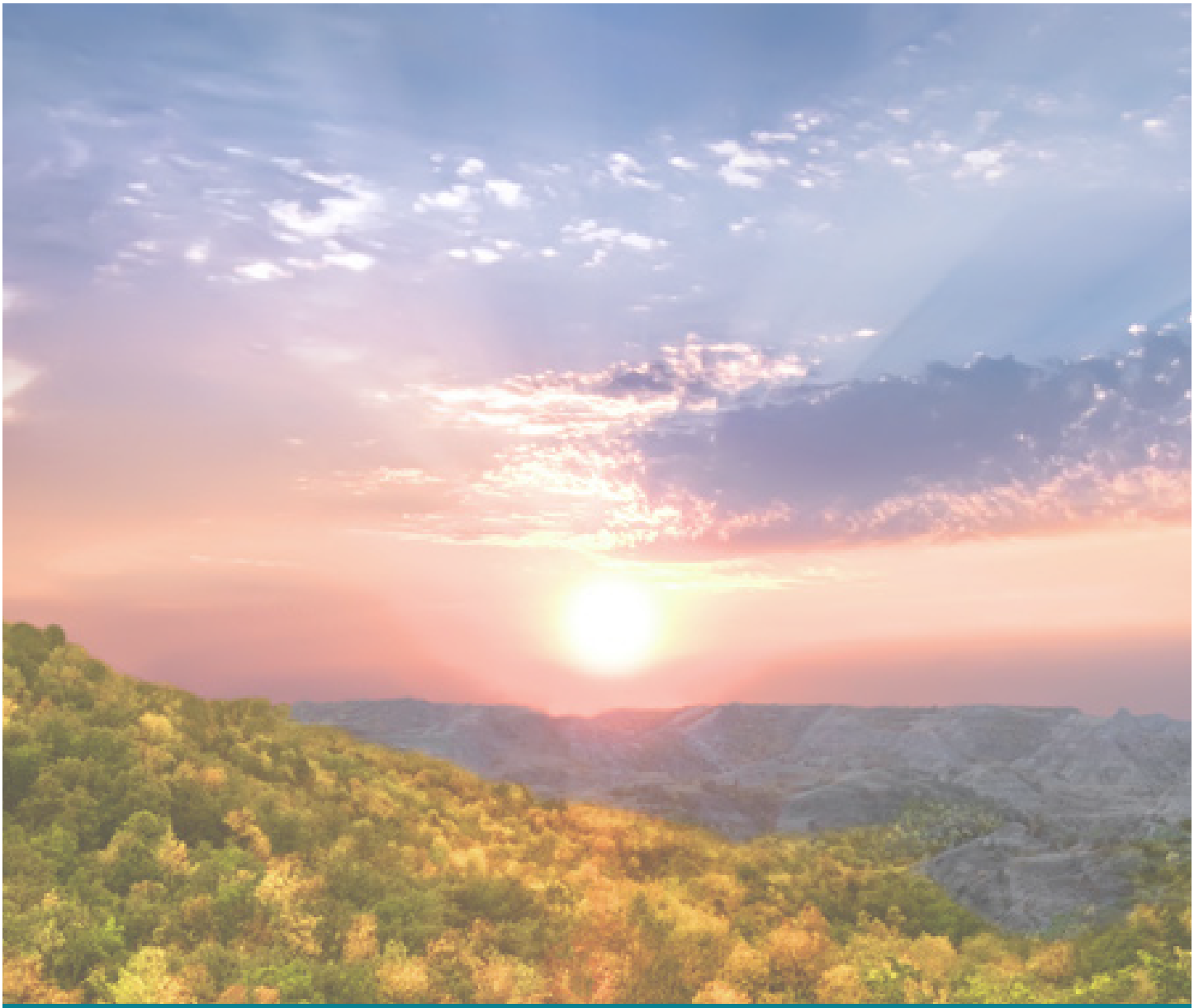


ND Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship

2026 Biennial Report

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SINNESS

As our first year as an agency draws to a close, I am honored to share the victories of our work and the early, tangible progress we have made.

The North Dakota Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship was created by the 69th Legislative Assembly in 2025 to protect the rights and autonomy of individuals under an order for guardianship or conservatorship.

