



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

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November 20, 2023

Chief Justice Maassen

Presiding Judge Thomas Matthews

Anchorage Civil Superior Court Judges

Palmer Superior Court Judges:

John Cagle  
Kari Kristiansen  
Kristen Stohler  
Jonathan Woodman

Magistrate Judges:

Robert Polley  
Marika Athens  
Derek Koehler  
Hannah Steketee  
Coralette Waite

Court Visitor Coordinator

Lisa Wawrzonek

**RE: OPA/Public Guardian's Limited Ability to Accept Cases in Anchorage and Palmer**

Dear Justice Maassen, Presiding Judge Matthews, Anchorage and Palmer Superior Court and Magistrate Judges:

We are writing to inform you that through the efforts of the current moratorium on accepting new guardianship and conservatorship appointments and internal caseload structuring, hiring and promotion, the Public Guardian currently has the immediate ability to accept a total of 2 new appointments from Anchorage and 2 new appointments from Palmer.

As many of you are aware, the Public Guardian has a geographical waitlist in place for cases in which the Public Guardian has been requested/appointed but has been unable to ethically accept. There are currently 8 cases on the Anchorage waitlist and 4 on the Palmer waitlist. We are aware of one Anchorage case that has an immediate need and we have notified the court visitor in that matter of our availability and are in the process of filing appropriate paperwork. An email has been sent to the court visitors in the remaining 7 Anchorage cases in order to ascertain which cases still need us and on what priority basis. We will be filing the appropriate pleadings in the cases that have the highest priority for consideration. We are also aware of a Palmer matter with an immediate need. We will be filing the appropriate paperwork in that matter and attending the December 1, 2023, hearing. An email has been sent out to the court visitors in the 3 other Palmer cases in order to ascertain which cases still need us and on what priority basis and again we will file the appropriate pleadings in the cases that have the highest priority for consideration. There should be additional openings for the current individuals remaining on the waitlist after the first of the year.

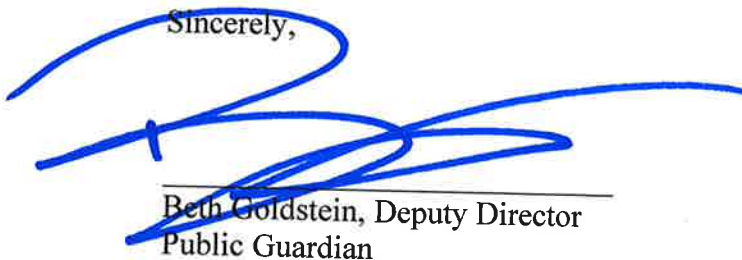
We are very pleased that we are in the position to accept some new cases several months before we had estimated in our original letter.

We are finding that the waitlist has become a valuable resource and we encourage the court visitors to continue to contact Beth Goldstein to provide the necessary information to add a matter to the waitlist so that we can consult the list as soon as an opening becomes available.

Again, we want to assure the courts that we are doing everything we can to both make the Public Guardian available for those cases that need the appointment of last resort while still being able to meet our statutory, fiduciary, and ethical duties to the current 1586 individuals we are obligated to protect on the court's behalf. While we currently still have certified public guardians with caseloads between 80 and 104, especially in the Anchorage and Palmer locations, as evidenced by this letter, we want to assure the courts that we are not waiting until every certified public guardian's caseload is below the ethical threshold. We are consistently working on individual caseloads in order to be able to accept cases in almost every geographic area by early January.

As always, we are happy to provide an administrative update on the status of the Public Guardian Unit at any time and to provide the specific caseload numbers for each public guardian whenever requested. As openings become available in other geographic areas, we will be providing an update letter to those specific courts as well as filing appropriate pleadings in any matter on the waitlist.

  
James Stinson, Director

Sincerely,  
  
Beth Goldstein, Deputy Director  
Public Guardian