

KANSAS GUARDIANSHIP PROGRAM
BUDGET DOCUMENT
FY 2026

September 16, 2024

Mr. Adam Proffitt, Director
Division of the Budget
State of Kansas
900 SW Jackson Street, Suite 504
Landon State Office Building
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Mr. Proffitt,

On behalf of Kansas Guardianship Program (“KGP”), we are pleased to submit our budget for your review.

This document has been prepared following your office's guidance. We wish to express our appreciation for our Budget Analyst, Ms. Julie Thomas, whose support has been invaluable.

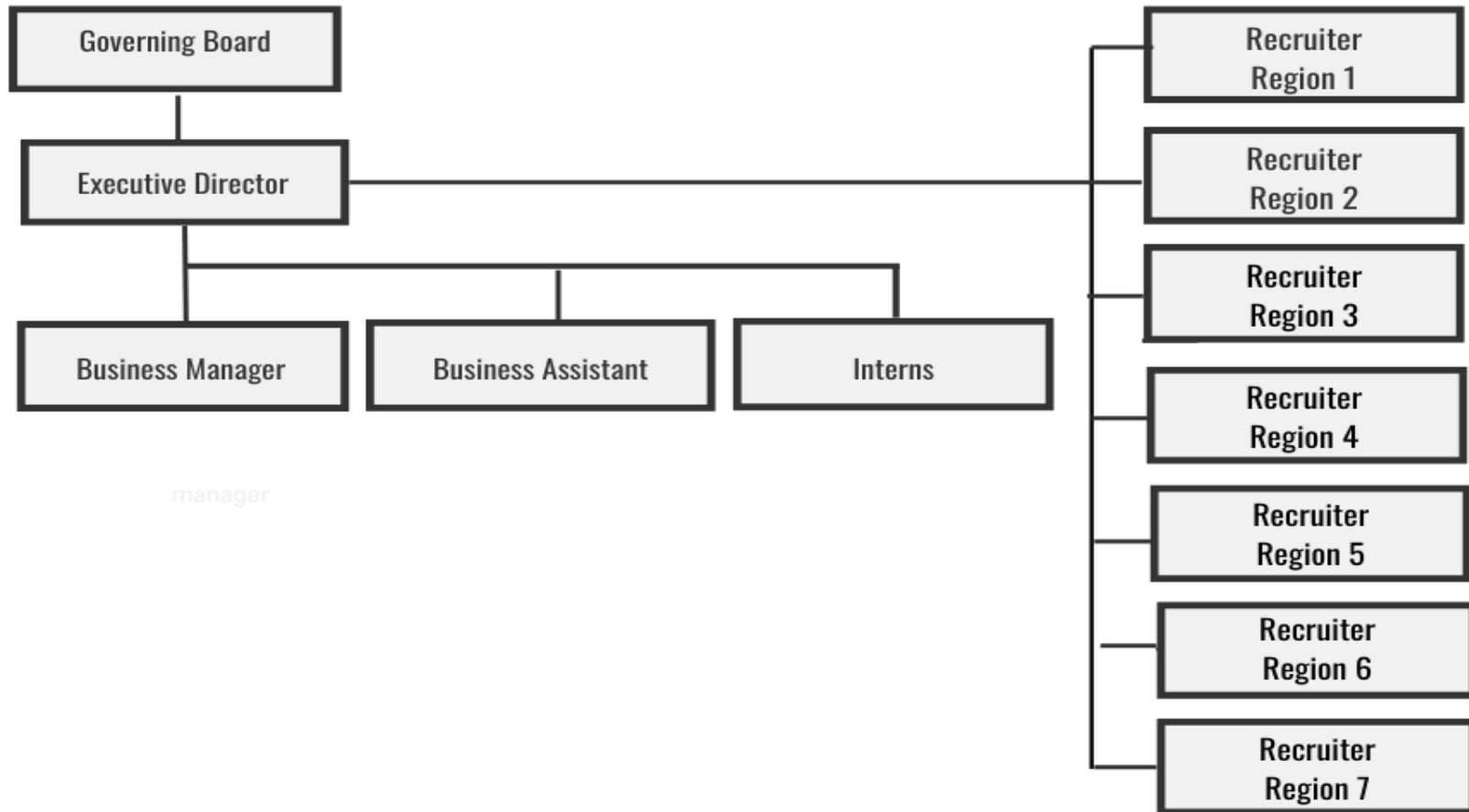
As always, we appreciate your leadership and commitment to excellence.

Please let me know if you need any further information or have any questions.

