CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5837

Chapter 177, Laws of 2026

69th Legislature
2026 Regular Session

GUARDIANSHIP, CONSERVATORSHIP, AND OTHER PROTECTIVE ARRANGEMENTS—ADULTS—VARIOUS PROVISIONS

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 11, 2026

Passed by the Senate February 11, 2026
Yeas 47 Nays 2

DENNY HECK

President of the Senate

Passed by the House March 4, 2026
Yeas 73 Nays 23

LAURIE JINKINS

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Approved March 24, 2026 10:35 AM

BOB FERGUSON

Governor of the State of Washington

CERTIFICATE

I, Sarah Bannister, Secretary of the Senate of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5837** as passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on the dates hereon set forth.

SARAH BANNISTER

Secretary

FILED

March 25, 2026

Secretary of State
State of Washington

ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5837

Passed Legislature - 2026 Regular Session

State of Washington 69th Legislature 2026 Regular Session

By Senate Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Pedersen, Holy, Nobles, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 01/23/26.

AN ACT Relating to guardianship, conservatorship, and other protective arrangements for adults; and amending RCW 11.130.275, 11.130.280, 11.130.285, 11.130.300, 11.130.310, 11.130.380, 11.130.385, 11.130.400, 11.130.410, 11.130.420, 11.130.425, 11.130.605, 11.130.610, 11.130.620, 11.130.630, 11.130.730, and 11.130.750.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

Sec. 1. RCW 11.130.275 and 2020 c 312 s 201 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) All petitions filed under RCW 11.130.270 for appointment of a guardian for an adult shall be heard within ((~~sixty-~~)) 60 days unless an extension of time is requested by a party or the court visitor within such ((~~sixty~~)) 60-day period and granted for good cause shown. If an extension is granted, the court shall set a new hearing date.

(2)(a) A copy of a petition under RCW 11.130.270 and notice of a hearing on the petition must be served personally on the respondent and the court visitor appointed under RCW 11.130.280 not more than five court days after the petition under RCW 11.130.270 has been filed.

(b) Notice under this subsection shall include a clear and easily readable statement of the legal rights of the respondent that could

be restricted or transferred to a guardian by a guardianship order as well as the right to counsel of choice and to a jury trial on whether a basis exists under RCW 11.130.265 for the appointment of a guardian and the issue of the respondent's rights that will be retained or restricted if a guardian is appointed. Such notice must be in substantially the same form as set forth in RCW 11.130.657 and must be double-spaced and in a type size not smaller than ((~~sixteen~~)) 16 point font. The court may not grant the petition if notice substantially complying with this subsection is not served on the respondent.

(3) In a proceeding on a petition under RCW 11.130.270, the notice required under subsection (2) of this section must be given to the persons required to be listed in the petition under RCW 11.130.270((~~(2)~~)) (3) (a) through (c) and any other notice party. Failure to give notice under this subsection does not preclude the court from appointing a guardian.

(4) After the appointment of a guardian, notice of a hearing on a petition for an order under this article, together with a copy of the petition, must be given to:

(a) The adult subject to guardianship;

(b) The guardian; and

(c) Any other notice party or person the court determines pursuant to RCW 11.130.310(5) or a subsequent court order.

Sec. 2. RCW 11.130.280 and 2024 c 267 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) On receipt of a petition under RCW 11.130.270 for appointment of a guardian for an adult, the court shall appoint a court visitor. The court visitor must be an individual with training or experience in the type of abilities, limitations, and needs alleged in the petition.

(2) The court, in the order appointing a court visitor, shall specify the hourly rate the court visitor may charge for his or her services, and shall specify the maximum amount the court visitor may charge without additional court review and approval. The fee shall be charged to the person subject to a guardianship or conservatorship proceeding unless the court finds that such payment would result in substantial hardship upon such person, in which case the county shall be responsible for such costs: PROVIDED, That the court may charge such fee to the petitioner, the person subject to a guardianship or

conservatorship proceeding, or any person who has appeared in the action; or may allocate the fee, as it deems just. If the petition is found to be frivolous or not brought in good faith, the court visitor fee shall be charged to the petitioner. The court shall not be required to provide for the payment of a fee to any salaried employee of a public agency.

(3)(a) The court visitor appointed under subsection (1) of this section shall within five days of receipt of notice of appointment file with the court and serve, either personally or by ((~~certified~~)) first-class mail ((~~with return receipt~~)), the respondent or his or her legal counsel, the petitioner or his or her legal counsel, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.080 with a statement including: His or her training relating to the duties as a court visitor; his or her criminal history as defined in RCW 9.94A.030 for the period covering 10 years prior to the appointment; his or her hourly rate, if compensated; whether the court visitor has had any contact with a party to the proceeding prior to his or her appointment; and whether he or she has an apparent conflict of interest. Within three days of the later of the actual service or filing of the court visitor's statement, any party may set a hearing and file and serve a motion for an order to show cause why the court visitor should not be removed for one of the following three reasons:

(i) Lack of expertise necessary for the proceeding;

(ii) An hourly rate higher than what is reasonable for the particular proceeding; or

(iii) A conflict of interest.

(b) Notice of the hearing shall be provided to the court visitor and all parties. If, after a hearing, the court enters an order replacing the court visitor, findings shall be included, expressly stating the reasons for the removal. If the court visitor is not removed, the court has the authority to assess to the moving party attorneys' fees and costs related to the motion. The court shall assess attorneys' fees and costs for frivolous motions.

