same manner as a regulated person.
- (3) Written authorization to engage temporarily in a regulated practice without certification, registration, or licensure is valid until the earliest of the following:
 - (A) the military service member to whom the military spouse is married is no longer stationed at a military installation in Texas;
 - (B) the end of the military spouse's marriage to the military service member;
 - (C) the imposition of a disciplinary sanction; or

- (D) three years from the date of issuance of written confirmation.
- (4) A military spouse cannot renew a temporary authorization but may obtain a certification, registration, or license from the Commission pursuant to these Rules.

6.0. Court Reporters Certification and Shorthand Reporting Firms Registration

6.1 Definitions

- (a) **Advisory Board** means the Court Reporters Certification Advisory Board.
- (b) **Certification** means a certification issued by the Supreme Court of Texas on the Commission's recommendation.
- (c) **Code of Ethics** means the Code of Ethics or, if applicable, its predecessor, the Code of Professional Conduct for Certified Shorthand Reporters and Court Reporting Firms approved by the Supreme Court of Texas.
- (d) **Court reporter** and **shorthand reporter** mean a person who engagesis certified as a court reporter, apprentice court reporter, or provisional court reporter under these Rules to engage in shorthand reporting.
- (e) **Court reporting** and **shorthand reporting** mean the practice of shorthand reporting for use in litigation in the courts of this State by making a verbatim record of an oral court proceeding, deposition, or proceeding before a grand jury, referee, or court commissioner using written symbols in shorthand, machine shorthand, or oral stenography.
- (f) **Court reporting firm, shorthand reporting firm, and affiliate office** mean an entity wholly or partly in the business of providing court reporting or other related services in this State. A court reporting firm, shorthand reporting firm, or affiliate office is considered to be providing court reporting or other related services in this State if:
 - (1) any act that constitutes a court reporting service or shorthand reporting service occurs wholly or partly in this State;
 - (2) the firm or affiliate office recruits a resident of this State through an intermediary located inside or outside of this State to provide court reporting services, shorthand reporting services, or other related services in this State; or
 - (3) the firm or affiliate office contracts with a resident of this State by mail or otherwise and either party is to perform court reporting services, shorthand reporting services, or other related services wholly or partly in this State.
- (g) **Official court reporter** means the shorthand reporter appointed by a judge under Section 52.041 of the Government Code as the official court reporter for a particular court.

- (h) **Registration** means a registration issued by the Commission.
- (i) **RMR** means a Registered Merit Reporter certification issued by the National Court Reporters Association.
- (j) **RPR** means the Registered Professional Reporter certification issued by the National Court Reporters Association.
- (k) **Uniform Format Manual** means the manual approved by the Supreme Court of Texas that governs the form of official reporters' records and freelance transcriptions.

6.7 Responsibilities of Certified Court Reporters

- (a) A certified court reporter is entitled to use the title "Certified Shorthand Reporter" or the abbreviation "CSR." A certified shorthand reporter may administer oaths to witnesses anywhere in this State in accordance with Section 154.105 of the Government Code.
- (b) The transcription of any proceeding and any other document certified by a certified shorthand reporter for use in litigation in the courts of this State must contain a signed certificate in the form required by the Uniform Format Manual.
- (c) A certification of a transcript of a court proceeding by an official court reporter must contain a signed certificate in the form required by the Uniform Format Manual.
- (d) A noncertified shorthand reporter may report an oral deposition only if:
 - (1) the noncertified reporter delivers an affidavit to the parties or to their counsel present at the deposition stating that a certified shorthand reporter is not available; or
 - (2) the parties or their counsel stipulate on the record at the beginning of the deposition that a certified shorthand reporter is not available.
- (e) A noncertified shorthand reporter who is employed when a certified shorthand reporter is not available must include with the certification of a transcription of a court proceeding an affidavit that no certified shorthand reporter was available to perform the duties of the court reporter.
- (f) Official court reporters, deputy court reporters, and substitute court reporters must comply with the Act, Chapter 52 of the Government Code, and all applicable provisions of the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure in conducting of the business of their offices.

7.0 Guardianship Certification

7.1 Definitions

- (a) **Certified guardian** means a person who is certified by the Commission to provide guardianship services in this State.
- (b) **Corporate fiduciary** has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.007 of the Estates Code.
- (c) **Engaged in the business of providing guardianship services** means to perform, offer to perform, or advertise the performance of guardianship services for compensation.
- (d) **Guardian** has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.012 of the Estates Code.
- (e) **Guardianship program** means a corporation; partnership; firm; other business entity; local, county, or regional agency; or nonprofit entity that provides guardianship and related services to an incapacitated person or other person who needs assistance in making decisions concerning the person's own welfare or financial affairs. This definition does not apply to service-providers that provide guardianship services pursuant to a contract with the Health and Human Services Commission Office of Guardianship.
- (f) **Guardianship services** means conducting, performing, or administering the duties and powers prescribed by the Estates Code or under a court order in a guardianship matter.
- (g) **Incapacitated person** has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.017 of the Estates Code.
- (h) **Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services** means the document titled "Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services" promulgated under Section 155.101 and Section 155.152 of the Government Code.
- (i) **Mediator** means a person who mediates disputes arising under Title 3 of the Estates Code.
- (j) **Mediation Trainer** means a person who trains Mediators.
- (k) **Private professional guardian** means a person, other than an attorney or a corporate fiduciary, who is engaged in the business of providing guardianship services.
- (l) **Provisionally certified guardian** means a person who has received provisional certification to provide guardianship services in this State from the Commission.
- (m) **Supervisor** means a certified guardian who has notified the Commission that he or she will be responsible for overseeing a provisionally certified guardian.
- (n) **Volunteer** means a person who renders guardianship services on behalf of a guardianship program or on behalf of the Health and Human Services Commission Office of Guardianship and who does not receive compensation that exceeds the authorized expenses that the person incurs in performing those services.

(~~mo~~) **Ward** has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.030 of the Estates Code.

7.2 Requirement of Certification

(a) To provide guardianship services in this State, the following individuals must be certified by the Commission:

- (1) an individual who is a private professional guardian;
- (2) an individual who will provide those services to a ward of a private professional guardian or to a ward of an attorney who is appointed guardian on the guardian's behalf;
- (3) an individual who will supervise the provision of those services to a ward of a guardianship program;
- (4) an individual who will provide or supervise the direct provision of those services to a ward on behalf of the Health and Human Services Commission Office of Guardianship; and
- (5) a person who at any time supervises direct providers of guardianship services, unless the person is an attorney or corporate fiduciary exempt under Section 155.001(6) of the Government Code.