Regards,

Gena D. Richardson
Executive Director

Organizational Chart



Mission

To ensure that adults lacking familial support or financial resources, who are identified through Adult Protective Services, the Department for Children and Families (DCF), and Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) state hospital social workers, have access to dedicated, qualified, and compassionate volunteers who can serve as their legally appointed guardians or conservators.

Philosophy

The KGP is committed to advocating for and safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the fundamental interdependence of all people and fostering respect for the rights and dignity of every Kansan. We firmly believe that when guardianship or conservatorship is deemed necessary, individuals should benefit from the proactive efforts of their guardian or conservator. These efforts should include fostering meaningful relationships and ensuring the individual has a dedicated advocate.

Programs Established

- 1- The Kansas Guardianship Program, also known to “KGP”, “Guardianship”, and “the Guardianship Program” is a specialized program within itself having no umbrella or feeder programs under the KGP agency.

Statutory History

The Kansas Guardianship Program (KGP) was established in 1979 under the Kansas Advocacy and Protective Services, Inc. In 1995, the program was officially recognized as a public instrumentality by the Kansas Legislature through the enactment of K.S.A. 74-9601 et seq., as amended. The KGP is overseen by a seven-member board of directors, with six members appointed by the Governor and one by the Chief Justice. The primary mission of the program is to recruit and train volunteers to serve as court-appointed guardians or conservators for individuals adjudicated by the court as needing this level of protection and advocacy.

In 1987, the Kansas Legislature enacted H.B. 2906, which was signed into law by the Governor. This legislation established that the State would act as surety on the bond for any conservator serving under the Kansas Guardianship Program. The intent was to eliminate the costs associated with purchasing private conservator bonds required by statute, thereby addressing the financial needs of the increasing number of individuals served by the program. The current statutory reference for this measure is K.S.A. 59-3069(g).

In 2004, the Legislature passed H.B. 2902, which was also signed into law by the Governor. This measure expanded the definition of “employee” in the Kansas Tort Claims Act to include court-appointed guardians and conservators who contract with the Kansas Guardianship Program. This change provides protection for program volunteers in cases of negligence or acts of omission. The current statutory reference for this measure is K.S.A. 75-6102(d)(4).

In 2006, the Kansas Legislature approved additional funding for the KGP, resulting in an increase in the stipend for volunteers serving as guardians and conservators from \$20 to \$30 per month.

Further support was provided by the Kansas Legislature in 2019, which approved additional funding to raise the stipend for these volunteers from \$30 to \$40 per month

Overview: Current Year Estimate & Budget Year Scenarios

Information

- **FY 2025: \$1,564,959** - This level of funding allows for the program to provide the volunteer stipend to serve up to 1145 wards or conservatees.
- **FY 2026: \$1,471,827** - This level of funding allows for the program to provide the volunteer stipend to serve up to 1129 wards or conservatees.

Goals

The KGP is dedicated to ensuring that qualified, compassionate, and trained volunteers are available across the state to serve as court-appointed guardians or conservators for vulnerable adults who lack capable family members to fulfill these roles. The KGP is engaged when individuals, identified by DCF Adult Protective Services or KDADS State Hospital social workers, have no other viable options for support and protection. Legal services are provided by the State to petition the court to determine impairment. The individuals served by the KGP may be regarded as wards of the State.

Objective

To provide that volunteers are available to serve as court appointed guardians or conservators of adults adjudicated as impaired and in need of a guardian or conservator.

Strategies

1. To recruit, screen and train volunteers to serve newly adjudicated individuals determined by the court to need a guardian or conservator.
2. To recruit, screen and train volunteers to serve as successor guardian or conservator for those whose current KGP guardian or conservator is no longer willing or able to serve in this capacity.
3. To provide ongoing training, technical support, and information systems for the volunteers throughout the duration of the guardianship or conservatorship service.
4. To require and review monthly written reports from the guardian or conservator regarding the status of and services provided to the ward or conservatee.

5. To provide monthly \$40 stipends to offset out-of-pocket expenses for the volunteers serving as guardian or conservator.
6. To provide notice and review of the annual court required guardian report regarding the personal status of the ward, and the conservator accounting regarding the status of the conservatee resources.
7. To meet the increased demands for services and supports as more individuals are residing in community living because of downsizing State hospitals and closure of large bed institutional settings.
8. To evaluate satisfaction with the information, training, support, and assistance provided to the volunteers serving as guardians or conservators.
9. To evaluate periodically the satisfaction with information/training provided to groups or persons other than KGP volunteers.

* Decrease is indicative of cyberattacks felt across the state.

