



# STRATEGY IN ACTION

2022 Annual Report



PROJECT  
GUARDIANSHIP

Changing the way we care for people.

# Letter from Leadership

## Rebuilding and Building Anew

As was the case for many social service organizations across the city, 2022 was a year of challenges, improvements, and growth for Project Guardianship. Older New Yorkers and those with disabilities continued to reel from the pandemic, whether coping with post-Covid health conditions, grieving the loss of friends and loved ones, or facing a diminished financial outlook. At the same time, providers grappled with the limitations of their services and the need to engage in systemic change to meet the needs of their communities in earnest. There was no returning to business as usual, and we committed to putting our reflections into action.



**We doubled down on our multidisciplinary model of legal guardianship services.**

This included rebuilding and supporting our client services team, expanding our caseload of guardianship clients, and improving client-facing processes and procedures. We also established new internal mechanisms to ensure the agility of our service model in an ever-changing social, health, and financial context. Over several months, Project Guardianship staff developed and put in motion an action plan that included new training, supervision, and client service delivery measures. By the end of the year, we added six new positions to PG's team thanks to new funding and onboarded 15 new guardianship clients.



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## We implemented new organizational strategies.

Our policy & advocacy and training & education strategies were designed to address inequities in the guardianship system that stem primarily from the absence of a public fund or program for New Yorkers who need a guardian but who lack family members or friends to serve and the resources to hire a private guardian. In 2022, we published a multiyear policy agenda and formed a small, statewide coalition of advocates. We also laid the groundwork for a network of organizations and practitioners committed to increasing support for older adults and people with disabilities, preventing unnecessary guardianships, and facilitating alternatives.



## We joined the movement to reframe aging and used our voices to dispel harmful narratives.

With dedicated resources to share our work with external audiences for the first time, Project Guardianship established an online presence and began to amplify the experiences of older New Yorkers and those with disabilities. In doing so, we spoke out against policies, practices, and stories designed to degrade or erase the communities we serve. We hosted and participated in webinars, authored and co-authored blogs and op-eds, testified at public hearings, and engaged with friends and followers on social media. We met with NYS and NYC agencies and worked with partners to include guardianship in the NYS Master Plan for Aging. These efforts contributed to a greater public understanding of our guardianship system, the need for alternatives to guardianship, and a threadbare safety net for older adults and those with disabilities living in New York.

As leaders of the organization, we are equally proud of the work that the Project Guardianship staff accomplished over the past year and excited to build on our strong foundation. 2023 is sure to bring new challenges and opportunities our way. We join with our clients, partners, and funders in pursuit of a world where older New Yorkers and people with disabilities are celebrated and provided with the support and care they need to thrive and live with pride.

With gratitude,

*Joan Malin*  
Joan Malin, Board Chair

*Kimberly George*  
Kimberly George, President & CEO

# Our Vision and Values



At Project Guardianship, we envision a world where our older neighbors and those with disabilities are celebrated and provided with the support and care they need to thrive and live with pride.

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This vision sits atop our values of **dignity, compassion, equity, excellence & integrity, and leadership.**





# DIGNITY

We believe in dignity for all, regardless of ability. We work every day to identify ways to restore and preserve dignity through decision-making supports, improved systems, and better guardianship.



# COMPASSION

We believe in recognizing and honoring the worth of every individual, regardless of current circumstances. We approach our work—from direct service to the pursuit of systems solutions—with empathy and personal kindness.



# EQUITY

We believe in recognizing, addressing, and advancing equity and justice and act in ways that promote respect and equitable treatment and opportunity for all.



# EXCELLENCE & INTEGRITY

We excel through constant learning and collaboration, drawing on our collective talents to provide optimal solutions to complex problems and bring joy to the lives of others.



# LEADERSHIP

We propel systems and individual actors to embrace innovation and realize better approaches to building a society that cares for all people equally.



# Strategy



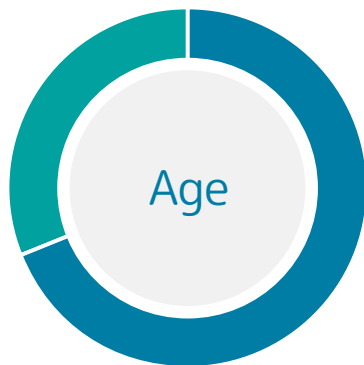
# Direct Services

## Legal Guardianship

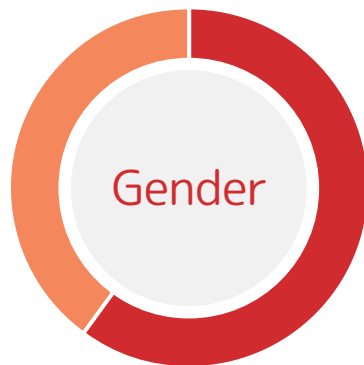


Project Guardianship continued its legacy of providing person-centered guardianship services to 173 individuals throughout the five boroughs of New York City and beyond. We upheld our multidisciplinary model of legal, social, and financial support, as well as our commitment to helping clients age in their homes and communities and avoid institutionalization whenever possible. Over the course of the year, we worked closely with individuals and families to maximize client participation in decision-making processes.