(b) To be eligible for certification, a person must:

- (1) satisfy the requirements of Section 3.0 of these rules;
- (2) be at least 21 years of age;
- (3) be a high school graduate or possess the GED equivalent;
- (4) satisfy the requirements of (A), (B), or (C) below:

(A) have two years of relevant work experience related to guardianship ~~or~~;

(B) have met the following education or training requirements:

- (~~A~~i) a minimum of a bachelor's degree conferred by a college or university accredited by an organization recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in a field related to guardianship; or
- (~~B~~ii) completion of a course curriculum or training specifically related to guardianship approved by the Commission; or

(C) have one year of work experience related to guardianship and completion of a course curriculum or training specifically related to guardianship approved

by the Commission;

- (5) successfully pass, after no more than four exam attempts, an examination approved by the Commission that covers Texas law and procedure related to guardianship and any other examination required and approved by the Commission testing knowledge of guardianship issues;
- (6) attest under penalty of perjury whether he or she has ever been adjudged guilty of, or entered a plea of guilty or no contest in return for a grant of deferred adjudication with respect to, any felony or misdemeanor offense, which will be considered using the factors listed in Rule 3.5;
- (7) attest under penalty of perjury whether he or she:
 - (A) has ever been relieved of responsibilities as a guardian or fiduciary by a court, employer, or client for actions involving fraud, moral turpitude, misrepresentation, material omission, misappropriation, theft, assault, battery, abuse, neglect, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary duty, or conversion;
 - (B) has ever been found civilly liable or settled a claim in an action, including but not limited to a surcharge action, that involved allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, material omission, misappropriation, theft, assault, battery, abuse, neglect, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary duty, or conversion on the applicant's part;
 - (C) has ever been denied certification or had his or her certification revoked or suspended in Texas or any other jurisdiction that requires certification, registration, or licensure to provide guardianship services; or
 - (D) has ever surrendered his or her certification in Texas or any other jurisdiction that requires certification, registration, or licensure to provide guardianship certification; and
- (8) complete the online training available on the Commission's website under Rule 10.3.
- (c) If any of the circumstances described in (b)(6) or (7) exist, the applicant must describe the circumstances with particularity and provide any related documentation requested by the Commission.
- (d) Examination.
 - (1) An individual who has failed the exam four times is not eligible for certification unless the individual petitions the Commission in writing for permission to take the exam again. The petition must set out in detail all facts that support the request, demonstrate that the individual has completed all other requirements for certification except for passing the exam, and demonstrate that no other impediments to

certification exist.

- (2) The Commission must consider the petition at its next regularly scheduled meeting and determine, without a formal hearing, whether permission to take the exam again will be granted or denied. The Commission may impose conditions to granting permission, including requiring the petitioner to provide additional information or complete specified continuing education prior to taking the exam again. If an individual fails or refuses to strictly and completely comply with the conditions specified by the Commission, permission to take the exam again will be denied.
- (3) An individual may petition the Commission only one time for permission to take the exam following four unsuccessful attempts. An individual who is granted permission to take the exam again and who fails the exam again is not eligible for certification. If the Commission denies permission to take the exam again, the individual is not eligible for certification.
- (4) The decision of the Commission is final and is not subject to appeal, reconsideration, or any further action.
- (e) Notwithstanding Rule 7.2(a), an individual who must be certified but does not meet the requirements for certification under Rule 7.2(b) may provide guardianship services in this State if the person obtains provisional certification pursuant to Rule 7.4.
- (f) Notwithstanding any other provision of these rules:
 - (1) pursuant to Section 1104.253 of the Estates Code, a family member or friend of an incapacitated person is not required to be certified under these rules to serve as the person's guardian; and
 - (2) an employee of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs appointed to serve as a guardian for an incapacitated person is not required to be certified under these rules to serve as the person's guardian.
- (g) A certified guardian may use the designation "TxCG" to indicate that the guardian is certified by the Commission. Provisionally certified guardians may not use such designation.

7.10 Guardianship Mediator Training Approval Process

- (a) A Mediation Trainer may seek the Commission's approval of a guardianship mediation training course.**
- (b) The Mediator Trainer must submit to the Commission an application on a form prescribed by the Commission. The application must be accompanied by an outline and materials that describe the course objectives and content, describe the teaching methods to be used, identify**

the instructors and provide their credentials, indicate the time allotted to each segment, and provide the date and location of the course.

(c) To be approved, the training must consist of at least 24 hours of content covering mediation methods, goals, and techniques. The course content must also address the following:

(1) a survey of the law of guardianship;

(2) the purpose and nature of guardianship, including the typical interests at stake in a contested guardianship;

(3) practical and ethical considerations arising in typical guardianship mediation scenarios based upon case studies;

(4) alternatives to guardianship, including less restrictive support and services available for the prospective ward;

(5) matters relating to capacity of the prospective ward, including mediation of conflicts regarding an incapacity determination;

(6) issues of mediation confidentiality and the privacy interests of the parties to mediation;

(7) the ward's bill of rights;

(8) the importance of involving the prospective ward and focusing mediation on the prospective ward;

(9) practical matters regarding a guardian's responsibilities to conduct inventories, accountings, and reports on the ward's estate, as well as other fiduciary duties; and

(10) the role of the Mediator as an impartial facilitator in resolving contested matters.

(d) The Commission may approve a course provided by an alternative dispute resolution system or other dispute resolution organization as an approved guardianship mediation training course.

(e) Once a guardianship mediation training course is approved, the Commission will post the name of the course and its provider on the Commission's website.

(f) A Mediator is encouraged to attend a guardianship mediation training course approved by the Commission, but attendance is not a required prerequisite to conduct a guardianship mediation. A court has discretion to refer a contested guardianship dispute to any Mediator, regardless of whether the Mediator has attended a guardianship mediation training course approved by the Commission.

