



FSGATM
Florida State
Guardianship Association

BULLETIN

VOLUME 1

FSGA Working For You in Tallahassee

The Florida Legislative Session formally commences early this year as of Tuesday, January 13th, 2026. Typically the Legislature holds their 60-Day Session during March and April but 2026 is also an election year and consequently the scheduling changed.

As it is FSGA has been actively engaged in meetings and conversations with policy makers since November when Gina Rossi and Carlos McDonald travelled to Tallahassee. Meetings held included Elder Affairs Secretary Michelle Branham, OPPG Director Michelle McDonald (*no relation*), Senator Kathleen Passidomo, and Representative John Snyder.

Already legislation has been filed that involve guardianship and related issues, including a rather omnibus bill by the Department of Elder Affairs – HB 1121 titled Aging and Disability Services. Most of the proposals within HB 1121 involve other functions carried out by Elder Affairs and not related to guardianship and OPPG. However, three provisions in the 47-page bill would impact Chapter 744. One provision would specify that 1-hour of the required 30 of continuing education should involve “Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders.” The other two concern the complaint and disciplinary process by providing for a potential monetary fine of \$500, and ensuring Elder Affairs has subpoena powers to obtain records from guardians and others.

Consequently, continuing to be engaged in conversations with policy makers is paramount. That is why FSGA will again be holding another “Tally Rally” in Tallahassee in the midst of the Legislative Session soon on February 3rd and 4th. Your support is welcomed and needed.

Thank you!

Carlos Mc Donald, FSGA President





THE FLORIDA STATE GUARDIANSHIP ASSOCIATION PROUDLY PRESENTS THE



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5TH ANNUAL ETHICS SYMPOSIUM

FSGA remains unwavering in its commitment to delivering the highest standard of professional education and training in Florida. Join us for this premier three-hour symposium, held in person at Florida State University Alumni Center and broadcast virtually via Zoom for participants statewide.

CLE and CEU credits available

This year's program features three distinguished and timely sessions led by statewide experts:

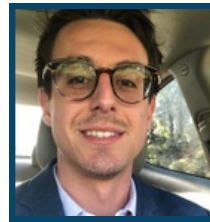
FEBRUARY 5TH, 2026
8:45AM - 1 PM

Supporting Guardianship Excellence: *Insights from the Office of Public & Professional Guardians*



MARYELLEN MCDONALD,

Director, Office of Public & Professional Guardians



KYLE HARMER,

FCCM, Operations Manager, Office of Public & Professional Guardians

Breaking the Silence: *Confronting Elder Domestic Abuse*



LAURA RIISKA,

Statewide Trainer, Florida Domestic Violence Collaborative (FLDVC)

Inside APD: *Current Priorities and What's Ahead for 2026*



ROBERT "BOB" ASZTALOS,

Director, Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Beginning at 8:45 AM, attendees will receive three hours of continuing education focused on guardianship, with emphasis on Guardianship Law and Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation.

Breakfast will be provided for in-person attendees.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

FSGA is pleased to offer select **event sponsorships** for this year's Ethics Symposium. This is a unique opportunity for companies and organizations to gain **high-visibility exposure** and connect directly with **hundreds of FSGA members throughout the year**—well beyond our annual conference. Sponsors will have the valuable chance to place their services in front of **Florida's guardians, attorneys, and industry professionals**, positioning their business as a trusted partner in the field.

SPONSOR:



GUARDIAN.COURSELAUNCH.IO

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPONSOR THIS EVENT?



SIGN UP ONLINE. LOG IN FOR THE FSGA MEMBER DISCOUNT

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FLORIDA GUARDIANSHIP FOUNDATION



The Florida Guardianship Foundation (FGF), FSGA's sister organization, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit first established in 2003 with a mission to enhance education and strengthen the quality of guardianship services throughout Florida. The Foundation continues to play a vital role in advancing professional standards and supporting those who serve vulnerable adults.

Donor Recognition

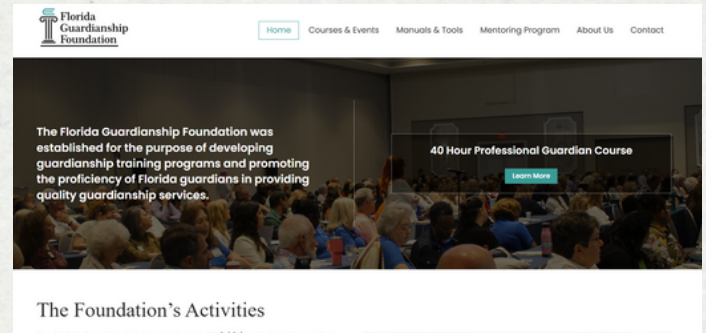
The Foundation is grateful to recognize **Lance Mc Kinney Esq. and Lee Guardianship Services, Inc.** Lee Guardianship Services is a Florida not-for-profit organization with 501(c) charitable status whose mission is to provide affordable special needs trust services to disabled Floridians and to fund guardianship services for Southwest Florida residents served through public guardianship.

Lee Guardianship Services serves as trustee for the Lee Guardianship Services Pooled Trust as well as individual private special needs trusts, ensuring long-term financial security and support for those they serve. Their commitment to protecting and supporting vulnerable populations exemplifies the collaborative spirit that strengthens guardianship services across our state.

To learn more about Lee Guardianship Services, visit www.leeguardianshipservices.com.