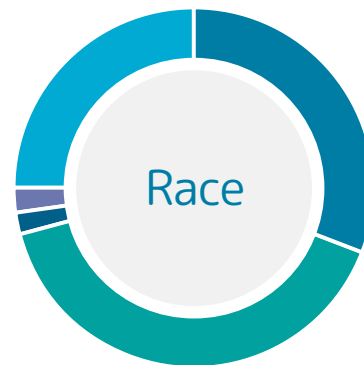
Here's a snapshot of who we served:



59% Ages 65+  
69 Average Age  
67 Median Age



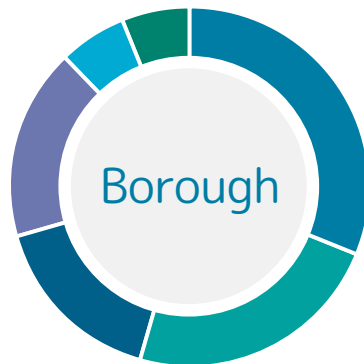
60% Women  
40% Men



31% Black 2% Multi-racial  
40% White 25% Undisclosed/  
2% Asian unknown



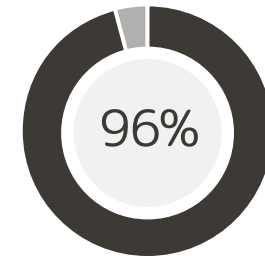
18% Hispanic  
10% Non-Hispanic  
72% Undisclosed/  
unknown



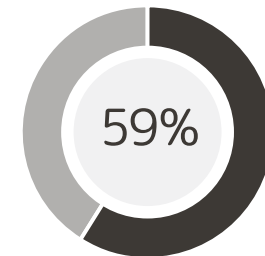
32% Manhattan 17% Brooklyn  
23% Queens 6% Staten Island  
16% Bronx 6% Non-NYC



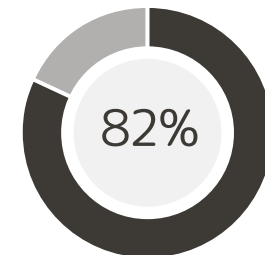
50% Living with  
diagnosed mental  
illness and/or  
cognitive disorder



live under  
**NYC median income**  
for single person  
household (\$93,400)



lived below the  
**federal poverty line**  
(\$13,590 in 2022)



enrolled in  
**Medicaid**

## Client Outcomes

## Financial Outcomes

90%

of clients maintained or obtained **public benefits**



## Social Outcomes



11

### MOVE HOMES

clients **moved back home or to a less restrictive facility**

20

### SOCIALIZING WITH OTHERS

clients were **reunited/reconnected with a loved one**—friend or family member.

nearly

50%

### AGING IN PLACE

of clients **maintained in community home**

## Public Outcomes

## Public dollars saved

nearly

\$4M

**saved in Medicaid**

(based on a 2015 cost-benefit analysis)





# Public Helpline



In addition to providing legal guardianship services, Project Guardianship recognized the need for a new type of service: an accessible way for New Yorkers—including individuals and families, lay guardians, health and human services providers, and taxpayers—to get information about guardianship, alternatives to guardianship, and navigating the guardianship system. In 2022, we secured funding to pilot a Guardianship Prevention and Support Helpline.

## ✓ Mediums

Dedicated phone, email, and web service

## ✓ Services

Information, assistance, and referrals

## ✓ Topics

Guardianship prevention, care planning to maximize independence, lay guardianship, support for social service providers, interpretation of powers, motion practice in guardianship court, removal of one's guardianship and the restoration of rights, and more

In November, Project Guardianship set out to design the pilot for a mid-2023 launch and to build the necessary data collection tools to make a strong case to public agencies for the continued funding, development, and expansion of the Helpline.