FEES OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH CERTIFICATION COMMISSION

Certified Court Reporters and Registered Court Reporting Firms

- (a) Applicants for Certification, Certification by Endorsement, Provisional Certification, and Apprenticeship.
 - (1) Certification Application Fee—\$200
 - (2) Certification by Endorsement Application Fee—\$200
 - (3) Provisional Certification Application Fee—\$200
 - (4) Apprenticeship Application Fee—\$200
 - (5) Examination Fee—~~\$125~~175 for Part A and ~~\$75~~100 for Part B
 - (6) Renewal Fee—\$200
 - (7) Late Renewal Fee (Expired for 90 Days or Less)—\$300
 - (8) Late Renewal Fee (Expired More than 90 Days but Less than 1 Year)—\$400
 - (9) Recertification Fee (Moved to Another State)—\$400 (A person who was certified in this State, moved to another state, and is currently certified and has been in practice in the other state for one year preceding the date of application may obtain a new certification without reexamination by paying a fee of \$400.)
 - (10) Regrading Fee—\$35
 - (11) Certificate Replacement Fee—\$ 15
 - (12) Certification Card Replacement Fee—\$5
- (b) Applicants for Registration and Registered Court Reporting Firms.
 - (1) Registration Fee—\$200 plus any unpaid late renewal fee for any pre-existing expired registration
 - (2) Renewal Fee—\$200

- (3) Late Renewal Fee (Expired for 90 Days or Less)—\$300
- (4) Late Renewal Fee (Expired More than 90 Days but Less than 1 Year)—\$400
- (5) Registration Replacement Fee—\$15

Certified Guardians

- (a) Certification Application Fee—\$100 (An employee of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission Office of Guardianship ("HHSC") who is applying for certification to provide guardianship services to a ward of the HHSC is exempt from payment of this fee.)
- (b) Examination Fee (initial)—\$175 (This fee must be paid separately from all other fees by the date established in the exam schedule.)
- (c) Examination Fee (retake)—\$175 (This fee must be paid separately from all other fees by the date established in the exam schedule.)
- (d) Renewal Fee—\$100 (An employee of the Texas HHSC who is applying for renewal of certification to provide guardianship services to a ward of the HHSC is exempt from payment of this fee.)
- (e) Late Renewal Fee (Expired for 90 Days or Less)—\$150
- (f) Late Renewal Fee (Expired More than 90 Days but Less than 1 Year)—\$200
- (g) Recertification Fee (Moved to Another State)—\$200 (A person who was certified in this State, moved to another state, and is currently certified and has been in practice in the other state for one year preceding the date of application may obtain a new certification without reexamination by paying a fee of \$200.)
- (h) Certification Card Replacement Fee—\$5

Registered Guardianship Programs

- (a) Initial Registration Application Fee—\$200
- (b) Renewal Fee—\$200

- (c) Late Renewal Fee (Expired for 90 Days or Less)—\$300
- (d) Late Renewal Fee (Expired More than 90 Days but Less than 1 Year)—\$400

Certified Process Servers

- (a) Certification Application Fee—\$200
- (b) Renewal Fee—\$200
- (c) Late Renewal Fee (Expired for 90 Days or Less)—\$300
- (d) Late Renewal Fee (Expired More than 90 Days but Less than 1 Year)—\$400
- (e) Recertification Fee (Moved to Another State)—\$400 (A person who was certified in this State, moved to another state, and is currently certified and has been in practice in the other state for one year preceding the date of application may obtain a new certification without reexamination by paying a fee of \$400.)
- (f) Certification Card Replacement Fee—\$5

Licensed Court Interpreters

- (a) License Application Fee—\$200
- (b) Renewal Application Fee—\$200
- (c) Upgrade to Master Application Fee—\$25
- (d) Additional Language Fee—\$25
- (e) Replacement License Fee—\$5
- (f) Written Examination Fee—\$100
- (g) Oral Examination Fee—\$300
- (h) Late Renewal Fee (Expired for 90 Days or Less)—\$300

- (i) Late Renewal Fee (Expired More than 90 Days but Less than 1 Year)—\$400
- (j) Relicensing Fee (Moved to Another State)—\$400 (A person who was licensed in this State, moved to another state, and is currently licensed and has been in practice in the other state for one year preceding the date of application may obtain a new license without reexamination by paying a fee of \$400.)
- (k) License Card Replacement Fee—\$5

Fee Waivers

- (a) Pursuant to Sections 55.0041 and 55.009 of the Occupations Code, the application and examination fees are waived for the following persons:
 - (1) a military service member or military veteran whose military service, training, or education substantially meets all of the requirements of the certification, registration, or license for which the military service member or veteran applies; or
 - (2) a military service member, military veteran, or military spouse who holds a current certification, registration, or license in good standing issued by another jurisdiction which has certification, registration, or licensing requirements that are substantially similar to the requirements enforced by the Commission.
- (b) Pursuant to Section 154.107 of the Government Code, the registration and renewal fees for a court reporting firm are waived if a certified court reporter submits to the Commission:
 - (1) an affidavit swearing that the reporter owns more than 50 percent of the firm and maintains actual control of the firm; and
 - (2) corroborating evidence, such as copies of tax forms and business entity filings, of ownership and actual control of the firm.

Certified Guardians

Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services

Code of Ethics

Preamble. The purpose of this Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services (Minimum Standards) is to protect the interests of incapacitated persons in Texas by ensuring that certified guardians and guardianship programs provide guardianship services in a professional and competent manner. These standards are promulgated by the Texas Supreme Court pursuant to Section 155.101 of the Texas Government Code.

1. *Ward's Independence and Self-Reliance Promoted.* Guardianships in Texas are designed to grant authority over an incapacitated person only to the extent necessary to promote and protect the incapacitated person's well-being. To that end, the guardian must seek to encourage the development or maintenance of maximum independence and self-reliance to the extent consistent with the ward's health and safety and financial circumstances, with the eventual goal, if possible, of self-sufficiency.
2. *Fiduciary Relationship.* A guardian is a fiduciary of a ward under the guardian's care and must exhibit the highest degree of loyalty and fidelity in the guardian's relations with the ward.
3. *Confidentiality.* A guardian must treat information relating to a ward under the guardian's care as confidential and may disclose such information only with the consent of the ward or, if the ward cannot give consent, only as necessary to promote and protect the ward's wellbeing. To the extent not inconsistent with the ward's direction and best interests, or to the extent necessary to respond to a complaint or investigation, a guardian may disclose information about the ward's condition to family and friends of the ward or to an appropriate government entity. A guardian must disclose information about those matters specified in Section 1151.056, Texas Estates Code, to a ward's spouse, parents, siblings and children, unless the court relieves the guardian of the duty to do so in accordance with Section 1151.056, Texas Estates Code.
4. *Ward's Preferences Generally Respected.* When making decisions on behalf of a ward, a guardian must strive to act in accordance with the known or ascertainable preferences of the ward, including preferences expressed in valid estate planning documents, unless to do so would cause substantial harm to the ward's person or property, in which case the guardian should make decisions that are in the best interest of the ward. A guardian must regularly visit and, to the extent feasible, confer with the ward regarding decisions to be made in and on the ward's behalf. To the extent not inconsistent with the ward's direction and best interests, a

guardian may confer with family and friends of the ward concerning the ward's preferences.

