

## Public Guardian (PG) Transition Frequently Asked Questions

### Question: When does the Public Guardian Transition to Ventura County Behavioral Health?

- ❖ **Answer:** As of February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Ventura County's Public Guardian will transition from Ventura County Human Services Agency (HSA) to Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH), per the direction of Ventura County Board of Supervisors, in an effort to align Public Guardian and Behavioral Health services related to upcoming legislative changes. Please note that the Public Administrator will remain with HSA.
- ❖ **Beginning Friday evening, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, community members will have access to Public Guardian information on the Behavioral Health website: [www.VCBH.org](http://www.VCBH.org).** The Human Services Agency's Public Guardian information page will be redirected to the new VCBH page.

### Question: Why did Public Guardian transition to Ventura County Behavioral Health?

- ❖ **Answer:** The PG investigates and oversees the care of people who are unable to care for themselves and who have either not designated someone to make decisions on their behalf or do not have family members who can reliably make such decisions. The PG may be appointed as guardian (for those with cognitive impairment due to dementia, traumatic brain injury or other conditions) or conservator (for those with diagnosed serious mental illness) of persons found by the Superior Court to be unable to care for themselves and/or their finances. Each month, the PG oversees conservatorships and guardianships (when court appointed) for some 335 clients.
- ❖ Nearly two-thirds of PG cases involve HCA-VCBH clients who are gravely disabled due to mental illness, including a growing number of clients in "Murphy Conservatorships" who are not competent to stand trial, have outstanding felony charges involving great physical injury, and pose a threat to themselves or others.
- ❖ In addition, Ventura is mandated by the State to establish, by December 2024, a new court process called Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court. As we establish CARE Court locally, we anticipate the following: family, close friends, first responders and behavioral health workers will be able to submit a petition with supporting documentation to the CARE Court on behalf of a person with untreated schizophrenia spectrum or other psychotic disorders who is unlikely to survive safely without supervision, or who is likely to pose a threat to themselves or others without support. The Court would then order a clinical evaluation of the person and review the evaluation to determine if the person qualifies for CARE Court services. If so, the individual would be provided with legal counsel, an advocate, and a care plan that can include recommended treatment, medication, and housing services. If the CARE Court mandates services, but the individual does not adhere to their treatment plan over the course of a year, the CARE Court could consider conservatorship to make it easier for someone who needs help to receive it. If there are an increase in cases that lead to conservatorship, it would result in further increases in the PG client caseload.

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- ❖ Given the nexus between the PG and the Public Representative Payee Program (PRPP) to HCA-VCBH clients, and mandates related to CARE Court, HCA and HSA sought to divide the tasks currently in the Office of the Public Administrator- Public Guardian (PAPG), which has operated as a combined entity within HSA, for improved alignment. Under this proposal, the Office of the PG and the PRPP, transferred to HCA, and the Office of the PA remained within HSA.

### Question: What does this mean for current Public Guardian Services?

- ❖ **Answer:** The entire Public Guardian team, formerly housed under Human Services Agency (HSA) has been moved to Ventura County Behavioral Health. As of now, their physical office location will remain the same. **Coordination of services remain the same with no impact to clients.**

### Question: What is the role of the Public Guardian?

- ❖ **Answer:** The Public Guardian functions as the legally appointed guardian or conservator of persons found by the Superior Court to be unable to properly care for themselves or their finances, including the elderly and those who are gravely disabled due to mental illness. Once appointed by the court, the Public Guardian assumes personal and financial responsibilities for care of the conservatee, their needs and assets. The Public Administrator is a separate function and remains a part of the Ventura County Human Services Agency.

### Question: How are referrals made to the Public Guardian (PG)?

- ❖ **Answer:** Those who are seeking services related to the **Public Guardian** can call the *Officer of the Day* phone line at **805-654-3141**. Deputies are available to respond to inquiries between 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.