

RULES GOVERNING GUARDIANSHIP CERTIFICATION
Including Amendments Through October 18, 2011

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these rules is to provide a mechanism to certify individuals who provide guardianship services in Texas and to ensure that these individuals meet minimum qualifications, have a minimum level of knowledge and perform their responsibilities in a professional and competent manner.

II. DEFINITIONS

- (a) "Attest" means to confirm as true under oath.
- (b) "Board" means the Guardianship Certification Board.
- (c) "Certified guardian" means a person who is certified to provide guardianship services in this state by the Guardianship Certification Board.
- (d) "Corporate fiduciary" has the meaning assigned by Section 601 of the Texas Probate Code.
- (e) "Director" means the director of the Guardianship Certification Board.
- (f) "Engaged in the business of providing guardianship services" means to perform, offer to perform, or advertise the performance of guardianship services for compensation.
- (g) "Guardian" has the meaning assigned by Section 601 of the Texas Probate Code.
- (h) "Guardianship program" means a local, county, or regional program that provides guardianship and related services to an incapacitated person or other person who needs assistance in making decisions concerning the person's own welfare or financial affairs.
- (i) "Guardianship services" means conducting, performing, or administering such duties or powers as prescribed by the Texas Probate Code or under a court order in a guardianship matter.
- (j) "Incapacitated person" has the meaning assigned by Section 601 of the Texas Probate Code.
- (k) "Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services" means the Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services promulgated under Section 111.041 of the Texas Government Code.
- (l) "Private professional guardian" means a person, other than an attorney or a corporate fiduciary, who is engaged in the business of providing guardianship services.
- (m) "Provisionally-certified guardian" means a person who has received provisional certification to provide guardianship services in this state from the Guardianship Certification Board.
- (n) "Review Committee" means a committee appointed by the Chair of the Board to review the denial of an application for certification, provisional certification, or re-certification or to review a petition that has been filed with the Board to initiate disciplinary action against a certified guardian.
- (o) "Supervisor" means a certified guardian who has notified the Board that he or she will be responsible for overseeing an applicant for provisional certification.

- (p) “Volunteer” means a person who renders guardianship services on behalf of a guardianship program and who does not receive compensation that exceeds the authorized expenses the person incurs in performing those services.
- (q) “Ward” has the meaning assigned by Section 601 of the Texas Probate Code.

III. CERTIFICATION AND RE-CERTIFICATION

- (a) To provide guardianship services in this state, the following individuals must be certified by the Board pursuant to Section 111.042, Texas Government Code:
 - 1) an individual who is a private professional guardian;
 - 2) an individual who will provide guardianship services to a ward of a private professional guardian or the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services on the guardian’s or department’s behalf; and
 - 3) an individual, other than a volunteer, who will provide guardianship services to a ward of a guardianship program on the program’s behalf.
- (b) Notwithstanding subsection (a), an individual who must be certified but does not meet the requirements for certification under Section VI(c) or (d) of these rules may provide guardianship services in this state if the person obtains provisional certification pursuant to Section XIV.
- (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of these rules:
 - 1) pursuant to section 696B of the Texas Probate Code, a family member or friend of an incapacitated person is not required to be certified under these rules to serve as the person’s guardian, and
 - 2) an employee of the United States Veterans Administration appointed to serve as a guardian for an incapacitated person under section 601(14)(C) of the Texas Probate Code is not required to be certified under these rules to serve as the person’s guardian.
- (d) The Board shall certify all individuals in accordance with these rules. Criteria not rationally related to the performance of guardianship services shall not be used to deny certification.
- (e) Upon certification, the individual will be issued a certificate, which will be valid for two years according to the provisions of Section V(d). New certificates will be issued for successive two-year periods upon timely and satisfactory completion of the re-certification process.
- (f) A certified guardian may use the designation “TxCG” to indicate that the guardian is certified by the Board. Provisionally-certified guardians may not use such designation.

IV. DUTIES OF THE BOARD

The Board shall develop or oversee the following:

- (a) Approval of the application process used for guardian certification, provisional certification, and re-certification.

- (b) Determination as to whether applicants have met the requirements for certification, provisional certification, or re-certification.
- (c) Approval of training and continuing education courses related to meeting certification or re-certification requirements.
- (d) Approval of waivers or modification of specific certification requirements for good cause.
- (e) Establishment of criteria relative to denial, suspension or revocation of certification.
- (f) Determination of all requests for review of denials of certification, provisional certification, and re-certification.
- (g) Review and determination of all complaints submitted to the Board regarding the conduct of certified guardians and provisionally-certified guardians.
- (h) Maintenance of all appropriate records relative to certification.

V. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- (a) Application Forms. Applications for certification, provisional certification, and re-certification shall be made in writing on forms provided by the Board. In appropriate circumstances, the Board may require the applicant to submit information in addition to that called for on the application forms.
- (b) Fees. All fees connected with certification and re-certification shall be set by the Board with the approval of the Supreme Court and are non-refundable. A schedule of fees shall be published on the Board's web site.
 - 1) Application Fee. Each applicant must submit a non-refundable application fee along with the completed application form. No application will be processed until the application fee has been paid. However, an employee of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services who is applying for a certificate to provide guardianship services to a ward of the department is exempt from payment of the application fee.
 - 2) Examination Fee. Each applicant must submit a non-refundable examination fee to take the examination approved by the Board that affirms competency in Texas guardianship matters. The fee must be paid by the date established in the examination schedule.
 - 3) Re-certification Fee. Each application for re-certification must be accompanied by a non-refundable re-certification fee. However, an employee of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services who is applying for re-certification to provide guardianship services to a ward of the department is exempt from payment of the re-certification fee. No re-certification application may be processed until the re-certification fee, if applicable, has been paid.
 - 4) Late Fee. Each late application for re-certification must be accompanied by a non-refundable late fee.
- (c) Application Procedures.
 - 1) Upon receipt of a completed application form, Board staff shall review and accept the application if:
 - A. the application form has been completed;