Performance Measures: Objective #1	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Estimate
Percentage of adults identified in need of a court-appointed guardian or conservator who receive guardianship or conservatorship services in the FY	95%	92%	92%	91%
Number of volunteers providing guardianship or conservatorship services in the FY	717	717	719	711
Percentage of volunteer recruits who make application to become a KGP volunteer and complete initial screening and training in the FY		55%* (49/27)	90%	91%
Average cost per day per all adults served within FY	\$2.78	\$2.93	\$3.74	\$3.57

Expenditure Justification

Object Code 100, Salaries and Wages

Small but mighty, the KGP operates from three physical locations across Kansas and maintains an annual budget for 10 full-time equivalents (FTEs), which aligns with its yearly staffing plan. The agency's primary focus is on providing efficient support, oversight, and leadership for the recruitment, training, and monitoring of volunteer guardians and conservators. Although the current staffing model has been stable for several years, it has not been updated to incorporate contemporary trends in Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement within the social service sector.

The agency's 10 full-time employees are divided between administrative roles and programmatic (field) staff. The administrative team comprises an executive director, a business manager, and a business assistant, who handle day-to-day operations and oversight. The programmatic team includes seven recruiters responsible for field activities.

All employees have substantial experience in relevant fields such as mental health, disability services, substance use treatment, criminal justice, advocacy for at-risk populations, and violence and sexual assault services. Notably, 37.5% of the workforce holds at least a master's degree, and 25% have advanced training beyond a master's degree, including state private practice licensure and/or national board certification. Additionally, 80% of the programmatic staff either hold or are in the process of obtaining national guardianship certification. All positions within the agency are classified as unclassified-regular.

FY 2025 - \$735,232 reflects funding for current positions.

- This would allow the program to maintain adequate supports to existing volunteers and to recruit new volunteers for ongoing referrals for guardianships or conservatorships.
- Cost indices provided by the Division of the Budget were utilized to calculate all fringe benefits, excluding health insurance and retirement. In today's competitive global economy, benefits play a crucial role, particularly for employees in smaller agencies.
- KPERS: For calculating salaries, we use the local non-school rate, ensuring that our approach aligns with the specific requirements and standards applicable to non-school personnel.
- Health Plan: When determining health plan costs, we refer to the rates established for the Non-State Employee Health Plan, which allows us to provide accurate and relevant calculations based on the specific health plan provisions.

FY 2026 - \$754,307 in funding would continue the current level of staffing and ensure the KGP can attract and retain qualified employees. Cost indices provided by the Division of the Budget were used to compute all fringe benefits except for health insurance and KPERS. KGP uses the KPERS local non-school rate for salary calculations. Health insurance costs are calculated using the non-State Employee Health plan rates for employers.

Object Code 200 – 290, Contractual Services

Summary: Program activities are undertaken to provide for the availability of qualified nominees for court appointed guardians or conservators for persons adjudicated in need of guardianship or conservatorship services. This is accomplished through maintaining activities to recruit, screen and train volunteers.

Following the legal appointment of the guardian or conservator, the KGP provides ongoing training, information/referral, monitoring and support to volunteers as they provide advocacy and guardianship or conservatorship services. With the diverse range of issues and the complex landscape to navigate accessing services and supports for individuals, the in-depth expertise provided by KGP staff is essential.

- **Orientation & Training:** This ongoing training and support is critical for the retention of volunteers. Volunteers are committed to empowering individuals to live their best lives while embracing the substantial responsibility of legal guardianship. They undertake this role with the assurance that KGP staff will champion their efforts by providing comprehensive training, monitoring, information, and unwavering support throughout the guardianship or conservatorship journey. Together, we achieve great things.
- **Volunteer Longevity & Retention:** Approximately 70% of our current volunteers have committed five or more years to the program, with 46% having served for a decade or more. These volunteers act as catalysts for change at the grassroots level, embracing the deep legal and moral responsibilities of guardianship. Their enduring dedication highlights the substantial time and effort needed to provide essential care and oversight for many of Kansas's most vulnerable individuals. KGP recognizes that each volunteer requires tailored support to meet their unique needs effectively.
- **Longevity:** Volunteer longevity is critical for two key reasons.
 - (1.) It represents deep, enduring relationships that often span a decade or more, offering vulnerable adults a profound sense of protection and security. This consistency is crucial as it provides a stable environment, reduces anxiety, and builds trust, all of which contributes to a higher quality of life.
 - (2.) This long-term commitment ensures consistent, reliable care tailored to the individual's needs, preventing disruptions and fostering greater independence. Ultimately, the steadfast dedication of long-term volunteers significantly enhances the well-being of vulnerable and at-risk adults across 105 counties.