(4) A court visitor appointed under subsection (1) of this section shall interview the respondent in person and, in a manner the respondent is best able to understand:

(a) Explain to the respondent the substance of the petition, the nature, purpose, and effect of the proceeding, the respondent's rights at the hearing on the petition, the right to counsel of choice and to a jury trial, and the general powers and duties of a guardian;

(b) Determine whether the respondent would like to request the appointment of an attorney, and determine the respondent's views about the appointment sought by the petitioner, including views about a proposed guardian, the guardian's proposed powers and duties, and the scope and duration of the proposed guardianship; and

(c) Inform the respondent that all costs and expenses of the proceeding, including the respondent's attorney's fees, may be paid from the respondent's assets.

(5) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(6) The court visitor appointed under subsection (1) of this section shall:

(a) Interview the petitioner and proposed guardian, if any;

(b) Visit the respondent's present dwelling and any dwelling in which it is reasonably believed the respondent will live if the appointment is made;

(c) Obtain information from any physician or other person known to have treated, advised, or assessed the respondent's relevant physical or mental condition; and

(d) Investigate the allegations in the petition and any other matter relating to the petition the court directs.

(7) A court visitor appointed under subsection (1) of this section shall file a report in a record with the court and provide a copy of the report to the respondent, petitioner, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.080 at least 15 days prior to the hearing on the petition filed under RCW 11.130.270, which must include:

(a) A summary of self-care and independent living tasks the respondent can manage without assistance or with existing supports, could manage with the assistance of appropriate supportive services, technological assistance, or supported decision making, and cannot manage;

(b) A recommendation regarding the appropriateness of guardianship, including whether a protective arrangement instead of guardianship or other less restrictive alternative for meeting the respondent's needs is available and:

(i) If a guardianship is recommended, whether it should be full or limited; and

(ii) If a limited guardianship is recommended, the powers to be granted to the guardian;

(c) A statement of the qualifications of the proposed guardian and whether the respondent approves or disapproves of the proposed guardian;

(d) A statement whether the proposed dwelling meets the respondent's needs and whether the respondent has expressed a preference as to residence;

(e) A statement whether the respondent declined a professional evaluation under RCW 11.130.290 and what other information is available to determine the respondent's needs and abilities without the professional evaluation;

(f) A statement whether the respondent is able to attend a hearing at the location court proceedings typically are held;

(g) A statement whether the respondent is able to participate in a hearing and which identifies any technology or other form of support that would enhance the respondent's ability to participate; and

(h) Any other matter the court directs.

(8) The appointment of a court visitor has no effect on the determination of the adult respondent's legal capacity and does not overcome the presumption of legal capacity or full legal and civil rights of the adult respondent.

Sec. 3. RCW 11.130.285 and 2020 c 312 s 202 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) The respondent shall have the right to be represented by a willing attorney of their choosing at any stage in guardianship proceedings. Any attorney purporting to represent a respondent or person subject to guardianship shall petition the court to be appointed to represent the respondent or person subject to guardianship.

(b) Unless the respondent in a proceeding for appointment of a guardian for an adult is represented by an attorney, the court ((~~is not required, but may~~)) must appoint an attorney to represent the respondent, regardless of the respondent's ability to pay, ((~~except as provided otherwise in (c) of this subsection~~)) when:

(i) The respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney to the court visitor; or

(ii) In the opinion of the court, the rights and interests of the respondent cannot otherwise be adequately protected and represented.

(c)((~~(i) The court must appoint an attorney to represent the respondent~~)) If an attorney is appointed for the respondent pursuant to (b) of this subsection, the attorney shall be appointed at public expense ((~~when either~~)) if:

((~~(A)~~)) (i) The respondent is unable to afford an attorney;

((~~(B)~~)) (ii) The expense of an attorney would result in substantial hardship to the respondent; or

((~~(C)~~)) (iii) The respondent does not have practical access to funds with which to pay an attorney. If the respondent can afford an attorney but lacks practical access to funds, the court must provide an attorney and may impose a reimbursement requirement as part of a final order.

((~~(ii) When, in the opinion of the court, the rights and interests of the respondent cannot otherwise be adequately protected and represented, the court on its own motion must appoint an attorney at any time to represent the respondent.~~

~~(iii)~~)) (d) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor, under the requirements of RCW 11.130.280(5), shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(e) An attorney must be provided under (b) of this subsection ((~~(1)(c)~~)) as soon as practicable after a petition is filed and long enough before any final hearing to allow adequate time for consultation and preparation. Absent a convincing showing in the record to the contrary, a period of less than three weeks is presumed by a reviewing court to be inadequate time for consultation and preparation.

(2) An attorney representing the respondent in a proceeding for appointment of a guardian for an adult shall:

(a) Make reasonable efforts to ascertain the respondent's wishes;

(b) Advocate for the respondent's wishes to the extent reasonably ascertainable; and

(c) If the respondent's wishes are not reasonably ascertainable, advocate for the result that is the least restrictive in type, duration, and scope, consistent with the respondent's interests.

Sec. 4. RCW 11.130.300 and 2019 c 437 s 308 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The existence of a proceeding for or the existence of a guardianship for an adult is a matter of public record unless the court seals the record after:

(a) The respondent or individual subject to guardianship requests the record be sealed; and

(b) Either:

(i) The petition for guardianship is dismissed; or

(ii) The guardianship is terminated.

(2) An adult subject to a proceeding for a guardianship, whether or not a guardian is appointed, an attorney designated by the adult, and a person entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.310(5) or a subsequent order are entitled to access court records of the proceeding and resulting guardianship, including the guardian's plan under RCW 11.130.340 and report under RCW 11.130.345. A person not otherwise entitled to access court records under this subsection for good cause may petition the court for access to court records of the guardianship, including the guardian's report and plan. The court shall grant access if access is in the best interest of the respondent or adult subject to guardianship or furthers the public interest and does not endanger the welfare or financial interests of the adult.