- B. the applicant meets the requirements for certification or provisional certification; and
 - C. the appropriate application fee has been paid.
- 2) An applicant must complete the requirements for certification or provisional certification within twelve (12) months of submitting the application form.
- (d) Application for Re-certification. Certification shall expire on the second anniversary of the date the certificate is issued. Re-certification shall expire every two years thereafter on the same day and month of the original certification. Applications for re-certification accompanied by the appropriate fee must be filed at least ninety (90) days before the certification expires; applications filed after this deadline but within ninety (90) days after the certification expires will be subject to a late fee. Re-certification applications filed more than ninety (90) days after the certification expires shall be denied and the certification process must begin anew. For purposes of this rule, if an application is filed by mail or courier receipted delivery, it shall be deemed filed on the date it is deposited with the United States Postal Service or courier service as indicated by the postmark or courier receipt.
- (e) Refusal to Accept Application for Re-certification. Notwithstanding (c) above, the Board shall refuse to accept a certified guardian's application for re-certification if the Board receives notice of child support arrearages in accordance with Section 232.0135 of the Texas Family Code. Upon receipt of further notice under Section 232.0135 that the arrearages have been satisfied, the Board shall accept an application for re-certification, subject to the filing requirements and fees contained in these rules.
- (f) Application for Provisional Certification. In addition to the other information required on the application form, an applicant for provisional certification must identify the applicant's supervisor on the application form. The supervisor must sign the application form.
- (g) Expiration of Certification. Upon expiration, denial of renewal, suspension, or revocation of a certified or provisionally-certified guardian's certification, the guardian must immediately provide written notice of the expiration, nonrenewal, suspension, or revocation to each court in which the guardian has been appointed pursuant to section 693 of the Texas Probate Code and, if the guardian provides guardianship services on behalf of the Department of Aging and Disability Services or a guardianship program, to each of those organizations on whose behalf the guardian provides guardianship services.

VI. REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

To qualify for certification, the applicant must pay all required fees, comply with the application procedures herein, and must:

- (a) Be at least twenty-one (21) years of age;
- (b) Be a high school graduate or possess the GED equivalent;
- (c) Have two years of relevant work experience related to guardianship or the following educational or training requirements:

- 1) a minimum of a bachelors degree conferred by a college or university accredited by an organization recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in a field related to guardianship, including but not limited to medical, mental health and mental retardation, law, business, accounting, social work, sociology, psychology, human services, protective services, and criminal justice fields, or completion of a course curriculum or training specifically related to guardianship approved by the Board;
- (d) Meet the following criteria:
- 1) successfully pass, after no more than four (4) exam attempts, an examination approved by the Board covering Texas law and procedure related to guardianship, and any other examination required and approved by the Board testing knowledge of guardianship issues.
 - 2) An individual who has failed the exam four (4) times shall not be eligible for certification unless:
 - A. The individual petitions the Board for permission to take the exam again. The petition must be in writing and set out in detail all facts which support the request. The petition must establish that the individual has completed all other requirements for certification, except for passing the exam, and that no other impediments to certification exist.
 - B. The Board shall consider the petition at its next regularly scheduled meeting. It shall determine, without a formal hearing, whether permission to take the exam again will be granted or denied. The Board may impose conditions to granting permission, including, but not limited to the following: that the petitioner provide additional information and/or complete specified continuing education prior to taking the exam again. If an individual fails or refuses to strictly and completely comply with the conditions specified by the Board, permission to take the exam again is denied.
 - C. An individual may petition the Board only one time for permission to take the exam again following four unsuccessful attempts. An individual who is granted permission to take the exam again and who fails the exam again is not eligible for certification. If the Board denies permission to take the exam again, the individual is not eligible for certification.
 - D. The decision of the Board is final and is not subject to appeal, reconsideration, or any further action. Rule IX does not apply to an individual who is petitioning the Board for permission to take the exam again after four failed attempts.
- (e) Attest under penalty of perjury as to whether he or she has ever been adjudged guilty of or entered a plea of guilty or no contest in return for a grant of deferred adjudication to a felony, crime of moral turpitude, or any offense listed in sections 22.01 (assault), 22.011 (sexual assault), 22.02 (aggravated assault), 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault), 22.04 (injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual), 22.041 (abandoning or endangering a child), 22.05 (deadly conduct),

- 22.07 (terroristic threat), and 32.45 (misapplication of fiduciary property) of the Texas Penal Code; and
- (f) Attest under penalty of perjury as to whether he or she:
 - 1) has ever been relieved of responsibilities as a guardian or fiduciary by a court, employer, or client for actions involving fraud, moral turpitude, misrepresentation, material omission, misappropriation, theft, assault, battery, abuse, neglect, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary duty, or conversion;
 - 2) has ever been found civilly liable or settled a claim in an action, including but not limited to a surcharge action, that involved allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, material omission, misappropriation, theft, assault, battery, abuse, neglect, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary duty, or conversion on the applicant's part; or
 - 3) has ever been denied certification or had his or her certification revoked or suspended in Texas or any other jurisdiction requiring certification, registration or licensure to provide guardianship services.
 - (g) Provide the Board with his or her Texas and national criminal history records by having his or her fingerprints submitted to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), to be used by DPS for a Texas criminal history search and forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a national criminal history search. The criminal history records resulting from both the Texas and national criminal history searches will then be forwarded to the Board. The Texas and national criminal history searches must be conducted no earlier than 90 days preceding the date the application is submitted.
 - (h) If the applicant has ever been adjudged guilty of or pleaded guilty or no contest to any crime described in Section VI(e) above, or been relieved of guardian responsibilities, been found civilly liable, settled a claim, or been denied certification or had certification revoked or suspended as described under Section VI(f)(1), (2) or (3) above, the applicant must describe with particularity the circumstances and provide any related documentation requested by the Board.