- **Retention & Recruitment:** A strong volunteer base is vital for the KGP, as it provides a valuable resource for sourcing potential guardian nominees from within the existing network whenever new referrals come in. As volunteers gain experience, they develop essential skills and deepen their understanding of various areas, including health care, social services, legal issues, and emotional support. This growing expertise enhances their ability to effectively serve and advocate for those in need, ensuring high-quality guardianship and continued support for the community.
- **Communication Expenses:** Expenses for phone and mailing services are crucial for building and sustaining a statewide network of volunteers. In a state with many rural areas, not all residents have access to high-speed internet, making it essential for the agency to use a mixed communication approach that includes traditional methods alongside digital tools. Effective communication is critical because it ensures that volunteers stay informed, engaged, and connected with the program. This connectivity supports timely updates, coordination of efforts, and the dissemination of important information, which is vital for maintaining a cohesive and responsive volunteer network. Moreover, reliable communication helps streamline operations, bolster volunteer support, and ensure that the program can effectively meet the needs of the diverse communities it serves.
- **Printing Costs:** Printed documents remain essential, particularly for older volunteers who may not use computers or digital technology. To support these volunteers, funding is needed to produce crucial materials, including an informational brochure for recruiting new volunteers, a detailed training handbook, a guide to relevant guardianship and conservatorship statutes, an assessment tool for evaluating guardianship needs, and various monitoring documents. These resources are vital for equipping volunteers with the necessary knowledge and tools for their roles. They ensure that volunteers can effectively contribute to the program and address the diverse needs of the communities served. Reliable communication and well-designed materials are key to enhancing volunteer effectiveness and achieving program success.
- **Office Expenses:** Funds are used to cover the overhead expenses of rent and utilities, ensuring that offices in Manhattan, Kansas City, and Wichita remain welcoming and operational. This support helps maintain professional spaces where our employees can work effectively and continue to serve our community with dedication. Situated in three areas across the state, the offices offer a designated meeting spot and drop-in area for interested citizens to visit in the event they need information or referrals.
- **Office Equipment Maintenance:** The budget covers repair and maintenance costs for office equipment, ensuring all tools stay in good working order. This investment helps prevent disruptions and keeps operations running smoothly.
- **Travel and Subsistence:** Funding supports statewide travel for recruiting, screening, training, and monitoring volunteers. It also covers travel for delivering information and training to service providers, family members, and other stakeholders.

- **Volunteer Stipends:** Volunteers receive a modest monthly stipend to help cover out-of-pocket expenses for regular visits, phone calls, and communications with support providers, facility staff, medical professionals, psychotherapists, legal professionals, and case managers. Some volunteers have reported using their stipend to offset costs for additional items, such as treats, that the individuals they support might otherwise not receive.
- **Miscellaneous Costs:** The budget also includes fees for an annual independent audit, subscriptions, insurance premiums, and other related expenses.

Object Code 260, Fees (Other Services - Detail)

1. This object code includes the stipend expenditure for volunteers serving as guardians or conservators.
 2. It includes computer support services and database access fees also.
- **FY 2025:** \$707,600 - The contractual services funding will cover office space rentals, travel, subsistence, communications, and other related business expenses needed to recruit and train new volunteers. Additionally, it will support the ongoing training and monitoring of current volunteers, maintain existing stipends, and enable the program to provide stipends for volunteers serving 1,145 wards or conservatees.
 - **FY 2026:** \$707,820 - The contractual services funding will cover office space rentals, travel, subsistence, communications, and other related expenses necessary for recruiting and training new volunteers. It will also support the ongoing training, monitoring, and assistance for current volunteers, ensure the maintenance of existing stipends, and enable the program to provide stipends for volunteers serving 1,129 wards or conservatees.

Object Code 300-390, Commodities

Summary: The program expenditures for commodities are for general office supplies and related professional supplies.

- **FY 2025:** \$9,700 in funding will maintain the level of office and professional supplies to meet the goal of recruiting and supporting volunteers who serve as guardians or conservators.
- **FY 2026:** \$9,700 in funding will maintain the level of office and professional supplies to maintain basic office activity.

Object Code 400, Capital Outlay

Summary: Program expenditures for commodities include the purchase of computer equipment, phone systems, file cabinets, desks, fax machines, and other items costing \$500 or more.

- **FY 2025:** \$112,427
 - \$ 8,000 in funding will allow for updates to the technology infrastructure which supports COOP requirements.
 - \$ 3,000 in funding will allow agency to update back-up computer software

- **FY 2026:** \$0
 - The agency is requesting no capital outlay funds and will request a reappropriation of unused funds as needed.