

Article 5.

Appointment of Guardian for Incompetent Person.

**§ 35A-1210. Application before clerk.**

Any individual, corporation, or disinterested public agent may file an application for the appointment of a guardian for an incompetent person by filing the same with the clerk. The application may be joined with or filed subsequent to a petition for the adjudication of incompetence under Subchapter I of this Chapter. The application shall set forth, to the extent known and to the extent such information is not already a matter of record in the case:

- (1) The name, age, address, and county of residence of the ward or respondent;
- (2) The name, address, and county of residence of the applicant, his relationship if any to the respondent or ward, and his interest in the proceeding;
- (3) The name, address, and county of residence of the respondent's next of kin and other persons known to have an interest in the proceeding;
- (4) A general statement of the ward's or respondent's assets and liabilities with an estimate of the value of any property, including any income and receivables to which he is entitled; and
- (5) Whether the applicant seeks the appointment of a guardian of the person, a guardian of the estate, or a general guardian, and whom the applicant recommends or seeks to have appointed as such guardian or guardians. (1987, c. 550, s. 1.)

**§ 35A-1211. Service of application, motions, and notices.**

(a) Application for appointment of a guardian and related motions and notices shall be served on the respondent, respondent's counsel or guardian ad litem, other parties of record, and such other persons as the clerk shall direct.

(b) When the application for appointment of a guardian is joined with a petition for adjudication of incompetence, the application shall be served with and in the same manner as the petition for adjudication of incompetence. When the application is filed subsequent to the petition for adjudication of incompetence, the applicant shall serve the application as provided by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5, Rules of Civil Procedure, unless the clerk directs otherwise. (1987, c. 550, s. 1; 1989, c. 473, s. 25.)

**§ 35A-1212. Hearing before clerk on appointment of guardian.**

(a) The clerk shall make such inquiry and receive such evidence as the clerk deems necessary to determine:

- (1) The nature and extent of the needed guardianship;
- (2) The assets, liabilities, and needs of the ward; and
- (3) Who, in the clerk's discretion, can most suitably serve as the guardian or guardians.

If the clerk determines that the nature and extent of the ward's capacity justifies ordering a limited guardianship, the clerk may do so.

(b) If a current multidisciplinary evaluation is not available and the clerk determines that one is necessary, the clerk, on his own motion or the motion of any party, may order that such an evaluation be performed pursuant to G.S. 35A-1111. The provisions of that section shall apply to such an order for a multidisciplinary evaluation following an adjudication of incompetence.

(c) The clerk may require a report prepared by a designated agency to evaluate the suitability of a prospective guardian, to include a recommendation as to an appropriate party or parties to serve as guardian, or both, based on the nature and extent of the needed guardianship and the ward's assets, liabilities, and needs.

(d) If a designated agency has not been named pursuant to G.S. 35A-1111, the clerk may, at any time he finds that the best interest of the ward would be served thereby, name a designated agency. (1987, c. 550, s. 1; 2003-236, s. 1.)

#### **§ 35A-1212.1. Recommendation of appointment of guardian by will or other writing.**

Any parent may by will recommend appointment of a guardian for an unmarried child who has been adjudicated an incompetent person and specify desired limitations on the powers to be given to the guardian. If both parents make such recommendations, the will with the latest date shall, in the absence of other relevant factors, prevail. Such recommendation shall be a strong guide for the clerk in appointing a guardian, but the clerk is not bound by the recommendation if the clerk finds that a different appointment is in the incompetent adult's best interest. If the will specifically so directs, a guardian appointed pursuant to such recommendation may be permitted to qualify and serve without giving bond, unless the clerk finds as a fact that the interest of the incompetent adult would be best served by requiring the guardian to give bond. (2005-333, s. 1.)

#### **§ 35A-1213. Qualifications of guardians.**

(a) The clerk may appoint as guardian an adult individual, a corporation, or a disinterested public agent. The applicant may submit to the clerk the name or names of potential guardians, and the clerk may consider the recommendations of the next of kin or other persons.

(b) A nonresident of the State of North Carolina, to be appointed as general guardian, guardian of the person, or guardian of the estate of a North Carolina resident, must indicate in writing his willingness to submit to the jurisdiction of the North Carolina courts in matters relating to the guardianship and must appoint a resident agent to accept service of process for the guardian in all actions or proceedings with respect to the guardianship. Such appointment must be approved by and filed with the clerk, and any agent so appointed must notify the clerk of any change in the agent's address or legal residence. The clerk shall require a nonresident guardian of the estate or a nonresident general guardian to post a bond or other security for the faithful performance of the guardian's duties. The clerk may require a nonresident guardian of the person to post a bond or other security for the faithful performance of the guardian's duties.

(c) A corporation may be appointed as guardian only if it is authorized by its charter to serve as a guardian or in similar fiduciary capacities. A corporation shall meet the requirements outlined in Chapters 55 and 55D of the General Statutes. A corporation will provide a written copy of its charter to the clerk of superior court. A corporation contracting with a public agency to serve as guardian is required to attend guardianship training and provide verification of attendance to the contracting agency. A corporation shall not be appointed as guardian for any individual to whom it provides mental health, developmental disabilities, or substance abuse services for compensation as part of a contractual or other arrangement with a local management entity (LME), including an LME that has been approved to operate the 1915(b)/(c) Medicaid Waiver.