VII. REQUIREMENTS FOR RE-CERTIFICATION

To be eligible for re-certification, the certified guardian must pay all required fees, apply within the required time, and meet the following requirements:

- (a) The certified guardian must comply with subsections (e), (f), and (g) of Section VI (relating to Requirements for Certification) of these rules.
- (b) Continuing Education. During each two year certification period, the certified guardian must complete at least twelve hours of continuing education and guardianship training by completing a course that has been approved by the Board under Section XIII (relating to Approval of Continuing Education). The twelve hours shall include a minimum of two hours of ethics and one hour of legislative update.
 - 1) The required twelve hours of continuing education must be earned prior to the expiration of the certificate. The certified guardian must list on the application for re-certification the following information concerning the certified guardian's

completion of the required continuing education: for each course list the date, location, sponsor(s), number of regular credits, number of ethics credits, and number of legislative update credits earned. Nothing herein shall be deemed to waive late fees under Section V.

- 2) A certified guardian may carry forward for the following certification period not more than four (4) regular continuing education hours, not including ethics or legislative update hours, which were earned in excess of the twelve hours used to satisfy the continuing education requirements of the immediately previous certification period. Ethics hours and legislative update hours cannot be carried forward from one certification period to another certification period even if said hours were earned in excess of the minimum requirements for ethics and legislative update hours.
- 3) The certified guardian must obtain documentation of attendance or completion of all continuing education activity from the sponsoring entity and submit the documentation to the Board along with the certified guardian's application for recertification. A provisionally certified guardian, when he or she meets the qualifications for certification, must submit documentation as described in this section with his or her application for certification.
- 4) A certified guardian may also earn continuing education credit by speaking at a seminar, teaching a course or authoring a book or article and obtaining approval for this activity under Section XIII (relating to Approval of Continuing Education).

VIII. BOARD DETERMINATION

If the applicant has complied with the application process, the Board shall grant certification, provisional certification, or recertification unless denial is made in accordance with Section IX. The Board may conduct further investigation or require additional information from the applicant or other sources. In appropriate circumstances, the Board may grant or deny certification, provisional certification, and re-certification based on the further information it receives.

IX. DENIAL OF CERTIFICATION; RECONSIDERATION

(a) Application Review Committee. The Director shall refer applications for certification, provisional certification, and re-certification to the Application Review Committee (herein, the "Committee") if the applicant does not clearly meet the standards set forth in Section VI (relating to Requirements for Certification), Section VII (relating to Requirements for Re-Certification), or Section XIV (relating to Provisional Certification), as applicable, or if the applicant may be disqualified under any of the disciplinary criteria set forth in Section XI (relating to Disciplinary Criteria).

- 1) The Committee Chair will schedule at least one meeting to review the application. Additional meetings may be held as deemed necessary. The applicant may attend the Committee's meetings in person or by telephone. If the applicant requests to

attend by telephone, he or she must be available to participate at the times and in the manner instructed by the Director. While the Committee may seek additional information in its discretion, it has no obligation to do so. The Committee is not an investigatory body and will generally render its decision based on the submissions of the Board staff and applicant.

- 2) The Committee must either grant or deny an application for certification, provisional certification, or re-certification. The Committee may deny an application only if the applicant fails to meet the standards set forth in Section VI, Section VII, or Section XIV, as applicable, or if the applicant is disqualified under any of the disciplinary criteria set forth in Section XI. The Committee must furnish to the applicant a written statement that includes the reason(s) for denying the application.
- (b) Petition for Reconsideration. Within fifteen (15) days after receipt of notice that the Committee has denied an application for certification, provisional certification, or re-certification, the applicant may petition the Board for reconsideration. The petition may be informal but shall be in writing and shall state the date on which notice was received, identify each point or matter about which reconsideration is requested, and set forth the grounds for the request for reconsideration.
- (c) Reconsideration Procedure. At its next meeting, the Board shall consider the petition and may allow the applicant or other witnesses to appear at the meeting and present sworn testimony. The Board may limit the number of witnesses appearing and the time allotted for a witness' testimony.
- (d) Board Action on Petition. After reconsidering a decision of the Committee, the Board may:
 - 1) affirm the Committee's decision; or
 - 2) reverse the Committee's decision.
- (e) Final Decision. The Board shall notify the applicant in writing of its decision on reconsideration. Correspondence and notices sent to the applicant by the Director on behalf of the Board will be sent to the last address on file with the Board.

X. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CERTIFIED GUARDIAN; REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- (a) Standards and Rules. A certified guardian must comply with these rules and with the Minimum Standards for the Provision of Guardianship Services.
- (b) Response. A certified guardian must respond to requests for information from the Board or the Director pertaining to renewal of certification, complaints alleging misconduct by the certified guardian, investigative inquiries by the Board or Director, and any audits or reviews of the certified guardian's practice. The certified guardian must respond to such requests for information within the time prescribed in the request.
- (c) Change of Name or Address. A certified guardian shall notify the Board in writing of any change in name or business name, business or home physical address, or business or home telephone number within thirty (30) days of any change.