I joined the office in late November 2025, followed by the rest of our staff, Anne-Kristen Partlow, Susan Kiemele, Deyan Junker, Tracy Laaveg and Nicole Cook in March and April 2026.

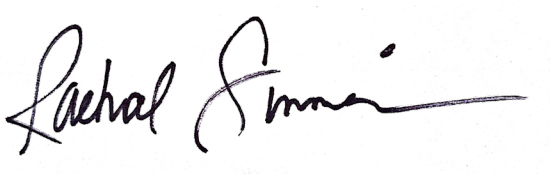
Our official launch as an agency took place April 1, 2026. Since then, we have developed and proposed our Administrative Rules; begun managing all existing state guardianship funding programs and reimbursing individuals and agencies; presented to agencies and organizations statewide to introduce our mission and goals; provided education about guardianships, the role of the guardian and alternatives to guardianship; and collaborated with like-minded organizations to ensure individuals under guardianship or conservatorship receive the best possible services.

As an agency, we are committed to protecting vulnerable individuals; providing oversight to guardians to ensure appropriate case management; educating individuals and agencies to increase understanding of guardianship; responsibly managing the state's guardianship funding programs to ensure opportunities and care for those most in need; and disciplining guardians and conservators whose actions harm those they are meant to protect.

This annual report reviews our accomplishments and the current challenges in guardianship and conservatorship. It also helps us set goals to strengthen the services we provide through protection, oversight, education, fiscal management and discipline.

Thank you for your interest in and support of the Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship. I am truly honored to serve as the Executive Director of such a great agency, and I look forward to the positive changes our agency will continue to contribute to the State of North Dakota.

Best regards,



Rachel Sinness

Executive Director

Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship

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STAFF



Rachel Sinness
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Tracy Laaveg
LEGAL DIRECTOR



Deyan Junker
FISCAL OFFICER



Susan Kiemele
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



Nicole Cook
GUARDIANSHIP CASE MONITOR



Anne-Kristen Partlow
GUARDIANSHIP CASE MONITOR

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Guardianship and Conservatorship

BACKGROUND & MISSION

BACKGROUND

The 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota recognized the need for a centralized agency which operates independently of other state agencies providing services to individuals under guardianship or conservatorship. The Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship (OGC) manages state guardianship funding programs, investigates and monitors guardianship and conservatorship services provided to protected persons, provides educational services to the public and to guardians and conservators, and directs general licensing requirements and standards of practice for professional and non-professional guardians and conservators. The authority granted to the OGC by the North Dakota Legislature provides necessary oversight to ensure the protection of eligible North Dakota citizens and their assets.

The OGC encourages responsible, ethical, and appropriate management of a guardianship or conservatorship ordered for the protection of eligible citizens within the State of North Dakota. The OGC is authorized to act and effectuate its purpose pursuant to North Dakota Century Code ch. 54-68.

MISSION

The mission of the OGC is to protect vulnerable adults and empower them to live with dignity, independence, and purpose by providing guardianship oversight, training, and education.



APPROPRIATIONS & EXPENDITURES

2025 LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATIONS

The OGC is committed to providing vigilant stewardship of North Dakota taxpayer dollars and state resources, efficiently applying its legislative appropriations.

