

# Guardianship Glossary

*Always check your state statute for the specific definitions and the court order for the authority granted.*

## Types of Guardianships

**Plenary or “full” guardianship** in which all personal decision-making rights have been delegated to another.

**Limited guardianship** in which the individual retains specific rights and the guardian has the authority to make decisions in specified areas. Most state statutes prefer limited guardianships in which the individual retains all rights except those specifically granted to the guardian.

**Guardianship of the person** in which the guardian has authority to make decisions relating to personal affairs, such as medical decisions, placement, education, etc.

**Guardianship of property** (in some states called conservatorship) in which the guardian (or conservator) has authority to make decisions relating to financial affairs, such as investments, income, bill paying and financial management.

**Emergency guardianship** in which the guardian has specific powers to resolve the emergency. Typically emergency guardianship is for a set time period at which time the powers expire and the guardian must petition for a regular guardianship.

**Voluntary guardianship** in which there is no finding of incapacity and the individual consents to the guardianship.

**Single transaction guardianship** in which a guardian is appointed to do a specific task such as sell real estate, and possibly make a placement decision.

## Types of Guardians

**Family guardian** is a relative or friend of the individual who most likely only serves one individual and receives no compensation. It is estimated that the vast majority of guardians are family guardians although we have no good data.

**Public guardian** is an employee of a state agency established to provide guardianship services. Public guardians typically are “guardians of last resort” and are appointed only if there are no other persons available or suitable to serve.

**Agency guardian** is an employee of a not-for-profit organization, such as Lutheran Family Service, that provides guardianship services.

**Professional guardian** is typically someone who serves more than 3 individuals and receives compensation from the individual's estate.

**Conservator** is typically someone who has authority over financial matters. Note: In California "guardians" are appointed for minors and "conservators" are appointed for adults and can have authority to make either personal or property decisions.

**National Certified Guardians** (NCG) have been certified by the Center for Guardianship Certification which means they have passed a qualifying examination, agree to abide by the National Guardianship Association Standards of Practice and are subject to discipline for ethical violations. The **National Master Guardians** (NMG) have been certified by the Center for Guardianship Certification as having broad and extensive experience. They have passed a day-long examination, agree to abide by the National Guardianship Association Standards of Practice and are subject to discipline for ethical violations. A CGC Peer Review Board hears grievances but can only sanction guardians they have certified.