New Website!



FGF recently launched a new website—[*www.flgdfoundation.com*](http://www.flgdfoundation.com)—which highlights its cornerstone initiatives, including the 40-Hour Professional Guardian Course and the Foundation's newly developed Mentoring Program. The Foundation also created the **first-ever Guidelines and Best Practices for teaching the 40-Hour Professional Guardian Course**, released alongside an updated training manual. Instructors who meet these standards are recognized as **Foundation Certified Instructors**, and a full list of certified instructors can be found on the Foundation's "About Us" page.

In another exciting development, students who complete the 40-Hour Course with a Foundation Certified Instructor are now eligible to participate in the **FGF Mentoring Program: Ethical Standards Training in Guardianship Project**. This program is designed to support new guardians by providing:

- One-on-one guidance and professional support
- Practical tools and helpful resources
- Training focused on ethics and person-centered care
- A strong foundation in best practices for serving vulnerable adults

Have you Renewed Your FSGA Membership?



For more than three decades, the Florida State Guardianship Association has grown into a strong community of more than 625 members across 15 chapters statewide. Our members are the driving force behind our work—without you, FSGA could not advocate for guardians or the vulnerable individuals they serve.

Membership is both essential to our mission and an investment in your professional success. FSGA provides critical education, training, legislative advocacy, and statewide connections that help guardians stay informed, effective, and supported in a demanding profession. Renewing your membership ensures you remain an active part of this collective voice and allows FSGA to continue leading and strengthening guardianship practice in Florida. Renew today and don't miss the opportunity to stay engaged and make an impact.

Member Benefits

ENHANCED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Access exclusive opportunities for Webinars and skill development
- Free and Discounted Continuing Education Units CEUs across various disciplines
- Member Only early registration

YOUR VOICE HEARD IN TALLAHASSEE

- Advocacy in Tallahassee with direct engagement to policymakers
- Your stories and the facts set straight with media across the state
- Stay informed and connected with crucial updates and insights delivered straight to your inbox

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS ON SIGNATURE EVENTS

- Enjoy special pricing and exclusive access to highly anticipated events
- Annual Symposium - Learn from industry experts on ethics from case studies and earn CEUs
- Annual Conference - Network with hundreds of like-minded professionals and hone your skills through educational seminars

STAY IN THE KNOW

- Guardianship News and purpose-driven stories from around the state
- Keep up to date with our FSGA Bulletins

NETWORKING AND ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand your professional network and visibility through our exclusive membership directory.
- Connect with industry peers at local chapters and statewide events
- Grow your practice by making connections with related fields
- Leverage prime advertising opportunities on the FSGA website to showcase your services.
- Join our Peer Community and collaborate online with Listserv

RENEW NOW!

Save the date: our next Free Friday Webinar for members will take place on April 10, 2026.

PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONALISM

FSGA 39th Annual Conference



SAVE THE DATE

JULY,
29-31

2026

[RESERVATION LINK](#)

Rosen Plaza 9700 International Drive,
Orlando, Florida 32819

Secure your reduced rate hotel reservations today.
ROOMS ARE LIMITED

You may call the Rosen Plaza to secure a room by
referencing the FSGA room block 1-800-204-7234

In Memoriam: Honoring Members We Lost in 2025

We pause to remember and honor the members we lost in 2025, with gratitude for their service, leadership, and commitment to guardianship.



EDWARD MARVIN LEAFFER

Edward Marvin Leaffer, age 85, of Port Charlotte, Florida, formerly of Matlacha, Florida, passed away on Tuesday, September 2, 2025. He was born on September 6, 1939, in Revere, Massachusetts. Edward graduated from Kenyon College in 1961 and later earned his MBA from the Questrom School of Business at Boston University in 1972.

Edward served for many years as a Florida Ombudsman before becoming a professional guardian in 2012. A beloved member of the Florida State Guardianship Association, he was known as a kind soul and a gifted conversationalist who brought warmth, insight, and thoughtfulness to every interaction. He will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his FSGA colleagues and friends.



BETTY PEARL GALL

Betty Pearl Gall, 75, of Ocala, FL quilter, tool designer, instructor, and business owner passed away on September 26, 2025 surrounded and held by family and friends.

Betty Gall began her Guardianship journey over 20 years ago. She was actually working as a housekeeper for a Guardian in Marion County and became interested in how this Guardian was helping people. She began asking questions and the answers to those questions began a new and destined career for Betty as a Professional Guardian.

During her career, she accepted many and various Guardianship cases with open arms and an open heart. Betty exhibited genuine caring for all her wards and went out of her way to listen to their needs and concerns.

Betty not only served as a Professional Guardian, but she supported the Heart of Florida Guardianship Chapter by attending meetings, mentoring new Guardians and serving as the Chapter Treasurer for many years.

On a personal level, Betty had an amazing sense of humor and could put difficult situations in their proper perspective using that humor. Her laugh was contagious and will be missed by many.



SHERRI GRAHAM

Sherri Graham passed away on December 5, 2025, in Cleburne, Texas, surrounded by the loving arms of her family. Sherri was a longtime member and past president of the Florida State Guardianship Association, where she played an instrumental role

in conference planning and the growth of the Association. Known for her infectious laugh, boundless energy, and unwavering dedication, Sherri was affectionately nicknamed the "Texas Tornado." She was a bright light in our community and will be deeply missed by her FSGA family.

