



Mental Health Association

in Orange County, Inc.

NADIA ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For Immediate Release:
Contact: Nickie Ronsini

April 2, 2014

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. Announces 17A Guardianship Program

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. (MHA) is pleased to announce their specialized 17-A Guardianship Program which offers assistance to families with children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Orange County. This service will be provided by Anne Klingner, MHA's Guardianship Associate.

Parents of persons who have developmental disabilities are considered the natural guardians of their children until their 18th birthday. After that, the state considers them to be legally competent adults and able to manage their own affairs.

Article 17-A Guardianship is for individuals with developmental disabilities in New York State and is a process by which someone is appointed by a court to make decisions for a person who is unable to make decisions independently. Guardianship designates an advocate with the legal authority to make certain decisions on behalf of a person, specifically to manage legal, medical personal and financial affairs. In simpler terms, guardianship allows a parent to continue making decisions for their son or daughter even after they turn 18.

Article 17-A Guardianship is a Surrogate Court proceeding. The court must be satisfied that the guardianship is necessary and in the best interest of the person. For individuals age 18 and older

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legal guardianship cannot be granted from, or specified in, a will.

The Guardianship Associate will provide assistance with compiling documentation as well as interfacing with Surrogate's Court, physicians' offices, schools, residential facilities and others as needed. Furthermore, the Guardianship Associate will file a petition with Surrogate's Court, answer questions during the process and meet families at the court to support them during the guardianship hearing.

MHA's Article 17-A Guardianship incorporates a fee of \$200.00 which covers all steps in the process regardless of duration.

The mission of MHA is to promote the positive mental health and emotional well being of Orange County residents, working towards reducing stigma of mental illness, developmental disabilities, and providing support to victims of sexual assault and other crimes. In partnership with service recipients, families, volunteers and the community, MHA strives to fulfill its mission through culturally competent advocacy, direct services, public education and responsiveness in times of community emergency.

For further information or to register for a 17A Guardianship appointment, contact Anne Klingner, Guardianship Associate, at (845)342-2400 ext. 260 or Nickie Ronsini at (845)342-2400 ext. 241.

Information regarding MHA and Guardianship services is also available on MHA's website:

www.mhaorangeny.com.

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