At the start of the year, Project Guardianship published a policy agenda designed to improve the guardianship system in New York. The agenda emphasized legislative actions required to create a world where older adults and people with disabilities are appreciated and given the necessary support and care to live with dignity and flourish.

## The first item on our agenda is to secure a \$15 million statewide appropriation for nonprofit guardianship services.

Despite a statutory mandate to appoint a legal guardian to every New Yorker who needs one, there is no dedicated funding stream for guardianship services statewide.

If a person has resources, guardianship fees are paid out of their income and assets. For those without resources, there is a patchwork of nonprofit providers with limited capacity and a small number of private guardians willing to serve at a low fee. This creates an inequitable system whereby judges struggle to find qualified guardians for people lacking family and friends to serve and the resources to pay a private guardian. This gap disproportionately impacts our Black, Brown, and female populations.



To address this inequity, Project Guardianship organized **Guardianship Access New York** ("GANY"), a small coalition of providers advocating for increased resources for guardianship services across the state. GANY members include organizations and individuals from Rochester, Buffalo, Albany, New York City, and Long Island.



Together, GANY members developed a model for statewide guardianship services and a corresponding advocacy strategy. In December, we met with representatives from the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Office for the Aging to present our model and ask for their support in the form of a \$15 million appropriation.

Such an appropriation would ensure that every New Yorker who needs a guardian can get one, regardless of location or financial circumstance, thus addressing a systemic inequity that reinforces and perpetuates racism, sexism, and classism. Further, by funding nonprofits to deliver guardianship services, we can ensure that New Yorkers are appointed guardians who prioritize their health, safety, and dignity.

The long-term impact of this work is a more equitable guardianship system for older adults and those with disabilities.

# Training and Education

In 2022, Project Guardianship laid the groundwork for **Good Guardianship and Autonomy Preservation** (“G-GAP”), a statewide network of guardianship and related professionals committed to increasing support for older adults and people with disabilities, preventing unnecessary guardianships, and facilitating alternatives. By convening and joining with practitioners on a variety of relevant topics, our goal was to build the collective capacity of the field and strengthen the infrastructure surrounding older adult and disability services, including guardianship.

We announced G-GAP in August with an invitation to join a launch event in October. The event was well attended, with over 90 participants from 30 organizations representing counties across the state. Based on participant feedback, G-GAP will design activities and events to provide the following benefits to members:

- ✓ Education and information on topics of their choosing
- ✓ Local networking and partnership building
- ✓ A forum to raise awareness of local and sector concerns
- ✓ A voice to influence priority issues for the coalition to address
- ✓ Opportunities to participate in continuum of care reform efforts

With G-GAP, Project Guardianship established a first-ever statewide network of guardianship and guardianship-adjacent professionals. This includes fellow nonprofit providers, attorneys, academic institutions, private and family guardians, court personnel, government agencies, healthcare systems, and more. As the coalition continues to operate and grow, it will function both as a driver and benefactor of new programs designed to improve New York’s guardianship system.

Also in 2022, Project Guardianship partnered with the NYS United Court System on an **Elder Justice Innovation (EJI) Project**. The purpose of the EJI Project is to reform parts of the NYS guardianship system to 1) improve outcomes for every New Yorker who is the subject of a guardianship case; 2) increase access to court services for those who are low-income, living with a disability, and/or have limited English proficiency; and 3) modernize guardianship case operations. The EJI Project is focusing its work on four areas: stakeholder engagement, uniform and plain language court forms, data enhancement, and training and education.



# Research and Development

## **Project Guardianship also made strides to research and develop alternatives to guardianship.**

We established a partnership with researchers from Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging at the City University of New York-Hunter College, a professor from Cardozo School of Law, and a former judge and advisor to Supported Decision-Making New York. Together, we conceptualized a multi-phase research project to better understand the types of supports, delivery mechanisms, and environmental factors that might enable older adults—including those with cognitive challenges—to maintain autonomy and decision-making power as they age. By the end of the year, we secured partial funding to launch the first phase of our research: an environmental scan of existing supports for older adults, including a literature review and select practitioner interviews.

We will use the results of the environmental scan to inform a project to develop a new program model that could alter the social services landscape for older adults and reduce an overreliance on guardianship systems in New York and across the country.



