

About the Adult Guardianship Coalition

Our Purposes

- 1 To provide a way for the people whose personal lives are affected by guardianship laws to speak with one voice.
- 2 To promote the community's role in **keeping people safe and honouring their choices.**
- 3 To help build on community strengths when putting the adult guardianship laws into effect.
- 4 To promote community alternatives to public guardianship.

Why a Coalition?

The Adult Guardianship Coalition was formed in January 1994 to create an organized voice for people whose personal lives are affected by adult guardianship.

Currently, people who are assessed as "incompetent" are placed under public guardianship (the Office of the Public Trustee) or become a "committee" of someone else. Committeeship and public guardianship take away all the decision-making rights of the individual.

New legislation came about as a result of five years of community-based discussion about adult

guardianship law reform. The community vision is that **personal support is the first resort to providing assistance with decision making.** People are capable within a circle of friends and family.

Four new Acts were passed by the B.C. Legislature in July, 1993. They are the *Representation Agreement Act*, the *Adult Guardianship Act*, the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act*, and the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act*.

The community vision

The community vision is reflected in these new laws through:

- Representation agreements, which will allow adults to pre-plan for assisted or substitute decision-making. (Currently there is no simple, inexpensive and comprehensive legal document to allow people to plan for their finances, health care, and end of life decisions if they should become ill or incompetent.)
- Recognition and status for families, friends and informal support networks
- Putting the focus on meeting needs instead of assessing

incapacity. (The old law only assessed people as being either competent or incompetent, but capacity isn't "all or nothing". Someone's abilities may vary from one situation to another, or from day to day.)

- Emphasis on advocacy and plain language, and recognition for non-verbal instructions.

These new laws are not yet in effect. We are currently in the Implementation phase—a period when the policies and procedures are developed that will make the new laws work.

The Coalition works to make sure that as these laws are put into effect, the emphasis is on personal support as the first resort so that public guardianship is truly a last resort.

The Coalition also advocates for a ground-up approach to planning for these new laws. This means that the regulations, policies and programs must be based on citizens' experiences.

Our Activities

In addition to its work on policy, members of the Coalition's Task Groups work within communities to help to develop the personal support

and advocacy that will make alternatives to public guardianship work.

The **Representation Agreement Task Group** has members around the province working to help people make representation agreements. The **Advocacy Task Group** is helping to build a province-wide network of advocates who will help people to act on their rights under the new legislation.

Who belongs?

The Guardianship Coalition is made up of:

- **Provincial Organizations** - like the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations, BCACL, the Alzheimer Society, BCCPD, BC Persons With AIDS, and the West Coast Mental Health Network
- **Local Groups** - like the Network of Burnaby Seniors, Family Link, the Victoria Association for Consumer Empowerment, Self-Advocates on the Move, and the Kamloops Seniors Liaison Council
- and hundreds of **Individuals**

Join us!

All of the Coalition's work is directed by its volunteer members. To find out more about getting involved write, phone or fax us.

Community Coalition
for the Implementation of Adult Guardianship Legislation

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