(3) A report under RCW 11.130.280 of a visitor or a professional evaluation under RCW 11.130.290 is confidential and must be sealed on filing, but is available to:

(a) The court;

(b) The individual who is the subject of the report or evaluation, without limitation as to use;

(c) The petitioner, visitor, ((~~and~~)) petitioner's and respondent's attorneys, and proposed guardians and conservators and their attorneys, for purposes of the proceeding;

(d) Unless the court orders otherwise, an agent appointed under a power of attorney for health care or power of attorney for finances in which the respondent is the principal; and

(e) Any other person if it is in the public interest or for a purpose the court orders for good cause.

Sec. 5. RCW 11.130.310 and 2019 c 437 s 310 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A court order appointing a guardian for an adult must:

(a) Include a specific finding that clear and convincing evidence established that the identified needs of the respondent cannot be met by a protective arrangement instead of guardianship or other less restrictive alternative, including use of appropriate supportive services, technological assistance, or supported decision making;

(b) Include a specific finding that clear and convincing evidence established the respondent was given proper notice of the hearing on the petition;

(c) State whether the adult subject to guardianship retains the right to vote and, if the adult does not retain the right to vote, include findings that support removing that right which must include a finding that the adult cannot communicate, with or without support, a specific desire to participate in the voting process; and

(d) State whether the adult subject to guardianship retains the right to marry and, if the adult does not retain the right to marry, include findings that support removing that right.

(2) An adult subject to guardianship retains the right to vote unless the order under subsection (1) of this section includes the statement required by subsection (1)(c) of this section. An adult subject to guardianship retains the right to marry unless the order under subsection (1) of this section includes the findings required by subsection (1)(d) of this section.

(3) A court order establishing a full guardianship for an adult must state the basis for granting a full guardianship and include specific findings that support the conclusion that a limited guardianship would not meet the functional needs of the adult subject to guardianship.

(4) A court order establishing a limited guardianship for an adult must state the specific powers granted to the guardian.

(5) The court, as part of an order establishing a guardianship for an adult, shall identify any person that subsequently is entitled to:

(a) Notice of the rights of the adult under RCW 11.130.315((~~(2)~~));

(b) Notice of a change in the primary dwelling of the adult;

(c) Notice that the guardian has delegated:

(i) The power to manage the care of the adult;

(ii) The power to make decisions about where the adult lives;

(iii) The power to make major medical decisions on behalf of the adult;

(iv) A power that requires court approval under RCW 11.130.335; or

(v) Substantially all powers of the guardian;

(d) Notice that the guardian will be unavailable to visit the adult for more than two months or unavailable to perform the guardian's duties for more than one month;

(e) A copy of the guardian's plan under RCW 11.130.340 and the guardian's report under RCW 11.130.345;

(f) Access to court records relating to the guardianship;

(g) Notice of the death or significant change in the condition of the adult;

(h) Notice that the court has limited or modified the powers of the guardian; and

(i) Notice of the removal of the guardian.

(6) A spouse, domestic partner, and adult children of an adult subject to guardianship are entitled to notice under subsection (5) of this section unless the court determines notice would be contrary to the preferences or prior directions of the adult subject to guardianship or not in the best interest of the adult.

(7) All orders establishing a guardianship for an adult must contain:

(a) A guardianship summary placed directly below the case caption or on a separate cover page in the form or substantially the same form as set forth in RCW 11.130.665;

(b) The date which the limited guardian or guardian must file the guardian's plan under RCW 11.130.340(1);

(c) ((~~The date by which the court will review the guardian's plan as required by RCW 11.130.340(4);~~

~~(d)~~)) The report interval which the guardian shall file its guardian's ((~~plan~~)) report under RCW 11.130.345. The report interval may be annual, biennial, or triennial;

((~~(e)~~)) (d) The date the limited guardian or guardian must file its guardian's ((~~plan~~)) report under RCW 11.130.345. The due date of the filing of the report shall be within ((~~ninety~~)) 90 days after the anniversary date of the appointment;

((~~(f)~~)) (e) The date for the court to review the guardian's ((~~plan~~)) report under RCW 11.130.345 and enter its order. The court shall conduct the review within ((~~one hundred twenty~~)) 120 days after the anniversary date of the appointment; and

(f) The date on which the original letters of office shall expire, which date shall be 180 days after the anniversary date of appointment.

Sec. 6. RCW 11.130.380 and 2024 c 267 s 9 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) If the respondent in a proceeding to appoint a conservator is a minor, the court may appoint a court visitor to investigate a matter related to the petition or inform the minor or a parent of the minor about the petition or a related matter.

(2) If the respondent in a proceeding to appoint a conservator is an adult, the court shall appoint a court visitor. The duties and reporting requirements of the court visitor are limited to the relief requested in the petition. The court visitor must be an individual with training or experience in the type of abilities, limitations, and needs alleged in the petition.

(3) The court, in the order appointing court visitor, shall specify the hourly rate the court visitor may charge for his or her services, and shall specify the maximum amount the court visitor may charge without additional court review and approval. The fee shall be charged to the person subject to a guardianship or conservatorship proceeding unless the court finds that such payment would result in substantial hardship upon such person, in which case the county shall be responsible for such costs: PROVIDED, That the court may charge such fee to the petitioner, the person subject to a guardianship or conservatorship proceeding, or any person who has appeared in the action; or may allocate the fee, as it deems just. If the petition is found to be frivolous or not brought in good faith, the court visitor fee shall be charged to the petitioner. The court shall not be required to provide for the payment of a fee to any salaried employee of a public agency.

