Seven Areas of Guardianship

When someone may need help making decisions, the district court looks at seven areas of their life. The court will choose the least restrictive option. This means giving them as much independence as possible, while still offering support. Guardianship can be general (full) or limited in each area.

Residence:

- Choosing where to live
- Using adult support services

Education:

- School plans like IEPs or Life Plans
- Going to college or job training

Medical Treatment:

- Making decisions about health care

Legal Affairs:

- Signing contracts
- Decisions about marriage, voting, or joining the military

Employment:

- Finding a job
- Joining job training programs

Finances:

- Managing checking and savings accounts
- Handling credit, debt, or Medicaid

Health:

- Making sure they have enough food and clothing
- Other important daily needs

If someone sets up a power of attorney before a financial guardian is chosen, the power of attorney comes first. A parent can sometimes be both a guardian and have the power of attorney.

Sometimes, Social Security picks someone (not the guardian) to be a representative payee—this person manages the person's benefits and spending.

- Example: We are our daughter's financial guardians, but a local service provider is her representative payee. They handle her benefits and daily spending with a set budget. We get regular reports and are asked about big purchases, but we don't manage her weekly grocery money.

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