Title XXXI TRUSTS AND ESTATES OF DECEDENTS AND PERSONS UNDER DISABILITY

Chapter 475

475.050. Appointment of guardian or conservator of disabled or incapacitated persons — order of priority. — 1. Before appointing any other eligible person as guardian of an incapacitated person, or conservator of a disabled person, the court shall consider the suitability of appointing any of the following persons, listed in the order of priority, who appear to be willing to serve:

(1) If the incapacitated or disabled person is, at the time of the hearing, able to make and communicate a reasonable choice, any eligible person nominated by the person;

(2) Any eligible person nominated in a durable power of attorney executed by the incapacitated or disabled person, or in an instrument in writing signed by the incapacitated or disabled person and by two witnesses who signed at the incapacitated or disabled person's request, before the inception of the person's incapacity or disability;

(3) The spouse, parents, adult children, adult brothers and sisters and other close adult relatives of the incapacitated or disabled person;

(4) Any other eligible person or, with respect to the estate only, any eligible organization or corporation, nominated in a duly probated will of such a spouse or relative.

2. The court shall not appoint an unrelated third party as a guardian or conservator unless there is no relative suitable and willing to serve or if the appointment of a relative or nominee is otherwise contrary to the best interests of the incapacitated or disabled person. If the incapacitated or disabled person is a minor under the care of the children's division and is entering adult guardianship or conservatorship, it shall be a rebuttable presumption that he or she has no relative suitable and willing to serve as guardian or conservator.

3. Except for good cause shown, the court shall make its appointment in accordance with the incapacitated or disabled person's most recent valid nomination of an eligible person qualified to serve as guardian of the person or conservator of the estate.

4. Except for those individuals specified in subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, the court shall require all guardians and conservators who are seeking appointment and who have a fiduciary responsibility to a ward, an incapacitated person, or a disabled person to submit at their own expense to a background screening that shall include the disqualification lists of the departments of mental health, social services, and health and senior services; the abuse and neglect registries for adults and children; a Missouri criminal record review; and the sexual offender registry. Individuals seeking appointment as a conservator shall also submit, at their own expense, to a credit history investigation. The nominated guardian or conservator shall file the results of the reports with the court at least ten days prior to the appointment hearing date unless waived or modified by the court for good cause shown by an affidavit filed simultaneously with the petition for appointment or in the event the protected person requests an expedited hearing. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to:

(1) Public administrators; or

(2) The ward's, incapacitated person's, or disabled person's spouse, parents, children who have reached eighteen years of age, or siblings who have reached eighteen years of age.

5. Guardians certified by a national accrediting organization may file proof of certification in lieu of the requirements of subsections 4 and 6 of this section.

6. An order appointing a guardian or conservator shall not be signed by the judge until such reports have been filed with the court and reviewed by the judge, who shall consider the reports in determining whether to appoint a guardian or conservator. Such reports, or lack thereof, shall be certified either by an affidavit or by obtaining a certified copy of the reports. No reports or national criminal history record check shall be required by the court upon the application of a petitioner for an emergency temporary guardianship or emergency temporary conservatorship. The court may waive the requirements of this subsection for good cause shown. If appointed, a guardian or conservator may petition the court for reimbursement of the reasonable expenses of the credit history investigation and background screenings.

(L. 1983 S.B. 44 & 45, A.L. 1989 H.B. 145, A.L. 1994 S.B. 734, A.L. 1996 S.B. 719, A.L. 2018 S.B. 806)

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