



Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

You are invited to participate in the Department of Human Services' (DHS)

STATEWIDE POSITIVE APPROACHES & PRACTICES MEETING

Resources to Support Decision Making in Human Services:

Guardianship and Psychiatric Advance Directives

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2026

Time: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Location: Online – Zoom Webinar

Jointly hosted by the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

(OMHSAS) and the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP).

This quarterly meeting aims to provide the most recent research and resources for people with mental health and behavioral challenges, intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities to live an everyday life.

MORNING SESSION

Guardianship Overview: Legal Interpretation, Expectations and Limitations

DESCRIPTION: This presentation will provide legal interpretation of the roles and responsibilities associated with guardianship. It will discuss the involvement of

individuals in decision making, including legal precedent. This presentation will also discuss some commonly asked questions related to guardianship and decision making.

It is important to note that this presentation is not intended to be a substitute for consulting with your own attorney, but instead to provide a general understanding of key concepts and case law.

PRESENTERS:

- **Gene K. Cuccarese**, Deputy Chief Counsel, Department of Human Services, Office of Chief Counsel, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- **Megan R. Robbins**, Senior Counsel, Department of Human Services, Office of Chief Counsel, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- **Lesley Oakes**, Senior Counsel, Department of Human Services, Office of Chief Counsel, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

AFTERNOON SESSION

Understanding the Significance of Psychiatric Advance Directives (PADs)

DESCRIPTION: Presented by a young adult peer support professional with personal experience using a psychiatric advance directive (PAD) and working on a mobile crisis team, this presentation will explore the value, benefits, and

applications of PADs in a variety of settings. A PAD is a legal, rights protection document that details preferences for future mental health treatment, services, and supports, specifically in the area of involuntary treatment and crisis support. This presentation will present the core elements of a PAD, common barriers experienced with implementation, and action steps attendees can take to advocate for PAD use. Hear firsthand about how using a PAD improved her trust in mental health care and saved her life.

PRESENTER:

Kaely Whittington, RPS, CPRS (she/her), is the CPRS Training Programs Manager at On Our Own of Maryland (OOOMD), a statewide peer-operated behavioral health advocacy and education organization. She coordinates grant-funded projects, provides technical assistance for CPRS initiatives, and provides training on emerging peer support trends and needs.

Kaely is a nationally recognized expert in the area of psychiatric advance directives (PADs), propagating her knowledge through curriculum development, film projects, committee work, conference presentations, and publications.

Kaely passionately uses her mental health lived experience to advocate for others and promote autonomy. She is an Advanced Level WRAP Facilitator, Adult Mental Health First Aid Instructor, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and holds an A.A.

from Wor-Wic Community College. Her prior service on Affiliated Santé Group's Mobile Crisis Team, informs her current work spearheading the Peer Support in Crisis Services project. Outside of work, she enjoys creative outlets and unwinding by the water.

AGENDA

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| 10:00am - 12:00pm | Guardianship Overview: Legal Interpretation, Expectations and Limitations |
| 12:30pm – 1:00pm | Break |
| 12:30pm - 2:00pm | Understanding the Significance of Psychiatric Advance Directives (PADs) |
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[REGISTER HERE](#)

The Zoom link for joining will be sent to the email you used to register. This link will be unique to your registration. Please do not share this link.

Questions? Email: PATraining@columbusorg.com

**Certificates of Attendance are not issued for
Statewide Positive Approaches & Practices Meetings**