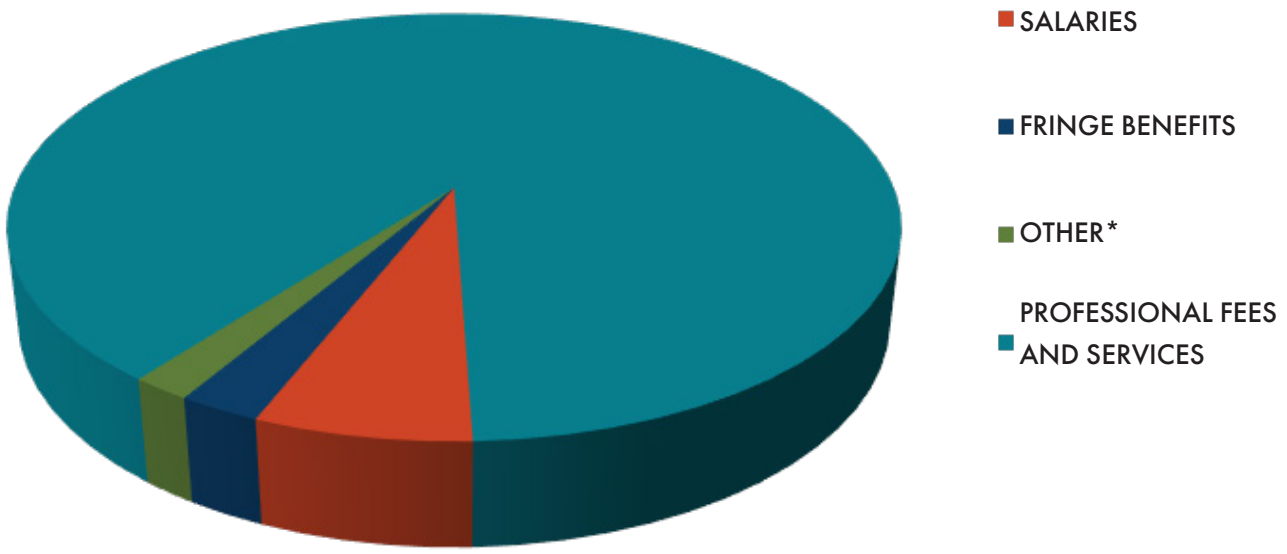
Legislative Bill & Section	Appropriation	Amount Received by OGC	Transferor	Purpose of Appropriation or Transfer	Date Received by OGC
HB 1012 § 7	$3,266,178	$3,266,178	State Treasury	Guardianship Services	July 1, 2025
HB 1012 § 8	$3,266,177 (remainder of)	$0	DHHS	Funding for Guardianship Programs	N/A
HB 1015 § 1	$8,100,000 (remainder of)	$606,799	OMB	Guardianship Grants	May 31,2026
		$6,497,628.50			July 13, 2026
SB 2002 § 1	$375,478	$302,653	Judicial Branch	FTE	April 20, 2026
SB 2002 § 5	$355,000	$355,000	Judicial Branch	FTE	July 1, 2025
SB 2029 § 7	$1,200,000	$1,200,000	State Treasury	4 FTEs	July 1, 2025
Total (Potential) Appropriations					**$ 16,562,833**
Total (Actual) Transferred to OGC					**$ 12,228,258**



EXPENDITURES

While a majority of the OGC's appropriations are specific to guardianship program allocations, the following chart indicates where the biennium's appropriations have been spent thus far:

2026 BUDGET AT A GLANCE



"OTHER"

- Travel
- Supplies - IT Software
- Supply/Material - Professional
- Food and Clothing
- Miscellaneous Supplies
- Office Supplies
- Postage
- Printing
- IT Equipment under $5,000
- Other Equipment under $5,000
- Office Equip & Furniture-Under
- Insurance
- Rentals/Leases - Bldg/Land
- IT - Data Processing
- IT - Communications
- Professional Development



OPERATIONS

The Office of Guardianship and Conservatorship was created and enacted under North Dakota Century Code chapter 54-68 for the purpose of:

1. Managing and distributing North Dakota guardianship funds;
2. Setting eligibility and licensing obligations for guardians and conservators;
3. Developing ethical standards for guardians and conservators;
4. Monitoring and investigating guardian and conservator conduct;
5. Providing training to guardians and conservators; and
6. Educating the public regarding guardianship and conservatorship services.

These powers and duties as authorized by the North Dakota Legislature ensure that the OGC acts as an administrative body, educator, investigator, disciplinary body, and fiduciary. The OGC employs six full-time staff to develop its rules and policies and fulfill its duties.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

The Operations Committee is comprised of seven individuals appointed by the legislative, judicial, and executive bodies to oversee the general operation of the OGC, including the appointment of the Executive Director, consent to the adoption of administrative rules, and offer input as to the overall agency budget. The authority of the Committee is further described in N.D.C.C. § 54-68-03.

REVIEW BOARD

A Review Board—also comprised of legislative, judicial, and executive appointees—stands at the ready to conduct disciplinary proceedings and issue sanctions against guardians and conservators. The OGC has developed proposed administrative rules for the involvement of the Review Board through its complaint process. Once those administrative rules are adopted by the legislative Administrative Rules Committee, the OGC will be able to utilize the Board as necessary. The authority of the Review Board is granted through N.D.C.C. § 54-68-05.

CREATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

The OGC has developed and proposed Administrative Rules for adoption to cover the following major aspects of the agency:

1. Outlining the general administration of the agency;
2. Defining commonly used terms;
3. Describing the types of misconduct eligible for OGC review and action;
4. Detailing the licensing requirements of professional guardians and conservators;
5. Describing the qualifications of nonprofessional guardians and conservators;
6. Enumerating the standards of practices and ethical principles applicable to all guardians and conservators; and
7. Detailing grievance and disciplinary procedures against guardians and conservators who have engaged in misconduct.

The OGC accepts referrals for investigation of guardianship and conservatorship matters from a variety of sources, including court referrals through North Dakota Supreme Court Administrative Rule 59.1, as well as agency and public referrals through its internal intake process utilizing detailed intake forms.

REFERRAL AND REVIEW PROCESS

Once a court referral or intake form is received by the OGC, the agency begins a thorough investigative process. The OGC may request acknowledgment by the Court as an interested party for the purpose of obtaining financial and other records necessary to the investigation and to make recommendations to the court regarding the disposition of the matter. The OGC may also request, under N.D.C.C. § 54-68-12, that other agencies provide documentation for the purpose of investigation.

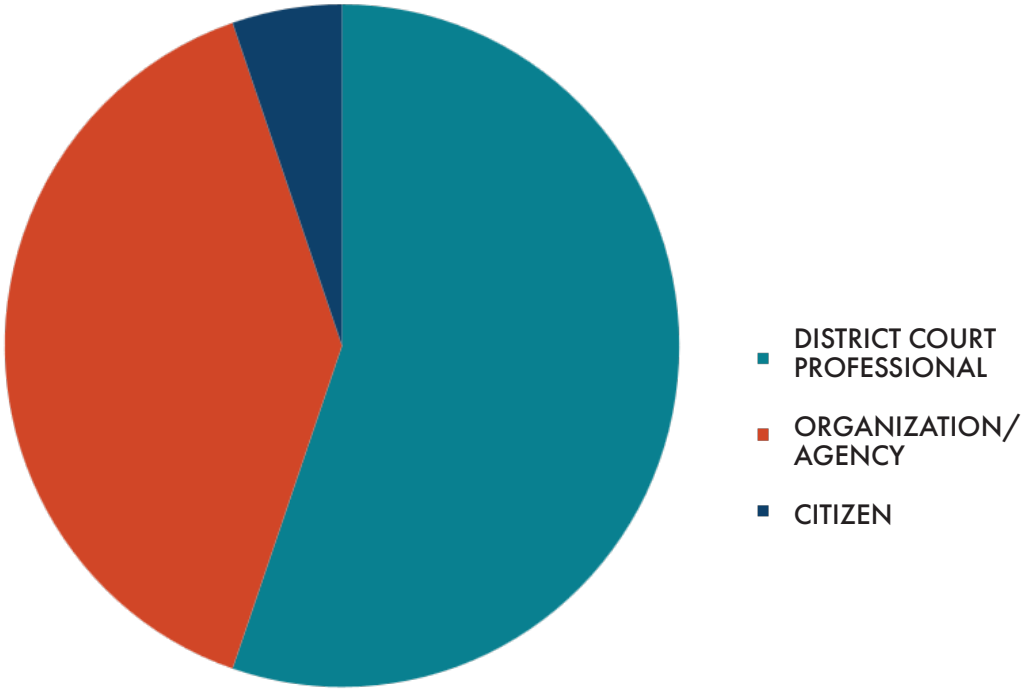
For any matters involving suspected criminal activity by the guardian or conservator, the OGC may refer the investigation to the Bureau of Criminal Investigation for further review.



