



## Alternatives to Guardianship Project

Hulme Resources Inc.

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Cassie Brown, MSW, LCSW  
Executive Director  
NASW - Missouri Chapter

Sent via email:  
[cbrown.naswmo@socialworkers.org](mailto:cbrown.naswmo@socialworkers.org)

Re: The Role of Social Workers in Evaluating Alternatives to Guardianship

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing on behalf of Alternatives to Guardianship, a project funded by the Department of Mental Health on behalf of the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council. Information about our mission and activities is found at: <http://alternativestoguardianship.com/>

The purpose of this letter is to invite the Missouri Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers to explore with us and other disability rights organizations ways to expand the use of social workers to evaluate alternatives to guardianship, such as supported decision-making, for adults with developmental disabilities when their mental capacity is called into question.

Data gathered by Spectrum Institute from the UMKC and the United States Census Bureau suggests that 73,000 adults in Missouri have developmental disabilities. Fewer than half of them are in a guardianship. It would therefore appear that most adults with developmental disabilities currently are making their own medical, financial, and other personal decisions.

Many petitions for guardianship are filed based on concerns of that an adult with developmental disabilities may lack capacity to care for their personal, medical, or financial needs. In the past, such guardianship petitions were often granted without a thorough and nuanced assessment of capacity for a wide range of decision-making areas and without a serious exploration of less restrictive alternatives to guardianship, such as supported decision-making.

Several years ago, the Missouri Legislature passed legislation ([RSMo Section 475.075\(13\)](#)) to require Missouri courts to consider and rule out less restrictive alternatives. This Project has been [reaching out](#) to public officials, nonprofit organizations, and professional associations in Missouri to encourage the consideration of alternatives to guardianship for this special needs population. We would like to explore with your organization how implementation of this legislation would be improved by more frequently involving social workers in adult guardianship proceedings.

I would appreciate learning the names and contact information of officials in your organization with whom we could initiate a conversation on this important topic.

Best regards,  
  
Jennifer Hulme  
Project Director