- (d) Notice to Board. A certified guardian shall immediately notify the Board if:
- 1) the guardian is indicted, formally charged, adjudged guilty of, or enters a plea of no contest in return for a grant of deferred adjudication to any offense listed in Section VI(e);
 - 2) any of the proceedings listed in Section VI(f) is initiated;
 - 3) events or circumstances would require any changes to the attestation required by Section VI(f); or
 - 4) the guardian is removed as a guardian under Section 761 of the Texas Probate Code.
- (e) Notice from Board. If the Board receives notice from the certified guardian of any of the items in section (d) above, the Director, on behalf of the Board, shall acknowledge receipt in writing. If the Board receives other notice affecting the guardian's certification, the Director will contact the certified guardian regarding the notification by first class mail. Notice from the Director on behalf of the Board is deemed given when sent to the certified guardian at the last home address on file in the Board's records.
- (f) Documents Filed with Court. Each document prepared by or on behalf of a certified guardian and filed with a court shall include the certified guardian's certification number.
- (g) Not later than January 31 of each year, each guardianship program must provide to the Board the following information for the preceding year:
- 1) the number of wards served by the guardianship program reported by county in which the application to create a guardianship for the ward is filed, and the total number of wards served by the guardianship program;
 - 2) the name, business address, and business telephone number of each individual employed by or volunteering or contracting with the guardianship program to provide guardianship services to a ward or proposed ward of the program;
 - 3) the name of each county in which an individual described in (2) above provides or is authorized to provide guardianship services;
 - 4) the total amount of money received from the State of Texas for the provision of guardianship services; and
 - 5) the amount of money received from any other public source, including a county or the federal government, for the provision of guardianship services, reported by source, and the total amount of money received from those public sources.
- (h) Not later than January 31 of each year, each private professional guardian must provide to the Board the following information for the preceding year:
- 1) the number of wards served by the private professional guardian reported by county in which the application to create a guardianship for a ward is filed and the total number of wards served by the private professional guardian, including the name of the ward and the docket number and court having jurisdiction of the guardianship;
 - 2) the aggregate fair market value of the property of all wards that was managed by the private professional guardian;

- 3) the name, business address, and business telephone number of each individual who provides guardianship services to a ward of a private professional guardian on behalf of the private professional guardian;
 - 4) the total amount of money received from the State of Texas for the provision of guardianship services;
 - 5) the amount of money received from any other public source, including a county or the federal government, for the provision of guardianship services, reported by source, and the total amount of money received from those public sources;
 - 6) whether the private professional guardian was removed as a guardian by the court or resigned as a guardian in a particular case, and, if so, a description of the circumstances causing the removal or resignation, and the style of the suit, the docket number, and the court having jurisdiction over the proceeding;
 - 7) reaffirmation of subsections (e) and (f) of Section VI (relating to Requirements for Certification) of these rules; and
 - 8) a copy of the private professional guardian's application for a certificate of registration with each county clerk required by Section 697(a) of the Probate Code.
- (i) Information that must be submitted under subsections (f) and (g) must be submitted on appropriate forms and in the manner determined by the Board.
- NOTE: References to subsections (f) and (g) should be to subsections (g) and (h).**

XI. DISCIPLINARY CRITERIA

- (a) The Board may deny, suspend or revoke certification or provisional certification, or impose other disciplinary action, if the applicant, certified guardian, or provisionally-certified guardian has:
- 1) Failed to comply with any of these rules;
 - 2) Failed to comply with any of the Minimum Standards for the Provision of Guardianship Services;
 - 3) Failed to pay any applicable fee established by the Board;
 - 4) Failed to meet the requirements for certification, provisional certification, or re-certification established by the Board;
 - 5) Falsely represented or misstated any material fact to the Board;
 - 6) Been adjudged guilty of or entered a plea of guilty or no contest in return for a grant of deferred adjudication to a felony, crime of moral turpitude, or any offense listed in sections 22.01 (assault), 22.011 (sexual assault), 22.02 (aggravated assault), 22.021 (aggravated sexual assault), 22.04 (injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual), 22.041 (abandoning or endangering a child), 22.05 (deadly conduct), 22.07 (terroristic threat), and 32.45 (misapplication of fiduciary property) of the Texas Penal Code;
 - 7) Been found civilly liable or settled a claim in an action, including but not limited to a surcharge action, that involved fraud, misrepresentation, material omission, misappropriation, theft, assault, battery, abuse, neglect, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary duty, or conversion.

- 8) Been relieved of responsibilities as a guardian or fiduciary by a court, employer, or client for actions involving fraud, moral turpitude, misrepresentation, material omission, misappropriation, theft, assault, battery, abuse, neglect, breach of trust, breach of fiduciary duty, or conversion.
 - 9) Been found liable in a subrogation action by an insurance or bonding agent or in a subrogation action brought by an interested party.
 - 10) Failed to notify the Board of a violation of any of the provisions set forth in subsections (e) and (f) of Section VI (relating to Requirements for Certification).
 - 11) Engaged in conduct that poses a substantial threat to the well-being of a ward or the ward's estate.
- (b) The Board may suspend or revoke certification or provisional certification if the certificate was granted:
- 1) Contrary to these rules and the requirements for certification set forth in Section VI (relating to Requirements for Certification) or the requirements for Provisional Certification set forth in Section XIV (relating to Provisional Certification); or
 - 2) To an individual who is not eligible to acquire a certificate or provisional certificate or who has made any false representations or misstatement of material fact to the Board.
- (c) The Board shall suspend certification or provisional certification pursuant to the provisions of Texas Family Code Section 232.011 upon receipt of a final order issued under Texas Family Code Chapter 232.
- (d) Denial of an application for certification, provisional certification, or recertification shall be in accordance with Section IX. Except for denial of certification, provisional certification, or recertification, and except for suspension of certification or provisional certification pursuant to Texas Family Code Chapter 232, actions by the Board under this section shall be taken in accordance with the procedures set out in Section XII.

