

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

I just came back from a two and a half day probate training conference held for County Judges and Clerks. The Judges spent one full day on Guardianships (Guardianships are part of probate court in Texas). Except where counties have a statutory probate court or a dedicated county court at law to probate (large counties), the County Judge is responsible for the maintenance of the Guardianships in that county.

I feel that is a serious obligation to review every guardianship to make sure the ward is being properly cared for. A guardianship's purpose is to have the legal authority for the oversight and care of someone who is unable to care for themselves. This could be a minor child who has no parent to care for them or a disabled adult (19 years and up) which could include many circumstances.

Significant changes in the governing state laws were our topics for study. Guardians will be required to be certified and pass background checks. Counties will be required to put all active guardianships in the computer banks at OCA (Office of Court Administration). We will need to hire a few part - time temporary folks to go through every guardianship folder we have and verify a number of facts. Then we will need to sort those reports into action items. All active guardianships will have to be keyed into the OCA website.

Some guardianships will be current and up to date with all annual reporting requirements. Those that are not current will have to be examined by me for disposition. That means, "Is it already closed? If so, no action is needed. "Is it delinquent in reporting?" If so why? "Is the ward still alive? Is the ward aged out (if a minor - reaching the age of 18)? Has the ward's physical ability improved enough to be reviewed?" I will need a representative of my court to go and physically investigate some of these exceptions. Some may be done with a letter or a phone call. But follow - up will be important because every one of these is potentially a very vulnerable person.

Thanks for listening.

We want you to be proud of your County Government.