

Special Needs Answers

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Things to Look for When Choosing a Guardian for Your Children

LAST UPDATED: 3/2/2008

One of the most important decisions parents must make when preparing their estate plan is the choice of a guardian for their child should they be the ones to die first. The choice of guardian can be especially difficult for the parents of a child or children with special needs. Unfortunately, many people don't put nearly enough thought into their selection, choosing a close relative or friend regardless of that person's background in dealing with children with special needs. Academy of Special Needs Planners co-founder [Diedre Wachbrit](#) has prepared a checklist of important questions any parent should ask when choosing a guardian for their child. It is a great starting point for parents preparing their estate plan and can help focus the search for the ideal guardian.

- Does the prospective guardian have the necessary maturity, experience, temperament, patience, and stamina to undertake the responsibilities as guardian of the particular child or children?
- Does the individual selected have a genuine interest in the minor's welfare, either through family relationship or personal friendship, and have the confidence of the minor and parent?
- Does the prospective guardian have some understanding of the emotional needs of children or the willingness and ability to obtain skilled guidance on this subject?
- Is the prospective guardian a person of integrity and stability?
- Is the individual physically able to undertake the care of an additional child or children, and have the time necessary to devote to this task?
- Are the prospective guardian's personal situation, religion, age, marital status, other children, personality traits, and similar factors acceptable to the parent?
- Will sufficient funds be available to cover the costs of caring for the child throughout the period of guardianship and, if the child is to live with the guardian, to enable the guardian and family to meet the increased strain on their resources?
- Does the prospective guardian have any conflicts of interest with the minor?
- Is the prospective guardian willing to serve?
- Is the prospective guardian willing and able to give the children an upbringing similar to that which the parent would have provided financially, socially, morally, and in other ways important to the parent?
- Does the parent want the guardian to adopt the children and, if so, is the nominee willing to do so?