5. *Duty of Competence.* A guardian of the person must make reasonable and informed decisions about the ward's residence, care, treatment, and services. A guardian of the estate must take care of and manage the estate as a prudent person would manage the person's own property unless relevant law imposes a higher standard of care. In either case, a guardian must exercise reasonable diligence to remain informed about options available to the ward to promote independence and self-reliance. A guardian must refrain from making decisions outside of the scope of authority granted to the guardian by law or court order.
6. *Less Restrictive Alternatives Preferred.* In determining the ward's residence, a guardian must strive to select a residence that represents the least restrictive environment available, both practically and financially. In making decisions relating to the ward's health, the guardian must strive to select care, treatment and service options that represent the least restrictive form of intervention available, both practically and financially. In either event, the guardian must give due consideration to the ward's preferences and well-being.
7. *Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest and Self-Dealing.* A must avoid conflicts of interest and refrain from personally engaging in transactions with the ward and other forms of self-dealing, except in a manner authorized by law.
8. *Responsibility to Keep Court Apprised of Condition of Ward's Person or Property.* A guardian must keep the court monitoring the guardianship apprised of the guardian's and ward's whereabouts and the condition of the ward's person and estate, including timely filing reports and accounts as required by law or court order, and updating the court regarding significant, material changes as they occur.
9. *Responsibility to Seek Modification or Termination of Guardianship.* A guardian must seek modification of the terms of the guardianship or termination of the guardianship when appropriate to promote the independence and self-reliance of the ward. Upon termination of a guardianship, the guardian must settle and close the guardianship competently and without unnecessary delay.
10. *Responsibility to Manage Caseload.* A guardian must not accept a new appointment if doing so would substantially and adversely affect the guardian's ability to fulfill duties to any ward already under the guardian's care. When a guardian can no longer effectively perform the duties of ~~the~~ guardian to a ward under the guardian's care, the guardian must take necessary steps to alert the court of the need for the appointment of a successor guardian.

Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services

1. *Applicability.* These Minimum Standards apply to the provision of guardianship services by certified guardians, guardianship programs, and the Texas ~~Department of Aging and Disability Services~~ Health and Human Services Commission. Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, a Minimum Standard applicable to a guardian appointed by a court is equally applicable to a guardianship program appointed as guardian by a court.
2. *Relationship with the Court.*
 - (a) Guardianships are established through a legal process and are subject to the supervision of the court.
 - (b) The guardianship court order determines the authority and the limitations of the guardian.
 - (c) The guardian must know the extent of the powers granted by the court and must not act beyond those powers.
 - (d) The guardian must clarify with the court any questions about the meaning of the order or directions from the court before taking action based on the order or directions.
 - (e) The guardian must obtain court authorization for actions that are subject to court approval.
 - (f) The guardian must submit reports regarding the status of the guardianship to the court as ordered by the court or required by the Texas Estates Code, but not less often than annually.
 - (g) All payments to the guardian from the assets of the ward must follow applicable federal or Texas statutes, rules, and requirements and are subject to review by the court.
3. *Relationship with the Ward.*
 - (a) The guardian must maintain a professional relationship with the ward. The guardian must treat the ward with respect, consideration, and recognition of the ward's dignity and individuality.
 - (b) The guardian must not engage in sexual relations with a ward.
 - (c) Unless this right of the ward is limited by a court or otherwise restricted by law, the guardian must keep the ward informed about the terms and limitations of the guardianship.

- (d) Unless this right of the ward is limited by a court or otherwise restricted by law, the guardian must provide the ward contact information for the court, the Judicial Branch Certification Commission, the Department of Family and Protective Services, Disability Rights Texas, and other state and local agencies and organizations which provide resources on aging, disability, mental health, and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

4. *Relationship with Family Members and Friends of the Ward.*

- (a) The guardian must maintain a professional relationship with the ward's family and the ward's friends.
- (b) The guardian must recognize the value of family and friends to the quality of life of the ward. The guardian must encourage and support the ward in maintaining contact with family members and friends when doing so benefits the ward.
- (c) The guardian must assist the ward in maintaining or reestablishing relationships with family and friends, except when doing so would not be of benefit to the ward.
- (d) When disposing of the ward's assets, the guardian may notify family members and friends and give them the opportunity, with court approval and in compliance with the Texas Estates Code, to obtain assets (particularly those with sentimental value).
- (e) The guardian must make reasonable efforts to preserve property designated in the ward's will and other estate planning devices executed by the ward. Subject to court approval, the present needs of a ward, if not covered by other property, may have priority over preservation of designated property.
- (f) The guardian may maintain communication with the ward's family and friends regarding significant occurrences that affect the ward when that communication would benefit the ward.
- (g) The guardian must maintain communication with the ward's spouse, parents, siblings, and children if the ward is admitted to a medical facility for acute care for three days or longer, the ward's residence has changed, or the ward is staying at a location other than the ward's residence for longer than a week, unless the court relieves the guardian of the duty to do so in accordance with Section 1151.056, Texas Estates Code.
- (h) The guardian may keep immediate family members and friends advised of all pertinent medical issues when doing so would benefit the ward. The guardian may request and consider family input when making medical decisions.

- (i) The guardian must inform the ward's spouse, parents, siblings, and children if the ward dies and, in the event of the ward's death, of any funeral arrangements and the ward's final resting place, unless the court relieves the guardian of the duty to do so in accordance with Section 1151.056 Texas Estates Code.

5. *Relationship with Other Professionals and Providers of Service to the Ward.*

- (a) The guardian must treat all professionals and service providers with courtesy and respect and strive to enhance cooperation on behalf of the ward.
- (b) The guardian must develop and stay current with the services, providers, facilities, and community resources to ensure that the ward receives high-quality services from the most appropriate provider.
- (c) The guardian must coordinate and monitor services needed by the ward to ensure that the ward is receiving the appropriate care and treatment. A guardian must not provide direct services to the ward for compensation unless a written contract approved by the court authorizes the provision of such services.
- (d) The guardian must engage the services of professionals (such as attorneys, accountants, stockbrokers, real estate agents, doctors) as necessary to appropriately meet the needs of the ward and in compliance with the Texas Estates Code.
- (e) The guardian must avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest or impropriety when dealing with the needs of the ward. Impropriety or conflict of interest arises where the guardian has some personal or agency interest that can be perceived as self-serving or adverse to the position or best interest of the ward. A conflict of interest may also arise where the guardian has dual or multiple relationships with a ward which conflict with each other or has a conflict between the best interests of two or more wards. The guardian must disclose dual or multiple relationships to the court, except those which are casual, coincidental or allowed under Standard 15(c). Governmental entities and guardianship programs providing multiple services must maintain an arm's-length relationship between those services.

