

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/blog/keeping-the-ball-rolling-toward-guardianship-reform-in-new-york-state>**

### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

This month, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law guardianship clinic published [acomprehensive report](#) summarizing the recommendations for best practices reform generated by nearly 100 lawyers, judges, social workers, and other practitioners who participated in a day-long conference on guardianship held last November. For those of us who work in [Veras Guardianship Project](#), it is satisfying to see our collective ideas for strengthening and improving New York States guardianship policies and practices in print and in circulation.

This conference was convened at a time of growing national attention to the continuing need for uniform best practice standards in legal guardianship across states, and improving court monitoring and efficiency mechanisms. As a panelist, workshop facilitator, and conferee, I came away from this event feeling optimistic about the emerging consensus that the complexities of guardianship practice demand a multidisciplinary approachone that is fully aligned with the holistic case management model of Veras Guardianship Project.

During the past year, Veras Guardianship Project has been strategizing and collaborating with Cardozo and several interested groups on keeping this momentum going in New York, with the specific goal of implementing a key recommendation of the Third National Guardianship Summit in 2011: establishing a statewide, court-community task force on guardianship. Cardozos report highlights this recommendation, encouraging the formation in New York State of

a Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholdersor WINGS group to facilitate cooperative efforts to advance best practices in guardianship. This WINGS group would be an ongoing statewide guardianship task force that would be charged with identifying key policy and practice issues and making and implementing recommendations for reform. Such a group would be composed of multiple stakeholders, including the courts, advocates, persons with disabilities, the private bar, persons with disabilities, lay guardians, and the service-provider community. To date, planning for such statewide stakeholder entities has begun, is anticipated, or is ongoing at least in Missouri, Ohio and Delaware. New York can join these states at the forefront of the national guardianship reform movement by establishing its own WINGS group.

New York State, which lacks a public guardianship system, has already seen the financial, health-related, and social benefits of Veras Guardianship Projects approach in Kings and New York counties, where the project has since 2005 saved New York State millions of Medicaid dollars by keeping hundreds of people in their own homes and communities and prioritizing high-need, low-asset cases that courts need guardians to serve. Vera sees great promise in taking this model for protecting incapacitated elderly people and those with disabilities to scale. Weve made the first step in that direction this fall, with the opening of our newest office in Queens County, in collaboration with the state Office of Court Administration.

The release of Cardozos report offers the states policymakers an opportunity to take a fresh look at the problems facing guardianship practice in New York and to begin constructing an effective, cost-efficient, and humane system of collaboration among courts, practitioners, and advocates for protecting the growing numbers of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Justice demands that all people adjudicated by a court as requiring a guardian to protect their safety, health, and welfare should have access to trustworthy guardianship care, regardless of their asset levels.

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