

2026 WEBINAR FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES

**Understanding Guardianship, Advanced Directives and
Supported Decision-Making in Illinois. A Webinar Series for
Residents, Families, Guardians and the General Public.**

"UNDERSTANDING GUARDIANSHIP"

by Sarah Smith,

Managing Attorney, Illinois Guardianship
and Advocacy Commission

Wednesday, June 3

3:00 - 4:30 PM CST



Adult guardianship involves a court appointing a guardian to make decisions for an adult who is unable to make their own decisions due to disability. This presentation provides an overview of the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the courts, guardians, and adults with disabilities.

"UNDERSTANDING ADVANCED DIRECTIVES"

by Laurel Spahn,

Attorney, Illinois Guardianship and
Advocacy Commission

Wednesday, June 10

3:00 - 4:30 PM CST



Advance directives are powerful, as they are legal documents a person age 18 or older makes to be sure someone else can voice important healthcare decisions for them if there's ever a time they might be unconscious or unable to make their own decisions. Documents like these can avoid delays in treatment, or someone else making a decision that the person might not want. And importantly, a person with an advance directive can probably avoid being declared a person in need of guardianship, because they've taken steps to put someone into that decision-making role. Hear an attorney explain the types of healthcare advance directives available in Illinois and their legal implications.

"UNDERSTANDING SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING"

by Teresa Parks,

Deputy Director, Illinois Guardianship
and Advocacy Commission

Wednesday, June 24

3:00 - 4:30 PM CST



This presentation will provide an overview of Illinois' Supported Decision-Making Act, including its application, underlying principles, and its use. The presenter will explain how individuals can identify a supporter to assist with identified areas of support that will empower them to reach decisions regarding their lives. The presentation will cover supporter duties, limitations and safeguards that protect the individual's decisions. Finally, the presentation will include a review of a Supported Decision-Making Agreement Form as well as how a Supported Decision-Making Arrangement works.

**On the day and time of the
events, scan this QR code to be
taken directly into the meeting.**



*SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS
ABOUT THE SPEAKERS.*

2026 WEBINAR FOR FAMILIES

Understanding Guardianship, Advanced Directives and Supported Decision-Making in Illinois. A Webinar Series for Families, Guardians and the General Public.



"UNDERSTANDING GUARDIANSHIP"

by Sarah Smith,

Managing Attorney, Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission

Sarah Smith serves with the Office of State Guardian (OSG) as a Managing Attorney, a division of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission. As managing attorney, Sarah supervises legal work for OSG in Cook, Lake, DuPage, Will, and Grundy Counties and provides guidance for OSG staff. Sarah graduated from Loyola University Chicago School of Law.



"UNDERSTANDING ADVANCED DIRECTIVES"

by Laurel Spahn,

Attorney, Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission

Laurel Spahn has served as an attorney for the Legal Advocacy Service – a division of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission devoted to providing trial and appellate representation to persons with mental illnesses – since 1993. Ms. Spahn represents respondents in involuntary-commitment and involuntary-treatment proceedings at the trial level and has argued mental-health cases in all five districts of the Appellate Court and in the State Supreme Court. She has spoken at national and state mental-health conferences and has co-authored a chapter on Mental Health Law in an Illinois guide for lawyers. She will also bend your ear about the power of advance directives and why it's a good idea if you're an adult to have one, even if you are in perfect health right now.



"UNDERSTANDING SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING"

by Teresa Parks,

Deputy Director, Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission

Teresa Parks, MSW, NCG is the Deputy Director of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission as well as Director of the Commission's Human Rights Authority. Parks holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana and is National Certified Guardian through the Center for Guardianship Certification. Parks is also a graduate of Illinois' Partners in Policy Making Program and the Institute of Special Education Advocacy through William and Mary Law School. Prior to working for the Commission, Parks was a nursing home ombudsman and program director for a community mental health agency. Currently, Parks serves on the board and education committee of the Illinois Guardianship Association, is an appointed member of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, is a trustee for the Center for Guardianship Certification and serves on the Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force. She also serves as the Commission's representative on the Youth Homelessness Subcommittee and the Long-Term Care Council. Parks has also served on various local and regional disability-related boards and committees. Parks has presented at a number of state and national conferences, including numerous presentations on Supported Decision-Making.