6. *Informed Consent.*

- (a) The guardian must enable the ward to exercise the ward's right to make informed consent decisions to the greatest extent of the ward's capacity and ability. Unless this right of the ward is limited by a court or otherwise restricted by law, the guardian must annually explain the rights of the ward listed in §1151.351, Texas Estates Code, in the ward's native

language, or preferred mode of communication, and in a manner accessible to the ward.

- (b) Unless this right of the ward is limited by a court or otherwise restricted by law, the guardian must provide the ward a copy of the guardianship order, letters of guardianship, contact information for the court that issued the letters, contact information for the Judicial Branch Certification Commission, and other entities required by §1151.351, Texas Estates Code.
- (c) The guardian, standing in the place of the ward who lacks capacity, must access the same information that would have been given to the ward if the ward had capacity in order to make informed substituted judgments on behalf of the ward.
- (d) The guardian must make a good faith effort to determine whether the ward has previously stated any preferences before making any decisions on the ward's behalf and then follow these preferences unless doing so would adversely affect the ward or the ward's estate.
- (e) The guardian may make decisions that are contrary to the known preferences of the ward when following the wishes of the ward would adversely affect the ward.

7. *Standards for Decision-Making.*

- (a) Each decision made by the guardian must be an informed decision based on the principle of Informed Consent.
- (b) Substituted Judgment.
 - (1) Substituted Judgment is the principle of decision-making that substitutes, as the guiding force in any surrogate decision made by the guardian, the decision the ward would have made when competent.
 - (2) Substituted Judgment promotes the underlying values of self-determination and wellbeing of the ward.
 - (3) Substituted Judgment is not used when following the ward's wishes would cause substantial harm to the ward or when the guardian cannot establish the ward's prior wishes.
- (c) Best Interest of the Ward.

- (1) Best Interest is the standard of decision-making the guardian should use when the ward

has never had capacity or when the ward's wishes cannot be determined.

- (2) The Best Interest standard requires the guardian to consider the least intrusive, most normalizing, and least restrictive course of action possible to provide for the needs of the ward.
- (3) The Best Interest standard is used when following the ward's wishes would cause substantial harm to the ward, or when the guardian is unable to establish the ward's prior or current wishes.
- (4) Best Interest decisions include consideration of the ward's current and previously expressed wishes.

8. *Least Restrictive Alternative.*

- (a) The guardian must carefully evaluate the alternatives that are available and choose the one that best meets the needs of the ward while placing the least restrictions on his or her freedom, rights, and ability to control his or her environment.
- (b) The guardian must weigh the risks and benefits and develop a balance between maximizing the independence and self-determination of the ward and maintaining the ward's protection and safety.
- (c) The following guidelines apply in the determination of the least restrictive alternative:
 - (1) The guardian must become familiar with the available options for residence, care, medical treatment, vocational training, and education.
 - (2) The guardian must make a good faith effort to know the ward's preferences.
 - (3) The guardian must consider assessments of the ward's needs as determined by specialists. This may include an independent assessment of the ward's functional ability, the ward's health status, and the ward's care needs.

9. *Self-Determination of the Ward.*

- (a) The guardian must provide the ward with every opportunity to exercise those rights that the ward might be capable of exercising as they relate to the care of the ward's person.
- (b) The guardian must encourage the development or maintenance of maximum self-reliance

and independence of the ward.

- (c) The guardian must advocate for individualized planning and the least restrictive alternative on behalf of the ward.

10. *Duties Regarding Diversity and Personal Preference of the Ward.* The guardian must make a good faith effort to determine the extent to which the ward identifies with particular ethnic, religious, gender, cultural, and personal values and to make decisions consistent with these values, unless doing so would result in substantial harm to the ward's person or property.

11. *Confidentiality.*

- (a) Subject to state and federal law, the guardian must keep the affairs of the ward confidential.
- (b) The guardian must respect the ward's privacy and dignity, especially when the disclosure of information is necessary.
- (c) Disclosure of information must be limited to what is necessary and relevant to the issue being addressed in the best interest of the ward.

12. *Duties of the Guardian of the Person.* The guardian of the person has the following duties and obligations to the ward unless the order of appointment provides otherwise:

- (a) To see that the ward is living in the most appropriate environment that addresses the ward's wishes and needs.
 - (1) The guardian must authorize moving a ward to a more restrictive environment only after evaluating other medical and health care options and making an independent determination that the move is the least restrictive alternative at the time, fulfills the current needs of the ward, and serves the overall best interest of the ward.
 - (2) When the guardian considers involuntary or long-term placement of the ward in an institutional setting, the bases of the decision must be to minimize the risk of substantial harm to the ward, to obtain the most appropriate placement possible, and to secure the best treatment for the ward.
- (b) To ensure that provision is made for the support, care, comfort, health, and maintenance of the ward.

- (c) To make reasonable efforts to secure for the ward medical, psychological, therapeutic, and

social services, training, education, and social and vocational opportunities that are appropriate and that will maximize the ward's potential for self-reliance and independence.

- (d) To seek specific judicial authority when the dissolution of a marriage or another extraordinary circumstance is being addressed.
- (e) To file with the court, on a timely basis but not less often than annually, all reports required by the Texas Estates Code or as ordered by the court.
- (f) To petition the court for modification or termination of the guardianship when the ward's capacity is partially or completely restored.

13. *Guardian of the Person: Initial and Ongoing Responsibilities.*

(a) After appointment, the guardian must:

- (1) Address all issues of the ward that require immediate action.
- (2) Meet with the ward as soon after the appointment as is feasible. At the first meeting, to the extent possible given the ward's capacity to comprehend and communicate, the guardian must:
 - (A) Communicate to the ward the role of the guardian;
 - (B) Explain the rights retained by the ward;
 - (C) Unless this right of the ward is limited by a court or otherwise restricted by law, deliver a copy of the guardianship order, letters of guardianship, a copy of the Bill of Rights for Wards, Subchapter H, Chapter 1151, Texas Estates Code, and contact information for the court that issued the order and letters.
 - (D) Unless this right of the ward is limited by a court or otherwise restricted by law, provide the ward contact information for regulatory agencies and resource organizations as required by §1151.351, Texas Estates Code.
 - (E) Assess the ward's physical and social situation, the ward's educational, vocational, and recreational needs, the ward's preferences, and the support systems available to the ward; and
 - (F) Attempt to gather any missing necessary information regarding the ward.