(4)(a) The court visitor appointed under subsection (1) or (2) of this section shall within five days of receipt of notice of appointment file with the court and serve, either personally or by ((~~certified~~)) first-class mail ((~~with return receipt~~)), the respondent or his or her legal counsel, the petitioner or his or her legal counsel, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.080 with a statement including: His or her training relating to the duties as a court visitor; his or her criminal history as defined in RCW 9.94A.030 for the period covering ((~~ten~~)) 10 years

prior to the appointment; his or her hourly rate, if compensated; whether the court visitor has had any contact with a party to the proceeding prior to his or her appointment; and whether he or she has an apparent conflict of interest. Within three days of the later of the actual service or filing of the court visitor's statement, any party may set a hearing and file and serve a motion for an order to show cause why the court visitor should not be removed for one of the following three reasons:

(i) Lack of expertise necessary for the proceeding;

(ii) An hourly rate higher than what is reasonable for the particular proceeding; or

(iii) A conflict of interest.

(b) Notice of the hearing shall be provided to the court visitor and all parties. If, after a hearing, the court enters an order replacing the court visitor, findings shall be included, expressly stating the reasons for the removal. If the court visitor is not removed, the court has the authority to assess to the moving party attorneys' fees and costs related to the motion. The court shall assess attorneys' fees and costs for frivolous motions.

(5) A court visitor appointed under subsection (2) of this section for an adult shall interview the respondent in person and in a manner the respondent is best able to understand:

(a) Explain to the respondent the substance of the petition, the nature, purpose, and effect of the proceeding, the respondent's rights at the hearing on the petition, the right to counsel of choice and to a jury trial, and the general powers and duties of a conservator;

(b) Determine whether the respondent would like to request the appointment of an attorney, and determine the respondent's views about the appointment sought by the petitioner, including views about a proposed conservator, the conservator's proposed powers and duties, and the scope and duration of the proposed conservatorship; and

(c) Inform the respondent that all costs and expenses of the proceeding, including respondent's attorneys' fees, may be paid from the respondent's assets.

(6) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(7) A court visitor appointed under subsection (2) of this section for an adult shall:

(a) Interview the petitioner and proposed conservator, if any;

(b) Review financial records of the respondent, if relevant to the court visitor's recommendation under subsection (8)(b) of this section;

(c) Investigate whether the respondent's needs could be met by a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship or other less restrictive alternative and, if so, identify the arrangement or other less restrictive alternative; and

(d) Investigate the allegations in the petition and any other matter relating to the petition the court directs.

(8) A court visitor appointed under subsection (2) of this section for an adult shall file a report in a record with the court and provide a copy of the report to the respondent, petitioner, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.080 at least ((~~fifteen~~)) 15 days prior to the hearing on the petition filed under RCW 11.130.365, which must include:

(a) A recommendation:

(i) Regarding the appropriateness of conservatorship, or whether a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship or other less restrictive alternative for meeting the respondent's needs is available;

(ii) If a conservatorship is recommended, whether it should be full or limited;

(iii) If a limited conservatorship is recommended, the powers to be granted to the conservator, and the property that should be placed under the conservator's control; and

(iv) If a conservatorship is recommended, the amount of the bond or other verified receipt needed under RCW 11.130.445 and 11.130.500;

(b) A statement of the qualifications of the proposed conservator and whether the respondent approves or disapproves of the proposed conservator;

(c) A statement whether the respondent declined a professional evaluation under RCW 11.130.390 and what other information is available to determine the respondent's needs and abilities without the professional evaluation;

(d) A statement whether the respondent is able to attend a hearing at the location court proceedings typically are held;

(e) A statement whether the respondent is able to participate in a hearing and which identifies any technology or other form of support that would enhance the respondent's ability to participate; and

(f) Any other matter the court directs.

(9) The appointment of a court visitor has no effect on the determination of the adult respondent's legal capacity and does not overcome the presumption of legal capacity or full legal and civil rights of the adult respondent.

Sec. 7. RCW 11.130.385 and 2020 c 312 s 211 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) The respondent shall have the right to be represented by a willing attorney of their choosing at any stage in conservatorship proceedings. Any attorney purporting to represent a respondent or person subject to conservatorship shall petition the court to be appointed to represent the respondent or person subject to conservatorship.

(b) ((~~Unless the respondent in a proceeding for appointment of a conservator is represented by an attorney, the~~)) The court ((~~is not required, but may~~)) must appoint an attorney to represent the respondent, regardless of the respondent's ability to pay, ((~~except as provided otherwise in (c) of this subsection~~)) when:

(i) The respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney to the court visitor; or

(ii) In the opinion of the court, the rights and interests of the respondent cannot otherwise be adequately protected and represented.

(c)((~~(i) The court must appoint an attorney to represent the respondent at public expense when either~~)) If an attorney is appointed for the respondent pursuant to (b) of this subsection, the attorney shall be appointed at public expense if:

((~~(A)~~)) (i) The respondent is unable to afford an attorney;

((~~(B)~~)) (ii) The expense of an attorney would result in substantial hardship to the respondent; or

((~~(C)~~)) (iii) The respondent does not have practical access to funds with which to pay an attorney. If the respondent can afford an attorney but lacks practical access to funds, the court must provide an attorney and may impose a reimbursement requirement as part of a final order.

((~~(ii) When, in the opinion of the court, the rights and interests of the respondent cannot otherwise be adequately protected and represented, the court on its own motion must appoint an attorney at any time to represent the respondent.~~

~~(iii)~~)) (d) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor, under the requirements of RCW 11.130.380(6), shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(e) An attorney must be provided under (b) of this subsection ((~~(1)(c)~~)) as soon as practicable after a petition is filed and long enough before any final hearing to allow adequate time for consultation and preparation. Absent a convincing showing in the record to the contrary, a period of less than three weeks is presumed by a reviewing court to be inadequate time for consultation and preparation.

(2) An attorney representing the respondent in a proceeding for appointment of a conservator shall:

(a) Make reasonable efforts to ascertain the respondent's wishes;

(b) Advocate for the respondent's wishes to the extent reasonably ascertainable; and

(c) If the respondent's wishes are not reasonably ascertainable, advocate for the result that is the least restrictive in type, duration, and scope, consistent with the respondent's interests.