XII. COMPLAINTS; DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

- (a) Initiation of Process. Any person ("Petitioner"), including the Director, may petition the Board to initiate disciplinary procedures against a certified guardian or provisionally-certified guardian ("Respondent").
- (b) Information Subject to Disclosure. A document given to the Board in support of or response to a complaint, including the Petition to initiate disciplinary proceedings, is subject to disclosure to the public unless it is confidential or exempt from disclosure under law.
- (c) Content of the Petition. The Petition must be submitted to the Board in writing and must include:
- 1) The name and pertinent contact information of the Petitioner and the Respondent;
 - 2) An allegation of the existence of one or more of the disciplinary criteria set forth in Section XI (relating to Disciplinary Criteria);
 - 3) An adequate factual basis for the allegation(s); and
 - 4) Any necessary documentation or other supporting materials or information.

- (d) Initial Review of Petition. If a Petition filed by a person other than the Director does not conform to the requirements of subsection (c) of this section, the Director shall notify the Petitioner that the Petition will not be considered. If a Petition filed by the Director does not conform to the requirements of subsection (c) of this section, the Board Chair shall notify the Director that the Petition will not be considered. The Petitioner may re-file an amended Petition.
- (e) Review Committee. Once a Petition is determined to conform to the requirements of subsection (c), the Director will notify the Board Chair, who will appoint three Board members to a Review Committee to address the Petition. The Board Chair shall also designate one of the Review Committee members to be Review Committee Chair. The General Counsel of the Office of Court Administration or the General Counsel's designee shall serve as counsel to the Review Committee. The Review Committee will act by majority vote.
- (f) Notice; Answer.
 - 1) Notice to Respondent. At the same time the Director notifies the Board Chair, the Director will also inform the Respondent in writing that a Petition has been submitted, provide the Respondent with a copy of the Petition, including all supporting materials, as well as a copy of these Rules, and direct that the Respondent submit a written Answer to the Petition, to be received by the Board within fifteen (15) days after the Respondent's receipt of the notice. Respondent may request an extension of time to file an Answer. The request must be made in writing before the expiration of the fifteen (15) day period. For good cause shown, the Review Committee or its designee may extend the Respondent's time to answer for such period as it may determine, but in no event shall the extension exceed thirty (30) days.
 - 2) Failure to Submit Answer. If the Respondent fails to submit an Answer within the required time, absent good cause shown, such failure will constitute default, and all facts alleged in the Petition may be taken as true. If the Review Committee believes that such default has occurred, it will recommend to the Board whether any sanctions should be imposed. Absent good cause for the failure to timely submit an Answer, the Board shall enter an order of default and determine any sanctions to be imposed.
- (g) Review and Recommendation by Review Committee.
 - 1) Review by Review Committee. The Review Committee Chair will schedule at least one meeting to review the Petition and Answer, if any. Additional meetings may be held as deemed necessary by the Review Committee. The Review Committee may seek additional information in its discretion, but it has no obligation to do so. The Review Committee is not an investigatory body and will generally render its recommendation to the Board based on the submissions of the Petitioner and Respondent.
 - 2) Review Committee's Recommendation. If the Review Committee does not request additional information from the Petitioner or Respondent, the Review Committee must make a recommendation to the Board within thirty (30) days

after the Review Committee receives the Answer. If the Review Committee requests additional information, the Review Committee may allow up to thirty (30) days to provide the additional information and must make a recommendation to the Board within fifteen (15) days after the date it receives or should have received the additional information. The Review Committee's recommendation must be in writing and furnished to the Respondent at the same time it is furnished to the Board.

- 3) The Petitioner and Respondent may attend the Review Committee's meetings in person or by telephone. If the Petitioner or Respondent requests to attend by telephone, he or she must be available to participate at the times and in the manner instructed by the Director.
- (h) Hearing. If the Review Committee recommends disciplinary action, or if the Board does not adopt a recommendation from the Review Committee to dismiss the Petition, the Respondent may request a hearing. The request must be made no later than fifteen (15) days after the date the Respondent receives the Review Committee's recommendation, or within fifteen (15) days of notice that the Board has rejected the Review Committee's recommendation to dismiss the Petition.
- 1) Hearing Date and Location. If the Respondent timely requests a hearing, the date and location of the hearing will be determined by the Board or its designee. The hearing must be held within one hundred twenty (120) days from the date the Board receives a timely request for hearing, unless the Board extends the hearing date for good cause.
 - 2) Notice of Hearing; Requirements. The Board shall give notice of the hearing to the Petitioner and the Respondent. The notice must include a statement of the time, place, and nature of the hearing; a reference to the particular sections of the statutes and rules involved; and a short statement of the disciplinary action recommended. The Board must also provide the Respondent a copy of the Review Committee's recommendation.
 - 3) Costs of Attending Hearing. The Respondent is responsible for Respondent's costs of preparing for and attending the hearing, including any costs associated with witnesses called on the Respondent's behalf. The Petitioner is responsible for Petitioner's costs of preparing for and attending the hearing.
 - 4) Respondent's Rights at Hearing. At the hearing, the Respondent will be permitted to testify; present evidence; respond to questions from the Board; and examine and cross-examine witnesses who are also present. The Respondent may be represented by legal counsel at the hearing.
 - 5) Conduct of the Hearing; Burden of Proof. The Board may establish rules for the conduct of the hearing. Formal rules of evidence will not apply. Testimony of witnesses must be given under penalty of perjury. The burden of proof shall be on the Petitioner to show why disciplinary action should be imposed. The burden of proof shall be by a preponderance of the evidence.
 - 6) Board Counsel. The General Counsel of the Office of Court Administration or the General Counsel's designee shall serve as counsel to the Board.