# Organizational Development

In 2022, we continued to build our infrastructure as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We created three new staff positions, including a Chief Program Officer, Director of NYS Guardianship Initiatives, and Communications Associate. Our staff engaged in organizational development work to support the implementation of our strategic plan and arrived at a set of action items that prioritize the health and wellbeing of our clients and internal team. Toward the end of the year, we put the following action plan in motion:

- ▶ Eliminate a backlog of final accountings and annual reports for guardianship clients that accumulated during the pandemic
- ▶ Develop new processes for distributing funds to clients with the goal of eliminating last-minute and emergency transfers
- ▶ Improve and standardize supervision practices for all team members
- ▶ Revise the client team meeting format; clarify roles and responsibilities, streamline meeting materials, improve record-keeping
- ▶ Establish a robust training curriculum for direct service staff to support onboarding and professional development
- ▶ Deepen relationships with client physicians to improve client medical decision-making communication and practices

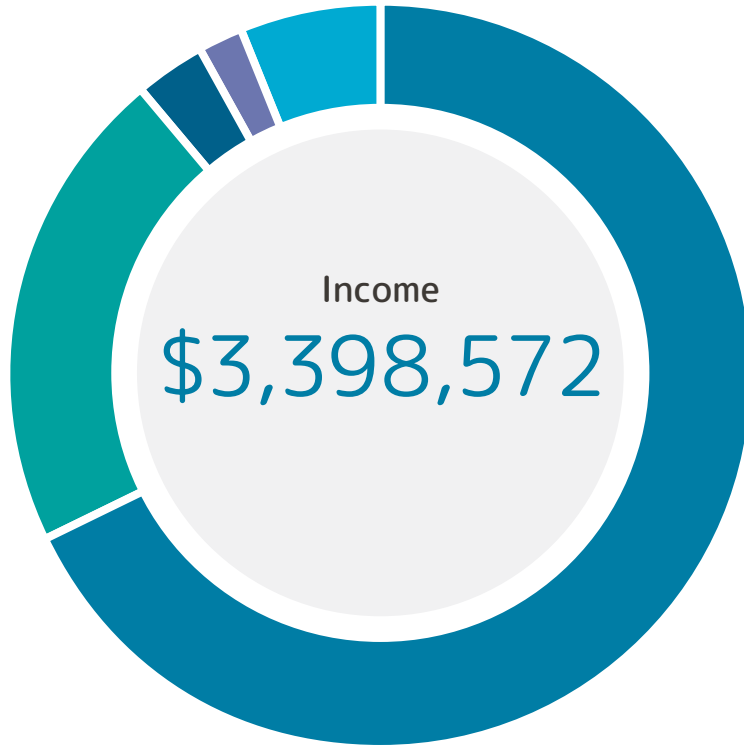


We welcomed a new member to our Board of Directors, **Lloyd G. Stanford**, Founder and CEO of Lloyd G. Stanford & Associates, Inc., which provides physician practices with operational, financial, and other advisory and consulting services, including interim organizational leadership. Lloyd has served as CEO

of large academic medical and surgical practices. He also serves on the Vestry of Saint Thomas Church on Fifth. Project Guardianship is excited and proud to have his skills and support in our leadership!

Project Guardianship's Board of Directors expanded its committee structure by adopting a resolution to turn our Diversity, Race Equity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility Committee into a standing committee of the Board.

# 2022 Financials



- 68% Government**
- 21% Foundations**
- 3% Individuals**
- 2% Earned Income**
- 6% In-Kind**



- 81% Program**
- 14% Fundraising**
- 5% Administration**

# Thank You to Our Supporters

## Grants and Donations Received in 2022

### \$2,000,000+

NYS Unified Court System

### \$250,000+

New York Health Foundation  
Vera Institute of Justice

### \$100,000+

New York Community Trust  
NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services  
NYS Office for the Aging  
Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP

### \$50,000+

FJC—A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds  
NYC Council Speaker's Initiative

### \$25,000+

Brooklyn Community Foundation  
Fan Fox and Leslie R Samuels Foundation  
New York Foundation for Eldercare  
Tuttle Fund

### \$10,000+

Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging  
Elizabeth Gilmore  
NYC Council Member Rita Joseph

### \$2,500+

Wendy Mackenzie  
Joan Malin  
Eliza Rossman

### \$1,000+

Janel Callon  
Elizabeth and Jon Hochman  
Hochman Seigler Family Fund  
Gregory Klemm  
Kleiner Family Foundation  
Franziska Laskaris  
David Lenefsky  
Janet Offensend  
Obi Orjih  
Charlene Ray  
Victoria Stanhope  
Judy Willig

### \$500+

Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of  
the Religious Society of Friends  
Blake Foote  
Laura Glant  
Jane Levine  
Lloyd Stanford



## Leadership

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joan Malin, *Chair*  
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Kevin Keenan  
Charles King  
Greg Klemm  
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