(3) The court is not required, but may appoint an attorney to represent a parent of a minor who is the subject of a proceeding under RCW 11.130.365 if:

(a) The parent objects to appointment of a conservator;

(b) The court determines that counsel is needed to ensure that consent to appointment of a conservator is informed; or

(c) The court otherwise determines the parent needs representation.

Sec. 8. RCW 11.130.400 and 2019 c 437 s 408 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) of this section, a hearing under RCW 11.130.370 may not proceed unless the respondent attends the hearing. If it is not reasonably feasible for the respondent to attend a hearing at the location court proceedings typically are held, the court shall make reasonable efforts to hold the hearing at an alternative location convenient to the respondent

or allow the respondent to attend the hearing using real-time audiovisual technology.

(2) A hearing under RCW 11.130.370 may proceed without the respondent in attendance if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that:

(a) The respondent ((~~consistently and repeatedly~~)) has refused to attend the hearing after having been fully informed of the right to attend and the potential consequences of failing to do so;

(b) There is no practicable way for the respondent to attend and participate in the hearing even with appropriate supportive services or technological assistance; or

(c) The respondent is a minor who has received proper notice and attendance would be harmful to the minor.

(3) The respondent may be assisted in a hearing under RCW 11.130.370 by a person or persons of the respondent's choosing, assistive technology, or an interpreter or translator, or a combination of these supports. If assistance would facilitate the respondent's participation in the hearing, but is not otherwise available to the respondent, the court shall make reasonable efforts to provide it.

(4) The respondent has a right to choose an attorney to represent the respondent at a hearing under RCW 11.130.370.

(5) At a hearing under RCW 11.130.370, the respondent may:

(a) Present evidence and subpoena witnesses and documents;

(b) Examine witnesses, including any court-appointed evaluator and the visitor; and

(c) Otherwise participate in the hearing.

(6) Unless excused by the court for good cause, a proposed conservator shall attend a hearing under RCW 11.130.370.

(7) A hearing under RCW 11.130.370 must be closed on request of the respondent and a showing of good cause.

(8) Any person may request to participate in a hearing under RCW 11.130.370. The court may grant the request, with or without a hearing, on determining that the best interest of the respondent will be served. The court may impose appropriate conditions on the person's participation.

Sec. 9. RCW 11.130.410 and 2020 c 312 s 213 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The existence of a proceeding for or the existence of conservatorship is a matter of public record unless the court seals the record after:

(a) The respondent, the individual subject to conservatorship, or the parent of a minor subject to conservatorship requests the record be sealed; and

(b) Either:

(i) The petition for conservatorship is dismissed; or

(ii) The conservatorship is terminated.

(2) An individual subject to a proceeding for a conservatorship, whether or not a conservator is appointed, an attorney designated by the individual, and a person entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.420(6) or a subsequent order may access court records of the proceeding and resulting conservatorship, including the conservator's plan under RCW 11.130.510 and the conservator's report under RCW 11.130.530. A person not otherwise entitled access to court records under this section for good cause may petition the court for access to court records of the conservatorship, including the conservator's plan and report. The court shall grant access if access is in the best interest of the respondent or individual subject to conservatorship or furthers the public interest and does not endanger the welfare or financial interests of the respondent or individual.

(3) A report under RCW 11.130.380 of a court visitor or professional evaluation under RCW 11.130.390 is confidential and must be sealed on filing, but is available to:

(a) The court;

(b) The individual who is the subject of the report or evaluation, without limitation as to use;

(c) The petitioner, court visitor, petitioner's and respondent's attorneys, and proposed guardians <u>and conservators and their attorneys</u>, for purposes of the proceeding;

(d) Unless the court directs otherwise, an agent appointed under a power of attorney for finances in which the respondent is identified as the principal; and

(e) Any other person if it is in the public interest or for a purpose the court orders for good cause.

Sec. 10. RCW 11.130.420 and 2020 c 312 s 215 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A court order appointing a conservator for a minor must include findings to support appointment of a conservator and, if a full conservatorship is granted, the reason a limited conservatorship would not meet the identified needs of the minor.

(2) A court order appointing a conservator for a minor may dispense with the requirement for the conservator to file reports with the court under RCW 11.130.530 if all the property of the minor subject to the conservatorship is protected by a verified receipt.

(3) A court order appointing a conservator for an adult must:

(a) Include a specific finding that clear and convincing evidence has established that the identified needs of the respondent cannot be met by a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship or other less restrictive alternatives, including use of appropriate supportive services, technological assistance, or supported decision making; and

(b) Include a specific finding that clear and convincing evidence established the respondent was given proper notice of the hearing on the petition.

(4) A court order establishing a full conservatorship for an adult must state the basis for granting a full conservatorship and include specific findings to support the conclusion that a limited conservatorship would not meet the functional needs of the adult.

(5) A court order establishing a limited conservatorship must state the specific property placed under the control of the conservator and the powers granted to the conservator.

(6) The court, as part of an order establishing a conservatorship, shall identify any person that subsequently is entitled to:

(a) Notice of the rights of the individual subject to conservatorship under RCW 11.130.425((~~(2)~~)) (1);

(b) Notice of a sale of or surrender of a lease to the primary dwelling of the individual;

(c) Notice that the conservator has delegated a power that requires court approval under RCW 11.130.435 or substantially all powers of the conservator;

(d) Notice that the conservator will be unavailable to perform the conservator's duties for more than one month;

(e) A copy of the conservator's plan under RCW 11.130.510 and the conservator's report under RCW 11.130.530;

(f) Access to court records relating to the conservatorship;

(g) Notice of a transaction involving a substantial conflict between the conservator's fiduciary duties and personal interests;

(h) Notice of the death or significant change in the condition of the individual;

(i) Notice that the court has limited or modified the powers of the conservator; and

(j) Notice of the removal of the conservator.