- 7) Board Action. The Board will act by majority vote of Board members attending the meeting.
- (i) Default. If the Respondent fails to appear at the hearing:
 - 1) upon proof that notice of the hearing was given to Respondent, the Board may proceed in the Respondent's absence on a default basis; and
 - 2) the factual allegations in the Petition may be deemed admitted.
- (j) Board Decision. The Board shall notify the Respondent and the Petitioner in writing of its decision not more than forty-five (45) days after the conclusion of the hearing. The written notification shall include an explanation of the basis for the decision and the Board's decision as to any disciplinary action to be imposed, including reprimand, suspension, revocation, or other disciplinary action.
- (k) Publication. The Board may publish or otherwise provide public notice of the final result of any disciplinary proceeding or action.
- (l) Correspondence. All correspondence and notices herein sent by or to the Petitioner or Respondent should be made by regular and certified mail to ensure receipt of the item served. Correspondence and notices sent to the Respondent by the Director on behalf of the Board will be sent to the last address on file with the Board.

XIII. APPROVAL OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

- (a) A continuing education activity must be an organized program of learning dealing with matters that are directly related to the guardianship profession, the services guardians provide, and the legal process involved in guardianship proceedings. A continuing education activity should increase participants' understanding of the Texas judicial system, the responsibilities of a certified guardian and the certified guardian's impact on the judicial process and the public. In this Section XIII, the term "certified guardian" includes a provisionally-certified guardian.
- (b) Subject to the requirements contained in Section VII(b) (relating to Requirements for Re-Certification), continuing education activities should include one or more of the following subjects:
 - 1) guardianships;
 - 2) trust administration;
 - 3) powers of attorney;
 - 4) mental or physical health or geriatric health;
 - 5) ethics for guardians, including cooperation with lawyers, judges and fellow guardians and courtesy to all litigants;
 - 6) Texas statutes, rules and case law relevant to the guardianship profession;
 - 7) the role and responsibilities of the certified guardian under the Texas Probate Code, rules adopted by the Supreme Court relating to guardianship certification and the Minimum Standards for the Provision of Guardianship Services adopted by the Board; and
 - 8) management issues, including financial planning and accounting.
- (c) The following do not qualify as continuing education activities under these rules:

- 1) attendance or participation at professional or association business meetings, general sessions or policy making sessions;
 - 2) service on a committee or council or as an officer in a professional organization;
 - 3) activities completed to satisfy the requirements of a disciplinary action; and
 - 4) any activity completed as ordered by a judicial officer.
- (d) The Board will publish on its web site a list of courses that are approved by the Board as continuing education activities. Any such activities that are used by a certified guardian to satisfy the requirements of Section VII(b) must meet the requirements of subsections (a) and (b) above.
- (e) Continuing education activities that have not been approved by the Board may be approved by the Board upon written request for approval made by a certified guardian.
- 1) The request for approval must be made on a form provided by the Board and must include a sample brochure or course outline that describes the content of the program, identifies the presenters, indicates the time devoted to each subject and the date and location of the program.
 - 2) The request for approval will be reviewed and approved or denied by the Director. A certified guardian may appeal the Director's denial of a request for approval by submitting a written appeal to the Board within fifteen (15) days of notification of the denial.
 - 3) The Board shall review the denial at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The requesting guardian must be notified of the Board's decision not less than fifteen (15) days after the Board's decision.
- (f) A certified guardian may request up to six hours of continuing education credit during each 2-year certification period for teaching courses, speaking at seminars, or authoring books or articles related to the subject matter specified in Section XIII(b). The certified guardian must submit an application for teaching credit on a form provided by the Board. Credit for preparation and presentation may be provided on the basis of hour-for-hour credit for each hour spent preparing the article or book or making the presentation.

XIV. PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION

- (a) Application for Provisional Certification. An individual who does not meet the requirements for certification in Section VI(c) or (d) may apply for provisional certification in writing on the forms provided by the Board.
- (b) Requirements for Provisional Certification. To be eligible for provisional certification, an applicant must meet all requirements in Section VI other than those listed in (c) and (d). Provisional certification shall expire on the second anniversary of the date the certificate is issued.
- (c) Responsibilities of Provisionally-Certified Guardian.
- 1) A provisionally-certified guardian may provide guardianship services in this state only under the supervision of a certified guardian supervisor. In order to maintain provisional certification, a provisionally-certified guardian must have a certified

guardian supervisor, even if the provisionally-certified guardian is not currently providing guardianship services.

- 2) A provisionally-certified guardian must comply with these rules and with the Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services.
 - 3) A provisionally certified guardian must respond to requests for information from the Board or the Director pertaining to the provisional certification, including but not limited to complaints alleging misconduct by the provisionally certified guardian and investigative inquiries by the Board or Director. The provisionally certified guardian must respond to such requests for information within the time prescribed in the request.
 - 4) Change of Name or Address. A provisionally-certified guardian shall notify the Board in writing of any change in name or business name, business or home physical address, or business or home telephone number within thirty (30) days of any change.
 - 5) Notice to Board. A provisionally-certified guardian shall immediately notify the Board if:
 - A. the provisionally-certified guardian obtains a different supervisor, or is without a supervisor;
 - B. the provisionally-certified guardian is indicted, formally charged, adjudged guilty of, or enters a plea of no contest in return for a grant of deferred adjudication to any offense listed in Section VI(e);
 - C. any of the proceedings listed in Section VI(f) is initiated;
 - D. events or circumstances would require any changes to the attestation required by Section VI(f); or
 - E. the provisionally-certified guardian is removed as a guardian under Section 761 of the Texas Probate Code.
 - 6) Documents Filed with Court. Each document prepared by or on behalf of a provisionally-certified guardian and filed with a court shall include the provisionally-certified guardian's certification number and the name and certification number of his or her supervisor.
 - 7) A provisionally-certified guardian must comply with the continuing education requirements in Section VII(b). A provisionally-certified guardian, when he or she meets the qualifications for certification, must submit documentation as described in Section VII(b)(3) with his or her application for certification.
- (d) Responsibilities of Supervisor.
- 1) A supervisor shall:
 - A. assume primary responsibility for guiding the provisionally-certified guardian's work and for supervising, generally and directly, as necessary, the quality of the provisionally-certified guardian's work;
 - B. meet with each provisionally-certified guardian at least once every two weeks, with at least one of these meetings being face-to-face each month;
 - C. assist the provisionally-certified guardian in activities to the extent the supervisor considers it necessary and appropriate;