- (3) Notify relevant agencies and individuals of the appointment of a guardian and complete the intake process by documenting:
 - (A) Physician's evaluation.
 - (B) Psychological or neuropsychological evaluation, if appropriate.
 - (C) An inventory of advance directives: Such statements of intent would include, but are not limited to, powers of attorney, living wills, and organ donation statements.
- (b) The guardian must obtain all public benefits for which the ward is eligible and are appropriate to the ward's best interest.
- (c) The guardian must establish and maintain contact with the guardian of the estate or other fiduciary of the ward, where appropriate.
- (d) The guardian must develop and monitor a written guardianship plan setting forth short-term and long-term goals for meeting the ward's needs that are addressed in the guardianship order.
 - (1) The plan must use a multidisciplinary approach to address medical, psychiatric, social, vocational, educational, training, residential, and recreational needs of the ward as applicable and appropriate.
 - (2) The plan must also address whether the ward's finances and budget are in line with the services the ward needs and are flexible enough to deal with the changing status of the ward.
 - (3) Short-term goals are issues that need to be addressed immediately or as soon as possible and long-term goals are issues that require on-going attention.
 - (4) The plan must be updated no less often than annually.
- (e) The guardian must maintain a separate file for each ward. The file must include, at a minimum, the following information and documents:
 - (1) The ward's name, date of birth, address, telephone number, Social Security number, medical coverage, physician, diagnoses, medications, and allergies to medications;

- (2) All legal documents involving the ward;
 - (3) Advance directives;
 - (4) A list of key contacts;
 - (5) A list of service providers, contact information, a description of services provided to the ward, and progress/status reports;
 - (6) A list of all known over-the-counter and prescribed medication the ward is taking, the dosage, the reason why it is taken, and the name of the doctor prescribing the medication if applicable. The guardian must update the list after each of the guardian's visits or as the guardian receives information;
 - (7) Documentation of all ward and collateral contacts, including the date, time, and activity;
 - (8) Progress notes that are as detailed as necessary to reflect contacts made and work done regarding the ward;
 - (9) The guardianship plan;
 - (10) An inventory, if required;
 - (11) Assessments regarding the ward's past and present medical, psychological, and social functioning;
 - (12) Documentation of the ward's known values, lifestyle preferences, and known wishes regarding medical and other care and service; and
 - (13) A photograph of the ward.
- (f) The guardian must visit the ward not less often than monthly consistent with the requirements below unless otherwise ordered by the court.
- (1) The guardian must assess the ward's physical appearance and condition and assess the appropriateness of the ward's current living situation and the continuation of existing services, taking into consideration all aspects of social, psychological, educational, direct services, and health and personal care needs as well as the need for any additional services.

- (2) The guardian must maintain substantive communication with service providers, caregivers, court visitors, and others attending to the ward.
- (3) The guardian must make a good faith effort to participate in all care or planning conferences concerning the residential, educational, vocational, or rehabilitation program of the ward.
- (4) The guardian must make a good faith effort to obtain an appropriate service plan for the ward from each service provider and must take appropriate action to ensure that service plans are being implemented.
- (5) The guardian must regularly examine all services and all charts, notes, logs, evaluations, and other documents regarding the ward at the place of residence and at any program site to ascertain that the care plan is being properly followed.
- (6) The guardian must advocate on behalf of the ward with staff in an institutional setting and other residential placements. The guardian must assess the overall quality of services provided to the ward, using accepted regulations and care standards as guidelines and seeking remedies when care is found to be deficient.
- (7) The guardian must maintain a record of each in-person visit with the ward, including the date, time, and location of the visit. Upon request, the guardian must provide a copy of the record to the Judicial Branch Certification Commission and the court.

14. *Decision-Making About Medical Treatment.*

- (a) The guardian must promote, monitor, and maintain the ward's health and well-being.
- (b) The guardian must ensure that all reasonably available medical care necessary for the ward is provided.
- (c) The guardian must make a good faith effort to determine whether the ward, before becoming incapacitated, executed any advance directives, such as a living will, a durable power of attorney, or any other specific written or oral declaration of intent. On finding such documents, the guardian must consider the ward's wishes in the decision-making process.
- (d) The guardian must make decisions about withholding or withdrawing medical treatment in accordance with the above provisions unless restricted by the order appointing the

guardian.

- (e) Subject to available local and financial resources, the guardian must explore treatment options in medical interventions posing a significant risk to the ward.

15. *Conflict of Interest: Ancillary and Support Services.*

- (a) The guardian must avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest or impropriety when dealing with the needs of the ward. Impropriety or conflict of interest arises where the guardian has some personal or agency interest that can be perceived as self-serving or adverse to the position or best interest of the ward. A conflict of interest may also arise where the guardian has dual or multiple relationships with a ward which conflict with each other or has a conflict between the best interests of two or more wards. The guardian must disclose dual or multiple relationships to the court, except those which are casual, coincidental or allowed under Standard 15(c).
- (b) If the guardian becomes aware or is made aware that a conflict of interest exists in the guardian's relationship with a ward, the guardian must immediately disclose to the court the existence and nature of the conflict of interest.
- (c) Unless authorized by court order, the guardian, other than the ~~Department of Aging and Disability Services~~ Health and Human Services Commission and guardianship programs, must not directly provide housing, medical, or other direct services to the ward. Persons who own, operate or are employed by, or associated with, an entity that provides health care, habilitation, support, vocational, residential supervision or other direct services do not qualify as a guardianship program. This includes persons who own, operate or are employed by or associated with such entities which are not licensed.
 - (1) The guardian must coordinate and assure the provision of all necessary services to the ward rather than providing those services directly.
 - (2) To ensure that the guardian remains free to challenge inappropriate or poorly delivered services and to advocate vigorously on behalf of the ward, the guardian must be independent from all service providers.
- (d) The guardian may not employ ~~his or her~~ their friends or family to provide services for a profit or fee unless no alternative is available and the guardian discloses this arrangement to the court.
- (e) The guardian must not solicit or accept incentives from service providers.

- (f) The guardian must consider various ancillary or support service providers and select the providers that best meet the needs of the individual ward.

16. *Duties of the Guardian of the Estate.*

- (a) The guardian of the estate must maintain and manage the ward's estate as a prudent person would manage the person's own property consistent with a fiduciary's duties and responsibilities set forth in the Texas Estates Code.
- (b) The guardian must supervise all income and disbursements of the estate in accordance with the Texas Estates Code.
- (c) The guardian must manage the estate only for the benefit of the ward.
- (d) The guardian must safeguard estate assets by keeping accurate records of all transactions and be able to fully account for all the assets in the estate.
- (e) The guardian must keep estate money separate from the guardian's personal money.
- (f) The guardian must keep the money of individual estates separate.
- (g) The guardian must make claims against others on behalf of the estate as deemed in the best interest of the ward and must defend against actions that would result in a loss of estate assets in compliance with the Texas Estates Code.
- (h) The guardian must employ prudent accounting procedures when managing the estate.
- (i) The guardian must determine if a will exists and, for estate planning purposes only, may request that a copy be provided to the court for in camera inspection under Section 1162.005 of the Texas Estates Code.