(7) If an individual subject to conservatorship is an adult, the spouse, domestic partner, and adult children of the adult subject to conservatorship are entitled under subsection (6) of this section to notice unless the court orders otherwise based on good cause. Good cause includes the court's determination that notice would be contrary to the preferences or prior directions of the adult subject to conservatorship.

(8) If an individual subject to conservatorship is a minor, each parent and adult sibling of the minor is entitled under subsection (6) of this section to notice unless the court determines notice would not be in the best interest of the minor.

(9) All orders establishing a conservatorship for an adult must contain:

(a) A conservatorship summary placed directly below the case caption or on a separate cover page in the form or substantially the same form as set forth in RCW 11.130.665;

(b) The date which the limited conservator or conservator must file the conservator's plan under RCW 11.130.510;

(c) The date which the limited conservator or conservator must file an inventory under RCW 11.130.515;

(d) ((~~The date by which the court will review the conservator's plan as required by RCW 11.130.510;~~

~~(e)~~)) The report interval which the conservator must file its report under RCW 11.130.530. The report interval may be annual, biennial, or triennial;

((~~(f)~~)) (e) The date the limited conservator or conservator must file its report under RCW 11.130.530. The due date of the filing of the report shall be within ((~~ninety~~)) 90 days after the anniversary date of the appointment;

((~~(g)~~)) (f) The date for the court to review the report under RCW 11.130.530 and enter its order. The court shall conduct the review within ((~~one hundred twenty~~)) 120 days after the anniversary date of the appointment; and

(g) The date on which the original letters of office shall expire, which date shall be 180 days after the anniversary date of appointment.

Sec. 11. RCW 11.130.425 and 2024 c 267 s 10 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Not later than ((~~thirty~~)) 14 days after appointment of a conservator under RCW 11.130.420, the conservator shall give to the individual subject to conservatorship and any other person entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.420 (6) and (7) a copy of the order of appointment and a statement of the rights of the individual subject to conservatorship and procedures to seek relief if the individual is denied those rights. The statement must be in plain language, in at least ((~~sixteen~~)) 16-point font, and to the extent feasible, in a language in which the individual subject to conservatorship is proficient. The statement must notify the individual subject to conservatorship of the right to:

(a) Seek termination or modification of the conservatorship, or removal of the conservator, and choose an attorney to represent the individual in these matters;

(b) Participate in decision making to the extent reasonably feasible;

(c) Receive a copy of the conservator's plan under RCW 11.130.510, the conservator's inventory under RCW 11.130.515, and the conservator's report under RCW 11.130.530; and

(d) Object to the conservator's inventory, plan, or report.

(2) If a conservator is appointed for the reasons stated in RCW 11.130.360(2)(a)(ii) and the individual subject to conservatorship is missing, notice under this section to the individual is not required.

Sec. 12. RCW 11.130.605 and 2020 c 312 s 311 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) On filing of a petition under RCW 11.130.580 for a protective arrangement instead of guardianship, the court shall appoint a court visitor. The court visitor must be an individual with training or experience in the type of abilities, limitations, and needs alleged in the petition.

(2) On filing of a petition under RCW 11.130.580 for a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship for a minor, the court may appoint a court visitor to investigate a matter related to the

petition or inform the minor or a parent of the minor about the petition or a related matter.

(3) On filing of a petition under RCW 11.130.580 or a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship for an adult, the court shall appoint a court visitor unless the respondent is represented by an attorney appointed by the court. The court visitor must be an individual with training or experience in the types of abilities, limitations, and needs alleged in the petition.

(4) The court, in the order appointing a court visitor, shall specify the hourly rate the court visitor may charge for his or her services, and shall specify the maximum amount the court visitor may charge without additional court review and approval. The fee shall be charged to the person subject to a guardianship, conservatorship, or other protective arrangement proceeding unless the court finds that such payment would result in substantial hardship upon such person, in which case the county shall be responsible for such costs: PROVIDED, That the court may charge such fee to the petitioner, the person subject to a guardianship or conservatorship proceeding, or any person who has appeared in the action; or may allocate the fee, as it deems just. If the petition is found to be frivolous or not brought in good faith, the court visitor fee shall be charged to the petitioner. The court shall not be required to provide for the payment of a fee to any salaried employee of a public agency.

(5)(a) The court visitor appointed under subsection (1) or (3) of this section shall within five days of receipt of notice of appointment file with the court and serve, either personally or by ((~~certified~~)) first-class mail ((~~with return receipt~~)), the respondent or his or her legal counsel, the petitioner or his or her legal counsel, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.080 with a statement including: His or her training relating to the duties as a court visitor; his or her criminal history as defined in RCW 9.94A.030 for the period covering ((~~ten~~)) 10 years prior to the appointment; his or her hourly rate, if compensated; whether the court visitor has had any contact with a party to the proceeding prior to his or her appointment; and whether he or she has an apparent conflict of interest. Within three days of the later of the actual service or filing of the court visitor's statement, any party may set a hearing and file and serve a motion for an order to show cause why the court visitor should not be removed for one of the following three reasons:

(i) Lack of expertise necessary for the proceeding;

(ii) An hourly rate higher than what is reasonable for the particular proceeding; or

(iii) A conflict of interest.

(b) Notice of the hearing shall be provided to the court visitor and all parties. If, after a hearing, the court enters an order replacing the court visitor, findings shall be included, expressly stating the reasons for the removal. If the court visitor is not removed, the court has the authority to assess to the moving party attorneys' fees and costs related to the motion. The court shall assess attorneys' fees and costs for frivolous motions.