- D. ensure the provisionally-certified guardian is familiar with the provisions of these rules and the Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services; and
 - E. monitor the provisionally-certified guardian's compliance with these rules and the Minimum Standards for Guardianship Services.
- 2) A supervisor may not supervise more provisionally-certified guardians than a reasonably prudent supervisor operating under substantially similar circumstances would supervise at one time.
 - 3) A supervisor whose certification expires, is revoked, or is suspended may not continue as a supervisor and must notify all provisionally-certified guardians under that person's supervision that the person may not continue as a supervisor.
 - 4) A supervisor shall immediately notify the Board, or cause notice to be sent to the Board, if the supervisor ceases to supervise a provisionally-certified guardian.
 - 5) A supervisor may not:
 - A. be related within the second degree by affinity (marriage) or within the third degree by consanguinity (blood or adoption) to a person whom he or she is supervising; or
 - B. be an employee of or under the employment supervision of a person whom he or she is supervising.
- (e) Notice from Board. If the Board receives notice from the provisionally certified guardian of any of the items in sections (c)(4) or (5) above, the Director shall acknowledge receipt in writing. If the Board receives notice from the supervisor under section (d)(4) above, or receives other notice affecting the guardian's provisional certification, the Director, on behalf of the Board, will contact the provisionally certified guardian regarding the notification by first class mail. Notice from the Director on behalf of the Board is deemed given when sent to the provisionally certified guardian at the last home address on file in the Board's records.
- (f) Prohibition on Representation as a Certified Guardian. The supervisor and provisionally-certified guardian may not state, represent, or imply that the provisionally-certified guardian is a certified guardian.
- (g) Expiration of Provisional Certification.
- 1) A provisionally-certified guardian may be provisionally certified for only one two-year period unless a waiver is approved by the Board. A waiver may only be granted by the Board before the expiration of the two-year period. It is the responsibility of the provisionally-certified guardian to contact the Director of the Guardianship Certification Program regarding any questions or concerns about the expiration of provisional certification, requirements for full certification, or requesting a waiver.
 - A. To request a waiver from the Board, the provisionally-certified guardian shall, in writing, send a request to the Director of the Guardianship Certification Program. The request must include the reason(s) for seeking the waiver, the time period of the extension, and verification of attendance at Board-approved continuing education during the provisional certification

period. The provisionally-certified guardian may include information in support of his or her request for a waiver, such as a letter of support from the designated guardian supervisor. If the provisionally-certified guardian has not yet passed the required exam and/or completed required continuing education, the provisionally-certified guardian must include in a request for a waiver the details of his or her plan for completion of these requirements and the amount of time necessary to do so.

- B. The Board has four (4) regularly scheduled meetings each year, and will consider requests for waivers at regularly scheduled meetings. Said request must be received by the Director of the Guardianship Certification Program not less than thirty (30) days prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Board. If a request for waiver is not received in time to be heard at a regularly scheduled meeting before the provisional certification expires, the request will not be considered. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in extraordinary circumstances, the Board may, in its sole discretion, consider requests for waivers at special called meetings.
- 2) Upon expiration of a provisionally-certified guardian's certification, the guardian must immediately provide written notice of the expiration to each court in which the guardian has been appointed pursuant to section 693 of the Texas Probate Code and, if the guardian provides guardianship services on behalf of the Department of Aging and Disability Services or a guardianship program, to each of those organizations on whose behalf the guardian provides guardianship services.
- (h) If a provisionally-certified guardian applies to be a certified guardian within one year of obtaining provisional certification, it will not be necessary for the applicant to submit a new criminal history record.

XV. ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- (a) Policy. The Board encourages the resolution and early settlement of all contested disciplinary matters through voluntary settlement procedures. By doing so, the Board does not waive immunity from suit or sovereign immunity under the Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution.
- (b) Initiation of Settlement Conference. At any time after the filing of a complaint against a certified guardian or provisionally certified guardian, and before the Board has conducted a hearing on the complaint, the Director may initiate a Settlement Conference. The Director may initiate the Settlement Conference on the Director's own motion or on the request of any party; however, Settlement Conferences are completely voluntary. All parties must agree before a Settlement Conference can be convened.
- (c) Parties to Settlement Conference. The Complainant and Respondent are the parties in a Settlement Conference. The Board (through one or more Board members, staff, or counsel) may also participate as a party in a Settlement Conference at the sole option of the Board Chair. A party may be represented by counsel.