17. *Guardian of the Estate: Initial and Ongoing Responsibilities.*

- (a) With the proper authority, the initial steps after appointment as guardian are as follows:
 - (1) The guardian must address all issues of the estate that require immediate action, which include, but are not limited to, securing all real and personal property, insuring it at current market value, and taking the steps necessary to protect it from damage, destruction, or loss.

- (2) The guardian must meet with the ward as soon after the appointment as feasible. At the first meeting the guardian must:
- (A) Communicate to the ward the role of the guardian;
 - (B) Outline the rights retained by the ward and the grievance procedures available;
 - (C) Assess the previously and currently expressed wishes of the ward and evaluate them based on current acuity; and
 - (D) Attempt to gather from the ward any necessary information regarding the estate.
- (b) The guardian must prepare a financial plan and budget that correspond with the care plan for the ward. The guardian of the estate and the guardian of the person (if one exists) or other health care decision-maker must communicate regularly and coordinate efforts with regard to the care and financial plans, as well as other events that might affect the ward.
- (c) The guardian must post and maintain a bond with surety sufficient for the protection of the estate unless the guardian is exempt from bond by law.
- (d) The guardian must obtain all public benefits for which the ward is eligible.
- (e) The guardian must thoroughly document the management of the estate and the carrying out of any and all duties required by statute or regulation.
- (f) The guardian must prepare an inventory of the ward's property in compliance with the Texas Estates Code and as otherwise ordered by the court.
- (g) All accountings must contain sufficient information to clearly describe all significant transactions affecting administration during the accounting period in compliance with the Texas Estates Code and as otherwise ordered by the court. All accountings must be complete, accurate, and understandable.
- (h) The guardian must oversee the disposition of the ward's assets to qualify the ward for any public benefits program.
- (i) On the termination of the guardianship or the death of the ward, the guardian must facilitate the appropriate closing of the estate and submit a final accounting to the court.

- (j) The guardian must monitor the personal trust account of the institution-based ward.
- (k) The guardian must, when appropriate, open a burial account and make funeral arrangements for the ward.

18. *Property Management.*

- (a) The guardian may not sell, encumber, convey, or otherwise transfer property of the ward, or an interest in that property, without judicial authority.
- (b) The guardian must obtain an independent appraisal of real and personal property whenever ordered by the court.
- (c) The guardian must provide for insurance coverage, as appropriate, for property in the estate.

19. *Conflict of Interest: Estate, Financial, and Business Services.*

- (a) The guardian must avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest or impropriety when dealing with the needs of the ward. Impropriety or conflict of interest arises where the guardian has some personal or agency interest that can be perceived as self-serving or adverse to the position or best interest of the ward. A conflict of interest may also arise where the guardian has dual or multiple relationships with a ward which conflict with each other or has a conflict between the best interests of two or more wards. The guardian must disclose dual or multiple relationships to the court, except those which are casual, coincidental or allowed under Standard 15(c). Governmental entities and guardianship programs providing multiple services must maintain an arm's-length relationship between those services.
- (b) If the guardian becomes aware or is made aware that a conflict of interest exists in the guardian's relationship with the ward, the guardian must immediately disclose to the court the existence and nature of the conflict of interest.
- (c) The guardian must not commingle personal or program funds with the funds of the ward.
- (d) The guardian must not sell, encumber, convey, or otherwise transfer the ward's real or personal property or any interest in that property to himself or herself, a spouse, a coworker, an employee, a member of the board of the agency or corporate guardian, an agent, or an attorney, or any corporation or trust in which the guardian has a substantial beneficial

interest.

- (e) The guardian must not sell or otherwise convey to the ward property from any of the parties noted above.
- (f) The guardian must not loan, give, or use the ward's income or assets to support or benefit other individuals directly or indirectly unless specific prior court approval is obtained.
- (g) The guardian must not borrow funds from, or lend funds to, the ward unless there is prior notice of the proposed transaction to interested persons and others as directed by the court.
- (h) The guardian must not profit from any transactions made on behalf of the ward's estate at the expense of the estate, unless authorized to do so by the court. The guardian must not compete with the estate, unless authorized to do so by the court.

20. *Modification and Termination of the Guardianship.* The guardian may seek modification or termination of the guardianship in the following circumstances pursuant to the Texas Estates Code:

- (a) When it appears that the ward has developed or regained capacity in areas in which he or she was found incapacitated by the court.
- (b) When less restrictive alternatives exist.
- (c) When the ward expresses the desire to challenge the necessity of all or part of the guardianship.
- (d) When the ward has died.

21. *Management of Multiple Guardianship Cases.*

- (a) The guardian must limit the guardianship caseload to a size that allows the guardian to accurately and adequately provide care, supervise, and protect each ward; that allows a minimum of one visit per month with each ward; that allows regular contact with all service providers; and that allows the guardian to comply fully with all requirements contained in statutes, Rules, Code of Ethics and Minimum Standards for guardians. The guardian should decline to accept additional appointments if to do so would substantially and adversely impair the guardian's ability to fulfill duties to wards already under the guardian's care. When a guardian can no longer effectively perform the duties of the guardian to a ward under the guardian's care, the guardian shall take necessary steps to alert the court of the

need for the appointment of a successor guardian.

(b) In order to develop and maintain an appropriately sized caseload, the guardian should consider:

(1) Whether the guardian has been appointed as guardian of the person, guardian of the estate, or both for each case in the guardian's caseload.

(2) The complexity and overall demands of each case.

(3) The amount of travel time necessary to visit each ward at least once per month and to have regular contact with each ward's service providers.

(4) The amount of time required to:

(A) complete the necessary tasks, assessments, and observations during a visit with each ward;

(B) contact each service provider for a ward and to obtain from each of them updated information concerning the ward's condition, the services being provided, and any additional or different services needed by the ward;

(C) confer with or contact family and/or friends of the ward, to arrange for visits or other types of contact between the ward and the ward's family and friends;

(D) perform all financial functions which are part of the guardian's responsibilities regarding a ward; and

(E) timely complete all updates to the file of each ward and timely complete all reports required for each ward.

(5) Other duties of the guardian including but not limited to administrative duties, such as documenting the ward's file, listed above.

(6) Whether ancillary support is available to the guardian.