(6) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(7) A court visitor appointed under subsection (1) or (3) of this section shall interview the respondent in person and in a manner the respondent is best able to understand:

(a) Explain to the respondent the substance of the petition, the nature, purpose, and effect of the proceeding, and the respondent's rights at the hearing on the petition;

(b) Determine the respondent's views with respect to the order sought;

(c) Inform the respondent that all costs and expenses of the proceeding, including respondent's attorneys' fees, may be paid from the respondent's assets;

(d) If the petitioner seeks an order related to the dwelling of the respondent, visit the respondent's present dwelling and any dwelling in which it is reasonably believed the respondent will live if the order is granted;

(e) If a protective arrangement instead of guardianship is sought, obtain information from any physician or other person known to have treated, advised, or assessed the respondent's relevant physical or mental condition;

(f) If a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship is sought, review financial records of the respondent, if relevant to the court visitor's recommendation under subsection ((~~(7)~~)) (8)(b) of this section; and

(g) Investigate the allegations in the petition and any other matter relating to the petition the court directs.

((~~(7)~~)) (8) A court visitor under subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section promptly shall file a report in a record with the court and provide a copy of the report to the respondent, petitioner, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.580 (1) through (3), at least ((~~fifteen~~)) 15 days prior to the hearing on the petition filed under RCW 11.130.585, 11.130.590, or 11.130.595, which must include:

(a) To the extent relevant to the order sought, a summary of self-care, independent living tasks, and financial management tasks the respondent:

(i) Can manage without assistance or with existing supports;

(ii) Could manage with the assistance of appropriate supportive services, technological assistance, or supported decision making; and

(iii) Cannot manage;

(b) A recommendation regarding the appropriateness of the protective arrangement sought and whether a less restrictive alternative for meeting the respondent's needs is available;

(c) If the petition seeks to change the physical location of the dwelling of the respondent, a statement whether the proposed dwelling meets the respondent's needs and whether the respondent has expressed a preference as to the respondent's dwelling;

(d) A statement whether the respondent declined a professional evaluation under RCW 11.130.615 and what other information is available to determine the respondent's needs and abilities without the professional evaluation;

(e) A statement whether the respondent is able to attend a hearing at the location court proceedings typically are held;

(f) A statement whether the respondent is able to participate in a hearing and which identifies any technology or other form of support that would enhance the respondent's ability to participate; and

(g) Any other matter the court directs.

Sec. 13. RCW 11.130.610 and 2020 c 312 s 318 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) The respondent shall have the right to be represented by a willing attorney of their choosing at any stage in protective arrangement proceedings. Any attorney purporting to represent a respondent or person subject to a protective arrangement shall

petition the court to be appointed to represent the respondent or person subject to a protective arrangement.

(b) Unless the respondent in a proceeding under this article is represented by an attorney, the court ((~~is not required, but may~~)) must appoint an attorney to represent the respondent, regardless of the respondent's ability to pay, ((~~except as provided otherwise in (c) of this subsection~~)) when:

(i) The respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney to the court visitor; or

(ii) In the opinion of the court, the rights and interests of the respondent cannot otherwise be adequately protected and represented.

(c)((~~(i) The court must appoint an attorney to represent the respondent at public expense when either~~)) If an attorney is appointed for the respondent pursuant to (b) of this subsection, the attorney shall be appointed at public expense when:

((~~(A)~~)) (i) The respondent is unable to afford an attorney;

((~~(B)~~)) (ii) The expense of an attorney would result in substantial hardship to the respondent; or

((~~(C)~~)) (iii) The respondent does not have practical access to funds with which to pay an attorney. If the respondent can afford an attorney but lacks practical access to funds, the court must provide an attorney and may impose a reimbursement requirement as part of a final order.

((~~(ii) When, in the opinion of the court, the rights and interests of the respondent cannot otherwise be adequately protected and represented, the court on its own motion must appoint an attorney at any time to represent the respondent.~~

~~(iii)~~)) (d) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor, under the requirements of RCW 11.130.280(5), shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(e) An attorney must be provided under (b) of this subsection ((~~(1)(c)~~)) as soon as practicable after a petition is filed and long enough before any final hearing to allow adequate time for consultation and preparation. Absent a convincing showing in the record to the contrary, a period of less than three weeks is presumed by a reviewing court to be inadequate time for consultation and preparation.

(2) An attorney representing the respondent in a proceeding under this article shall:

(a) Make reasonable efforts to ascertain the respondent's wishes;

(b) Advocate for the respondent's wishes to the extent reasonably ascertainable; and

(c) If the respondent's wishes are not reasonably ascertainable, advocate for the result that is the least restrictive alternative in type, duration, and scope, consistent with the respondent's interests.

(3) The court is not required, but may appoint an attorney to represent a parent of a minor who is the subject of a proceeding under this article if:

(a) The parent objects to the entry of an order for a protective arrangement instead of guardianship or conservatorship;

(b) The court determines that counsel is needed to ensure that consent to the entry of an order for a protective arrangement is informed; or

(c) The court otherwise determines the parent needs representation.

Sec. 14. RCW 11.130.620 and 2019 c 437 s 509 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) of this section, a hearing under this article may not proceed unless the respondent attends the hearing. If it is not reasonably feasible for the respondent to attend a hearing at the location court proceedings typically are held, the court shall make reasonable efforts to hold the hearing at an alternative location convenient to the respondent or allow the respondent to attend the hearing using real-time audiovisual technology.

(2) A hearing under this article may proceed without the respondent in attendance if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that:

(a) The respondent ((~~consistently and repeatedly~~)) has refused to attend the hearing after having been fully informed of the right to attend and the potential consequences of failing to do so;

(b) There is no practicable way for the respondent to attend and participate in the hearing even with appropriate supportive services and technological assistance; or

(c) The respondent is a minor who has received proper notice and attendance would be harmful to the minor.

