

## **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING YOUR ANNUAL ACCOUNT**

As a guardian of the estate of an individual, you are required by law to file the enclosed Annual Account by **April 15th** (April 16<sup>th</sup> when the 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend) of each year. Below are a few guidelines to assist you in preparing your Account.

### **1. Start with the Inventory Total or last year's Total Assets on Hand.**

You should have filed an Inventory with the court detailing what assets came under your control at the beginning of your appointment as guardian. *If you have not yet filed an Inventory and do not have the Inventory form, please contact our office to request one or print it from the internet.* You can search for the **form GN-3440** from <http://www.wicourts.gov/forms1/circuit>. You can also print a blank account form from the internet by searching for form GN-3550.

Your first Annual Account begins with the Inventory Total and reports all money and assets received and money spent or losses suffered from the date of the Inventory to the end of the year. Subsequent accounts will always begin with the previous year's Ending Balance and cover the calendar year.

### **2. Keep it simple.**

Don't unnecessarily complicate the accounting process by giving the court more detail or information than is required. Keep in mind the purpose of the Annual Account -- to provide an accurate picture of your management of your ward's assets. The Account should demonstrate that your expenditures are proper and that all income and assets are accounted for and properly managed and invested.

For example, a guardian who has spent a total of \$250.00 for clothing for the ward should not list each purchase separately, but rather simply report clothing expenditures in a single entry (e.g. Clothing for ward - \$250.00). On the other hand, do not lump many dissimilar expenses together as one item (e.g. Rent, food and recreation - \$5,500.00).

Do not report changes in the market value of real estate in your annual accounts. Simply carry the asset at the inventory value until the item is sold. In your first accounting after sale, report the difference between the net sale proceeds and the inventory value as a "gain" or "loss" to balance your account.

### **3. Your account must balance.**

We suggest you start completing your account by working on Page 3 first – Schedule C "Assets on Hand" -- to show where the assets were invested and their value on December 31<sup>st</sup>. For most people it works best to use the bank's statement of account values as of December 31<sup>st</sup> and include only transactions that were completed before that date in Schedules A and B. In other words, don't include in your descriptions of income and expenses checks or deposits that did not clear by December 31<sup>st</sup>. When listing investments, do include the account numbers, number of shares (for stock or mutual funds), types of account, and names of institutions or brokerage firms.

The **Grand Total on Schedule C** must correspond to the **Ending Balance on Page 1**. If these figures do not match, it is a sign that an error or omission has been made. The most common errors include double-counting or omitting items at the beginning or ending of the accounting period. An increase or decrease in market value of a stock or mutual funds is also a common reason for differences. These should be indicated as a line item in Schedule A or Schedule B.

Our office also has an **Annual Account Worksheet in Microsoft Excel** available on the website to help with calculations and finding errors. If you use the worksheet, you can attach it to your account form and just complete and sign Page 1 of the Annual Account form.

#### **4. Display Proof of Value of Assets.**

All guardians must include proof of the value of investments listed on the account. This can be done in one of three ways:

- a) Come to the Probate Office to display bank statements, certificates, bonds, or other assets.
- or b) Display assets to a bank official or probate staff in another county and ask that person to sign the verification at the bottom of the form.
- or **c) *Send copies of documents verifying asset values as of December 31<sup>st</sup> along with your annual account.***

***DO NOT SIGN THE VERIFICATION YOURSELF, OR HAVE YOUR ATTORNEY OR ACCOUNTANT SIGN IT. IT MUST BE SIGNED ONLY BY A BANK OFFICIAL OR REGISTER IN PROBATE STAFF.***

#### **5. Ask questions, seek professional advice.**

You may consult an attorney or accountant to help with the account. An attorney or accountant fee is generally allowed. Probate staff cannot complete the form for you, but may be available to assist with general questions.

#### **6. Sign before a Notary, Copy the Account, and File by April 15th.**

You must **sign your account before a notary public**. Your signature can be witnessed at the Probate Office.

**Be sure you have included proof of the assets listed on page 3.**

**Make a copy of the completed account for your records.**

To "**file**" the account you can bring it **in person** to the Green County Justice Center, 2841 6<sup>th</sup> St., Monroe, Wisconsin, **mail** it by April 15<sup>th</sup>, or **fax** it to 608-328-9459.

As a guardian, you bear responsibility for handling another person's money and a timely accounting is an important feature of this responsibility. If you know that you will not be able to meet the April 15th deadline, you must provide the court a **written explanation for your delay and indicate a date by which you will have the account completed.**