(c) An individual certified or provisionally certified guardian who at any time has ~~5040~~ or more wards appointed or assigned to him or her must, within 10 days, report this situation to the Certification Division Director of the Judicial Branch Certification Commission. The report must include a list of all the guardian's cases and must provide for each case the

cause number, court and county; the name and residence location of the ward; the type of guardianship (person, estate or both); and the dates the guardian was appointed, qualified and/or assigned to each case. Upon request by the Certification Division Director of the Judicial Branch Certification Commission, the guardian must provide additional information.

22. *Quality Assurance.* The guardian must make a good faith effort to provide quality in the services the guardian delivers and to develop a quality assurance program to that end.

23. *Definitions.*

- (a) Advance directive – Has the meaning assigned by Section 166.002 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.
- (b) Advocate - To assist, defend, or plead in favor of another.
- (c) Best interest - The course of action taken to maximize what is best for a ward. It includes consideration of the least intrusive, most normalizing, and least restrictive alternative possible given the needs and limitations of the ward.
- (d) Conflict of interest - Includes situations in which an individual may receive financial or material gain or business advantage from a decision made on behalf of another; situations in which the guardian's responsibilities to a ward will be limited by the guardian's other responsibilities or by a personal interest of the guardian; and situations in which the guardian has dual or multiple relationships with a ward which conflict with each other or has a conflict between the best interests of two or more wards.
- (e) Corporate fiduciary - Has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.007 of the Texas Estates Code.
- (f) Court, probate court, statutory court, statutory probate court - Has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.008 of the Texas Estates Code.
- (g) Direct services - Services on behalf of a ward, including medical and nursing care, respite and hospice care, case management, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological therapy, counseling, residential services, legal representation, job training, and other similar services.
- (h) Estate - Has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.010 of the Texas Estates Code.

- (i) Fiduciary - An individual, agency, or organization that has agreed to undertake for another a special obligation of trust and confidence, having the duty to act primarily for another's benefit and subject to the standard of care imposed by law or contract.
- (j) Functional assessment - A procedure to measure and document on multiple dimensions the functional capacity, including the ability to fully understand and make decisions, to plan and undertake courses of action, and to evaluate the outcome of such courses of action, and the general well-being of an individual.
- (k) Guardian – Has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.012 of the Texas Estates Code. For the purpose of these Minimum Standards, the term also includes Certified Guardians and, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, guardianship programs and persons who offer or render guardianship services on behalf of guardianship programs.
 - (1) Certified Guardian – A person who is certified to provide guardianship services in this state by the Judicial Branch Certification Commission.
 - (2) Engaged in the business of providing guardianship services – To perform, offer to perform, or advertise the performance of guardianship services for compensation.
 - (3) Guardian of the Estate - A person or entity appointed by the court who has the powers and duties listed in Section 1151.001 and 1151.151 of the Texas Estates Code or as ordered by the court.
 - (4) Guardian of the Person - A person or entity appointed by the court who has the powers and duties listed in Section 1151.051 of the Texas Estates Code or as ordered by the court.
 - (5) Guardianship Program – A local, county, or regional program that provides guardianship and related services to an incapacitated person or other person who needs assistance in making decisions concerning the person's own welfare or financial affairs.
 - (6) Guardianship Services -- Conducting, performing, or administering such duties or powers as prescribed by the Texas Estates Code or under a court order in a guardianship matter.
 - (7) Private Professional Guardian - A person, other than an attorney or a corporate fiduciary, who is engaged in the business of providing guardianship services.
- (l) Incapacitated person - Has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.017 of the Texas Estates

Code.

- (m) Informed consent – A person’s agreement to allow something to happen that is based on a full disclosure of facts needed to make the decision intelligently, i.e., knowledge of risks involved, alternatives, etc.
- (n) Least restrictive alternative - A mechanism, course of action, or environment that allows the ward to live, learn, and work in a setting that places as few limits as possible on the ward’s rights and personal freedoms as appropriate to meet the needs of the ward.
- (o) Self-determination - A doctrine that states the actions of a person are determined by that person. It is free choice of one’s acts without external force.
- (p) Social services - These services are provided to meet social needs, including provisions for public benefits, case management, money management services, adult protective services, companion services, and other similar services.
- (q) Substituted judgment - The principle of decision-making that requires implementation of the course of action that comports with the individual ward’s known wishes expressed before incapacity, provided the individual was once capable of developing views relevant to the matter at issue and reliable evidence of those views remains.
- (r) Ward - Has the meaning assigned by Section 1002.030 of the Texas Estates Code.

EXHIBIT 2

Designation of Friends for Life as the Responsible Agent for the Disposition of Deceased Wards *(State of Texas)*

I. Purpose

This agreement affirms that **Friends for Life**, a Texas nonprofit organization with its principal office at 5000 Lakewood Drive, Waco, Texas 76710, shall serve as the designated agent with full authority and responsibility for the disposition of remains of any ward under its care, in accordance with Texas law, including **Texas Health and Safety Code § 711.002**.

II. Authority to Act

For all wards under the legal guardianship, conservatorship, or care of Friends for Life (whether by court appointment, contractual agreement, or statutory authority), Friends for Life shall:

1. Have full legal authority to make all decisions regarding the disposition of the ward's remains upon their death, including but not limited to:
 - Burial
 - Cremation
 - Anatomical donation
 - Interment or other lawful methods
2. Select and contract with funeral homes, crematories, cemeteries, and other providers as necessary.
3. Determine the nature and extent of any memorial or funeral service.
4. Receive and control the deceased ward's remains or cremated remains.
5. Obtain and execute all necessary authorizations, permits, and death-related documentation.

III. Financial Responsibility

Friends for Life agrees to assume full financial responsibility for all expenses related to the disposition of each deceased ward's remains, including but not limited to:

- Funeral home or crematory services
- Transportation and storage of remains
- Burial plots, urns, or caskets
- Cremation fees
- Memorial services
- Death certificates and related documentation

Funds from the ward's estate or pre-need arrangements, if available, may be used for this purpose. In the absence of sufficient personal funds, Friends for Life shall be responsible for covering such expenses from its own resources or charitable funds, as deemed appropriate by the organization.

IV. Superseding Other Claims

This designation is intended to take precedence over any claim or decision by next of kin or other legally authorized persons unless a valid and superseding written directive has been executed by the ward prior to their death, in accordance with **Texas Health and Safety Code § 711.002**.

V. Release and Indemnification

All relevant parties, including governmental agencies, healthcare providers, and funeral service providers, are authorized to recognize this designation. Friends for Life shall not be held liable for the good faith execution of these responsibilities in accordance with this agreement and applicable law.