(3) The respondent may be assisted in a hearing under this article by a person or persons of the respondent's choosing, assistive technology, or an interpreter or translator, or a combination of these supports. If assistance would facilitate the respondent's participation in the hearing, but is not otherwise available to the respondent, the court shall make reasonable efforts to provide it.

(4) The respondent has a right to choose an attorney to represent the respondent at a hearing under this article.

(5) At a hearing under this article, the respondent may:

(a) Present evidence and subpoena witnesses and documents;

(b) Examine witnesses, including any court-appointed evaluator and the visitor; and

(c) Otherwise participate in the hearing.

(6) A hearing under this article must be closed on request of the respondent and a showing of good cause.

(7) Any person may request to participate in a hearing under this article. The court may grant the request, with or without a hearing, on determining that the best interests of the respondent will be served. The court may impose appropriate conditions on the person's participation.

Sec. 15. RCW 11.130.630 and 2019 c 437 s 511 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The existence of a proceeding for or the existence of a protective arrangement instead of guardianship or conservatorship is a matter of public record unless the court seals the record after:

(a) The respondent, the individual subject to the protective arrangement, or the parent of a minor subject to the protective arrangement requests the record be sealed; and

(b) Either:

(i) The proceeding is dismissed;

(ii) The protective arrangement is no longer in effect; or

(iii) An act authorized by the order granting the protective arrangement has been completed.

(2) A respondent, an individual subject to a protective arrangement instead of guardianship or conservatorship, an attorney designated by the respondent or individual, a parent of a minor subject to a protective arrangement, and any other person the court determines are entitled to access court records of the proceeding and

resulting protective arrangement. A person not otherwise entitled access to court records under this subsection for good cause may petition the court for access. The court shall grant access if access is in the best interest of the respondent or individual subject to the protective arrangement or furthers the public interest and does not endanger the welfare or financial interests of the respondent or individual.

(3) A report of a visitor or professional evaluation generated in the course of a proceeding under this article must be sealed on filing but is available to:

(a) The court;

(b) The individual who is the subject of the report or evaluation, without limitation as to use;

(c) The petitioner, visitor, ((~~and~~)) petitioner's and respondent's attorneys, and proposed guardians, conservators, and special agents, and their attorneys, for purposes of the proceeding;

(d) Unless the court orders otherwise, an agent appointed under a power of attorney for finances in which the respondent is the principal;

(e) If the order is for a protective arrangement instead of guardianship and unless the court orders otherwise, an agent appointed under a power of attorney for health care in which the respondent is identified as the principal; and

(f) Any other person if it is in the public interest or for a purpose the court orders for good cause.

Sec. 16. RCW 11.130.730 and 2020 c 312 s 607 are each amended to read as follows:

The following are disqualified from acting as a supporter:

(1) A person who is an employer or employee of the adult with a disability, unless the person is ((~~an~~)): (a) An immediate family member of the adult with a disability; or (b) a certified professional guardian and conservator or certified professional guardian and conservator agency;

(2) A person directly providing paid support services to the adult with a disability, unless the person is an immediate family member of the adult with a disability; and

(3) An individual against whom the person with a disability has obtained an order of protection from abuse, or an individual who is

the subject of a civil or criminal order prohibiting contact with the adult with a disability.

Sec. 17. RCW 11.130.750 and 2020 c 312 s 611 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A person who receives the original or a copy of a supported decision-making agreement shall rely on the agreement.

(2) A person is not subject to criminal or civil liability and has not engaged in professional misconduct for an act or omission if the act or omission is done in good faith and in reliance on a supported decision-making agreement.

(3) A person who is asked to accept an acknowledged supported decision-making agreement may request, and rely upon without further investigation, a supporter's certification given under penalty of perjury meeting the following requirements:

(a) The person presenting themselves as the supporter and signing the affidavit or declaration is the person so named in the supported decision-making agreement;

(b) To the best of the supporter's knowledge, the principal is still alive;

(c) To the best of the supporter's knowledge, at the time the supported decision-making agreement was signed, the principal was competent to execute the document and was not under undue influence to sign the document;

(d) The supporter does not have actual knowledge of the revocation, termination, limitation, or modification of the supported decision-making agreement or of the supporter's authority; and

(e) The supporter is acting in good faith pursuant to the authority given under the supported decision-making agreement.

(4) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (5) of this section:

(a) If a person requests a certification, the person shall accept the supported decision-making agreement no later than five business days after receipt of the certification; and

(b) A person may not require an additional or different form of supported decision-making agreement for authority granted in the supported decision-making agreement presented.

(5) A person is not required to accept an acknowledged supported decision-making agreement if:

(a) The person is not otherwise required to engage in a transaction with the principal in the same circumstances;

(b) Engaging in a transaction with the supporter or the principal in the same circumstances would be inconsistent with federal law;

(c) The person has actual knowledge of the termination of the supporter's authority or of the supported decision-making agreement before exercise of the power;

(d) A request for a certification is refused;

(e) The person in good faith believes that the power is not valid or that the supporter does not have the authority to perform the act requested, whether or not a certification has been requested or provided; or

(f) The person makes, or has actual knowledge that another person has made, a report to the department of social and health services stating a good faith belief that the principal may be subject to physical or financial abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment by the supporter or a person acting for or with the supporter.

(6) A person who refuses in violation of this section to accept an acknowledged supported decision-making agreement is subject to:

(a) A court order mandating acceptance of the supported decision-making agreement; and

(b) Liability for reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in any action or proceeding that confirms the validity of the supported decision-making agreement or mandates acceptance of the supported decision-making agreement.

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