(d) A disinterested public agent who is appointed by the clerk to serve as guardian is authorized and required to do so; provided, if at the time of the appointment or any time subsequent thereto the disinterested public agent believes that his role or the role of his agency in relation to the ward is such that his service as guardian would constitute a conflict of interest, or if he knows of

any other reason that his service as guardian may not be in the ward's best interest, he shall bring such matter to the attention of the clerk and seek the appointment of a different guardian. A disinterested public agent who is appointed as guardian shall serve in that capacity by virtue of his office or employment, which shall be identified in the clerk's order and in the letters of appointment. When the disinterested public agent's office or employment terminates, his successor in office or employment, or his immediate supervisor if there is no successor, shall succeed him as guardian without further proceedings unless the clerk orders otherwise.

(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, an employee of a treatment facility, as defined in G.S. 35A-1101(16), may not serve as guardian for a ward who is an inpatient in or resident of the facility in which the employee works; provided, this subsection shall not apply to or affect the validity of any appointment of a guardian that occurred before October 1, 1987.

(f) An individual who contracts with or is employed by an entity that contracts with a local management entity (LME) for the delivery of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services may not serve as a guardian for a ward for whom the individual or entity is providing these services, unless the individual is one of the following:

- (1) A parent of that ward.
- (2) A member of the ward's immediate family, a licensed family foster care provider, or a licensed therapeutic foster care provider who is under contract with a local management entity (LME) for the delivery of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services and is serving as a guardian as of January 1, 2013. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "immediate family" is defined as a spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, or grandchild. The term also includes stepparents, stepchildren, stepsiblings, and adoptive relationships.
- (3) A biologically unrelated individual who was serving on March 1, 2013, as a guardian without compensation for guardianship services. (1987, c. 550, s. 1; 2004-203, s. 31(a); 2012-151, s. 12(c); 2013-258, ss. 1, 2.)

#### **§ 35A-1214. Priorities for appointment.**

The clerk shall consider appointing a guardian according to the following order of priority: (i) an individual or entity nominated under G.S. 32C-1-108(a) or G.S. 32A-22(b), as applicable; (ii) an individual recommended under G.S. 35A-1212.1; (iii) an individual; (iv) a corporation; or (v) a disinterested public agent. No public agent shall be appointed guardian until diligent efforts have been made to find an appropriate individual or corporation to serve as guardian, but in every instance the clerk shall base the appointment of a guardian or guardians on the best interest of the ward. (1987, c. 550, s. 1; 2005-333, s. 2; 2023-124, s. 7.10.)

#### **§ 35A-1215. Clerk's order; issuance of letters of appointment.**

- (a) When appointing a guardian, the clerk shall enter an order setting forth:
- (1) The nature of the guardianship or guardianships to be created and the name of the person or entity appointed to fill each guardianship; and
  - (2) The powers and duties of the guardian or guardians, which shall include, unless the clerk orders otherwise, (i) with respect to a guardian of the person and general guardian, the powers and duties provided under G.S. 35A, Article 8, and (ii) with respect to a guardian of the estate and general guardian, the powers, and duties provided under G.S. 35A, Article 9 and Subchapter III; and

(3) The identity of the designated agency if there is one.

(b) If the clerk orders a limited guardianship as authorized by G.S. 35A-1212(a), the clerk may order that the ward retain certain legal rights and privileges to which the ward was entitled before the ward was adjudged incompetent. Any order of limited guardianship shall include findings as to the nature and extent of the ward's incompetence as it relates to the ward's need for a guardian or guardians.

(c) The clerk shall issue the guardian or guardians letters of appointment as provided in G.S. 35A-1206. (1987, c. 550, s. 1; 2003-236, s. 2.)

**§ 35A-1216. Rule-making power of Secretary of Health and Human Services.**

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services shall adopt rules concerning the guardianship responsibilities of disinterested public agents. The rules shall provide, among other things, that disinterested public agents shall undertake or have received training concerning the powers and responsibilities of guardians. (1987, c. 550, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.15.)

**§ 35A-1217. Appointment of guardian ad litem for incompetent ward.**

The clerk shall appoint a guardian ad litem to represent a ward in a proceeding under this Subchapter if the ward has been adjudicated incompetent under Subchapter I and the clerk determines that the ward's interests are not adequately represented. Appointment and discharge of the guardian ad litem shall be in accordance with rules adopted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services. The guardian ad litem shall explain the notice of rights under G.S. 35A-1117 as part of the guardian ad litem's representation of the ward in connection with all proceedings under this Subchapter. Nothing herein shall affect the ward's right to retain counsel of his or her own choice. (2009-387, s. 2; 2023-124, s. 7.11.)

**§ 35A-1218: Reserved for future codification purposes.**

**§ 35A-1219: Reserved for future codification purposes.**