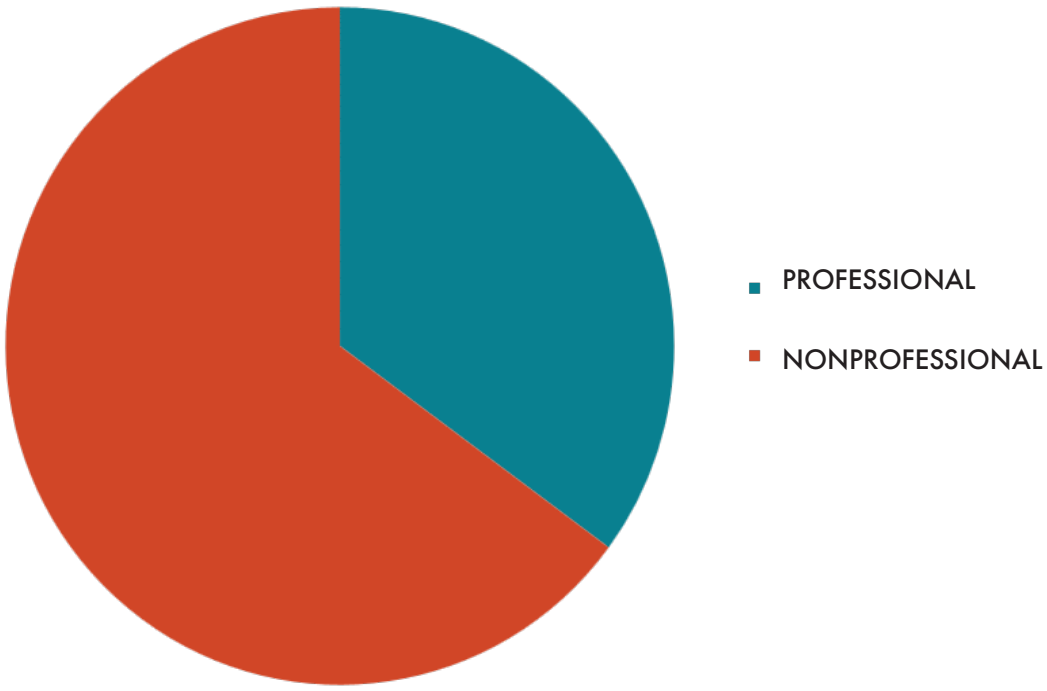
REFERRAL AND REVIEW PROCESS (continued)

During Fiscal Year 2025, the OGC received 38 referrals for investigation. Seven of these cases were referred to BCI for further investigation of suspected criminal activity.