- (d) Purpose of Settlement Conference. A Settlement Conference may be used to reach agreement about all or a portion of the ultimate issues in a disciplinary proceeding or to reach agreement about how to handle disputed matters. The parties may use a mediator for the Settlement Conference pursuant to (f) below or conduct the Settlement Conference without a mediator.
- (e) Power to Settle in Settlement Conference.
- 1) Does Not Bind Board. The Complainant and the Respondent may not bind the Board to any resolution of a complaint pending before the Board. If the Complainant and the Respondent are able to resolve some or all of the issues, the Board may consider this fact, and the terms of the agreement, in determining what action, if any, to take on the complaint.
 - 2) Participation of Board Member. The Board Chair may appoint one or more Board members or staff to attend the Settlement Conference. The Board representative shall attend the Settlement Conference and participate in the proceedings in good faith and in an effort to resolve the dispute within the parameters of any instructions received from the Board.
 - 3) Review of Settlement by Board. In the event a settlement of some or all of the disputed issues is reached during the Settlement Conference, the Board shall review the terms of the settlement at the next regularly-scheduled Board meeting.
 - (A) Upon review of the settlement, the Board may:
 - (i) Accept the settlement terms;
 - (ii) Reject the settlement terms and restore all proceedings on the complaint to the status quo as it existed immediately prior to the Settlement Conference; or
 - (iii) Refer the matter for further negotiation.
 - (B) The Director shall notify all parties of any action taken by the Board.
- (f) Use of Mediator in Settlement Conference.
- 1) Agreement of Parties. The parties may agree to retain a mediator to assist with the Settlement Conference. Parties who wish to explore this option will be given a reasonable time to do so by the Chair.
 - (A) The parties shall notify the Chair in writing of their agreement to retain a mediator. That notice must include: the name, address, and telephone number of the mediator selected, a statement that the parties have entered into an agreement with the mediator as to the rate and method of his or her compensation, and an affirmation that the mediator is qualified to serve as described herein.
 - (B) Upon receipt of a properly-filed notice that complies with this section, the Chair will enter an order referring the case to the mediator.
 - 2) Appointment if No Agreement. If the parties do not agree to a mediator, the Chair may appoint an individual to serve as mediator in the Settlement Conference. If any party objects promptly and with good cause to the mediator appointed, the Chair will appoint another qualified individual to serve as mediator. An objection

will be considered prompt if it is received by the Director within ten (10) days of the date of the order appointing the mediator.

- 3) Qualifications of Mediator. An individual appointed to serve as a mediator under (1) or (2) above must meet the qualifications set forth in Section 154.052, Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code. Pursuant to Section 154.052(c), an individual who has served as a probate judge in Texas may be appointed to serve as a mediator.
- (g) Payment of Costs. The Board shall not pay any fees or costs associated with the Settlement Conference unless good cause is shown and the Board and the Office of Court Administration agree to do so prior to the Settlement Conference.
- (h) Confidentiality of Communications. All communications in the Settlement Conference between or among the parties, and between each party and the mediator, if any, are confidential under the same terms as provided in Section 154.053(b) and (c) of the Civil Practice and Remedies Code. Information shared with the mediator in separate meetings will not be given to any other party unless the party sharing the information explicitly gives the mediator permission to do so. Material provided to the mediator is not required to be provided to the other parties and will not be filed or become a record in the disciplinary proceeding. Notes taken during the Settlement Conference by the parties and the mediator shall be destroyed at the end of the process.
- (i) Time Frame for Settlement Conference and Schedule for Disciplinary Action. A Settlement Conference is not intended to delay the process, including the hearing of the action, except by order of the Chair. Deadlines and settings in the disciplinary action may be extended only by motion to, and order of, the Chair.
- (j) Agreement to be Memorialized.
 - 1) Any agreement reached by the parties will be reduced to writing and signed by the parties before the end of the Settlement Conference. These writings may be informal in nature. The parties may agree that the written agreement remain confidential if there is no requirement of law to the contrary.
 - 2) Any part of an agreement that may affect the disposition of the disciplinary action (such as agreements concerning relevant facts) must be filed in the record of the disciplinary action.
 - 3) Whether a final written agreement reached through a Settlement Conference is subject to or excepted from required disclosure, or is confidential, will be determined in accordance with applicable law.
- (k) Conduct of Mediator. If the parties use a mediator for the Settlement Conference, the mediator must maintain confidentiality in accordance with Section 2009.054 of the Government Code. The mediator may not communicate to the Board matters discussed with the parties in the Settlement Conference. The mediator will report to the Board in writing whether the Settlement Conference resulted in a settlement of the matter in dispute, or other stipulations or matters that the parties agreed be reported.
- (l) Required Filings. Any request for the appointment of a mediator, any objection to the referral of the matter to a Settlement Conference, any objection to the appointment of

- a mediator, any notice required to be given, any settlement agreement, any report prepared by the mediator, and any similar documents as may become necessary or appropriate in the course of the Settlement Conference must be filed with the GCB.
- (m) Other Disputes. Where appropriate and feasible, the Board will attempt to resolve other disputes in which the Board is a party using alternative dispute resolution procedures in lieu of litigation.

XVI. CONSEQUENCES OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES

- (a) In determining whether to deny an application for certification or provisional certification under Rule VI(e), refuse to re-certify a certified guardian under Rule VII(a), or discipline a certified or provisionally-certified guardian under Rule XI(a)(6), the Board shall consider the following factors:
- 1) The nature and seriousness of the crime;
 - 2) The relationship of the crime to the provision of guardianship services;
 - 3) The extent to which certification might offer an opportunity to engage in further criminal activity of the same type as that in which the person previously had been involved; and
 - 4) The relationship of the crime to the ability, capacity, or fitness required to perform the duties and discharge the responsibilities of a certified guardian.
- (b) In determining the fitness to perform the duties and discharge the responsibilities of a certified guardian, the Board shall consider, in addition to the factors listed in section (a):
- 1) The extent and nature of the person's past criminal activity;
 - 2) The age of the person when the crime was committed;
 - 3) The amount of time that has elapsed since the person's last criminal activity;
 - 4) The conduct and work activity of the person before and after the criminal activity;
 - 5) Evidence of the person's rehabilitation or rehabilitative effort while incarcerated or after release; and
 - 6) Other evidence of the person's fitness, including, but not limited to, letters of recommendation.