

Rethinking Guardianship and Less Restrictive Alternatives: Transition to Adulthood

Program Description

Until a child turns eighteen, parents/caregivers have the legal authority and responsibility to make all major decisions for their child. Once the child reaches the age of eighteen, he or she is legally an adult and has the legal authority to make their own decisions about medical care, finances, housing, and other major aspects of daily living. Young adults who have special needs may not be capable of making major decisions on their own. Many times, parents seek legal guardianship of their adult child with special needs so they can continue to make important major decisions for them. Once a guardian is appointed, the person with the special need loses the legal right to make major decisions for themselves. There are several types of guardianship, with distinct roles and responsibilities. There are also less restrictive alternatives to guardianship that allow adults with special needs/disabilities to get support with major decision-making in the least restrictive environment.

This workshop will explore the several types of guardianship and less restrictive alternatives that support self-determination and independence for adolescents with special needs/disabilities transitioning to adulthood

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this the workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain North Carolina's Rethinking Guardianship Initiative.
2. Outline the types of adult guardianship and alternatives to guardianship.
3. Discuss values and principles of self-determination, self-advocacy, and independence
4. Explore transition planning for transition age youth and young adults.
5. List strategies and interventions that promote successful transition to adulthood and independence.

Target Audience

Service Providers, Clinicians, Teachers, Families, Community Members

Agenda

Introductions

Overview: North Carolina Rethinking Guardianship Initiative

Understanding Guardianship and the Guardianship Process

BREAK

Exploring Less Restrictive Alternatives

Group Brainstorming – Coming up with strategies

Contact Hours:

3.0 hours – informational; 6.0 hour – experiential

Faculty

Laurel Powell, MS is the Program Manager for the Family Support Program and the Family Support Network of NC University Office at the UNC School of Social Work. Laurel has worked with the IDD population and their support systems for over 20 years in many capacities. Laurel has expertise in building systems that support individuals with IDD and those who are neurodivergent. Laurel has extensive experience with crisis prevention and intervention planning for people with IDD and trauma histories as well as people with IDD who have co-occurring mental health challenges. Laurel's passions lie in supporting people with IDD and neurodivergence in advocating for their needs and utilizing positive psychology practices to build more accepting and affirming communities. Laurel has a degree in Special Education from UNC Wilmington and a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling and Psychology from the School of Medicine at UNC Chapel Hill.

Barbara Leach is a Family Support Specialist and Special Projects Coordinator. She joined the Family Support Program at UNC, School of Social Work in 2005. She has over 30 years of experience as a child and family advocate for families with children who have mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and other special needs. In addition to providing information and referral for families and providers, Ms. Leach serves as a family advisor on multiple state and national committees that work collaboratively to transform systems so that they better meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families. She presents extensively on topics relating to supporting families, family advocacy, family engagement, family/provider partnership, cultural competence, and systems change. Ms. Leach is passionate about lifting the voices of diverse families and to promoting families as partners to co-create and develop services and systems that improve outcomes so that individuals with disabilities can live their best lives – healthy, independent, and self-determined.