REFERRAL BY SOURCE



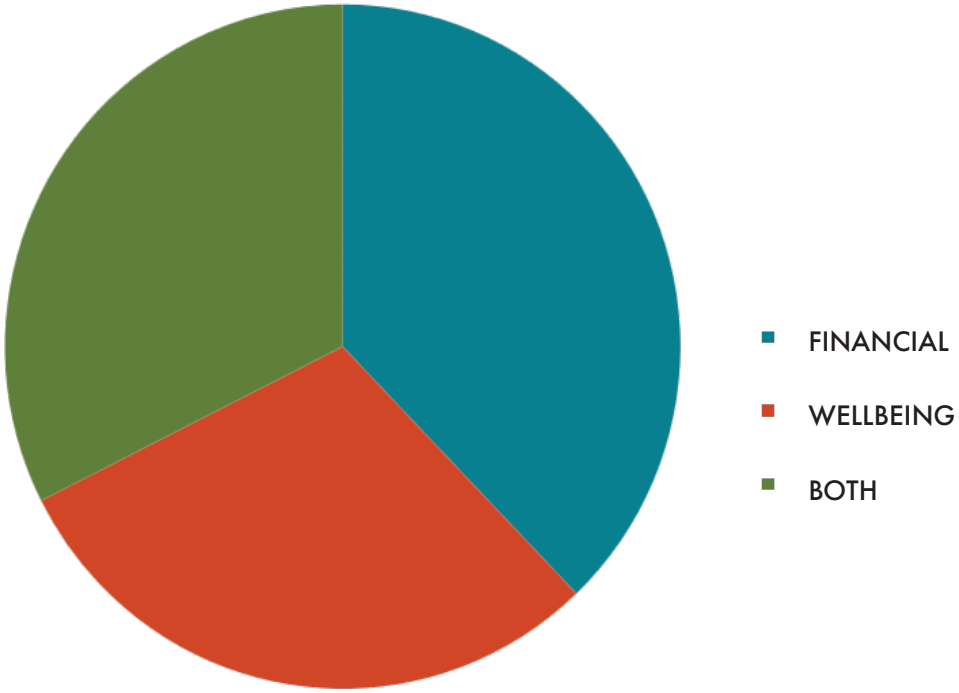
GUARDIAN TYPE



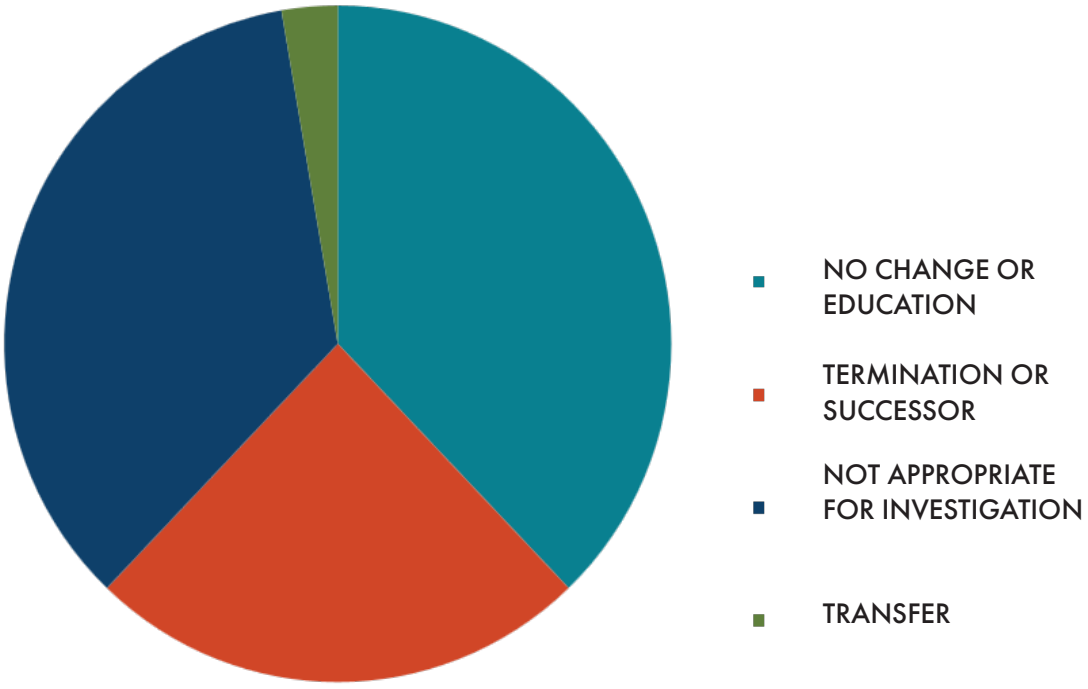
REFERRAL AND REVIEW PROCESS (continued)

The OGC has received 27 referrals for investigation so far for FY 2026.

REFERRAL BY TYPE



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISPOSITION



GUARDIANSHIP FUNDING PROGRAMS

GUARDIANSHIP FUNDING PROGRAMS

The OGC manages several state guardianship and conservatorship funding programs. These sources include the Guardianship Establishment Funds program, the Public Administrator Support Services program, and the Developmental Disability corporate funding program.

GUARDIANSHIP ESTABLISHMENT FUNDS

The Guardianship Establishment Funds program was transferred from the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services to the OGC for management on April 1, 2026. These funds are comprised of moneys for the establishment of guardianships in the categories of (1) aging and adult guardianships and (2) guardianships for individuals with developmental disabilities. Guardianship Establishment Funds cover up to $3,000 of the cost to petition for guardianship in North Dakota district court, including portions of the Guardian ad Litem, Visitor, Expert Examiner, and petitioning attorney's fees. On April 1, 2026, the OGC received $300,000.00 each for its aging/adult and developmental disabilities establishment fund programs. Since April 1, 2026, the OGC has approved funding for the establishment of over seventy-six (76) new guardianships in the State of North Dakota.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Public Administrator Support Services, or PASS, funds were transferred from the oversight of the North Dakota Association of Counties to the OGC between April and May 2026. PASS pays guardians and conservators who provide necessary guardianship services to protected individuals when those individuals are unable to pay for those services themselves. These funds currently cover services for around 520 North Dakota guardianships.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY CORPORATE FUNDING

The North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services previously contracted with Catholic Charities ND, a professional guardianship agency, to provide guardianship services specifically to individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The OGC has continued the contractual relationship, which provides funding for an additional 575+ North Dakota guardianships.



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