Rethinking Guardianship NC is a Collective Impact initiative that began in 2015. The Common Agenda is: To promote less restrictive alternatives to guardianship; and, to effect long-term changes in North Carolina’s guardianship system. Rethinking Guardianship: Making Alternatives a Reality in North Carolina (MAR-NC), was a three-year project (2020-2023) funded by the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD). By all indicators, RG MAR-NC was a huge success. Over 1,400 individuals were reached through educational trainings and outreach; self-advocates, family, friends and professionals became more aware of the concept of supported decision-making; educational materials about supporting choice and self-determination were created in print and video formats and are available in English and Spanish, and statutory guardianship reform is underway. Read on to learn more!

Educational materials created by Rethinking Guardianship include a video introducing supported decision-making, a downloadable, printable guide to SDM, and individual handouts, all available in English and Spanish. Topics include the importance of self-determination for well-being and how to get started using specific tools, including: Supported Decision-Making Formal and Informal; Power of Attorney; Healthcare Power of Attorney; Living Will; Living Trust; Special needs Trust; Simple Financial Tools; Foster Care 18-21; Representative Payee for Social Security Benefits; Fiduciary for Veterans Benefits; and Psychiatric Advance Directives.

You can find the following at Rethinking Guardianship’s website, www.rethinkingguardianshipnc.org:
- Our Common Agenda
- News & Reports about Rethinking Guardianship
- Educational materials in print and video, English & Spanish
- Stories and videos
- A blog
- Resources, including information about assessing capacity, restoration of rights, and guardianship in NC and the US.

Between October 2020 and June 2023, the website received 15,556 unique pageviews.
New Trainings for NC Adult Social Workers & Corporate Guardians

UNC Cares created two trainings on guardianship for the Division of Aging and Adult Services. The first is a pre-service titled Fundamentals of Guardianship training required for all DSS adult social workers and corporate guardians. During this grant period, 156 individuals completed this training. The second is a day-long live hybrid training titled Beyond Guardianship: Promoting Pathways to Greater Self-Determination. This training will be offered several times each year beginning July 2023.

Check Out Our Video Stories!
Janie and Suvya and their experience living independently with supported decision-making.
Jason and his experience regaining his rights after being subject to guardianship.
Carol and her mother's story of a predatory guardianship.
Jeremy and his parents and their experience using Supported Decision-Making.
Tylor, a young man in his late twenties living in Charlotte, NC, whose rights were restored.
I AM My Rights from Guardianship
Rights Legislative Day in NC
Check out these stories and more on the website: www.rethinkingguardianshipnc.org

RG-MAR Contributed to the NC Olmstead Plan

RG-MAR made detailed recommendations to the Olmstead Plan, which was finalized in January 2022. As a result, the plan includes "Exploring other ways, besides guardianship, to help people make decisions" as one of its eleven priorities.

Moving the Needle on Awareness and Use of Supported Decision-Making: 2020 to 2023

The initiative’s Common Agenda includes promoting less restrictive alternatives to guardianship. As a shared measure, we asked self-advocates, family, friends, and professionals in North Carolina about their awareness and use of supported decision-making (SDM) in 2020 and again in 2023. Over that time period, self-advocates, family members and friends became more familiar with the concept of supported decision-making, going from only 40% in 2020 to 75% in 2023. In addition, self-advocates, family members, friends and professionals increased their awareness & use of the following specific SDM tools: family, friends and community support services, SDM agreements (formal and informal), Foster Care 18-21, and Fiduciary for Veterans' Benefits.

Self-advocates, family members, friends, & professionals increased their awareness of ABLE Accounts, and Special Needs Trust, and use of Living Trust, Durable Power of Attorney, Health Care Power of Attorney, & Living Will.

Finally, professionals increased their awareness and use of Advance Directive for Mental Health, Joint Bank Account, and Living Trust, and their use of ABLE Accounts and Representative Payee for Social Security.
As part of its Common Agenda "to effect long-term changes in the state's guardianship system," Rethinking Guardianship identified several areas for Chapter 35A reform that will increase choice and autonomy for individuals encountering the guardianship system in North Carolina.

With input and guidance provided by national SDM advocate and RG MAR-NC consultant, Jonathan Martinis, the Statute Writing Team completed a 79-page draft spelling out important reforms. Rethinking Guardianship then partnered with the Conference of Superior Clerks of Court, the UNC School of Government, and the Estate Planning & Fiduciary Law Sections of the NC Bar to finalize proposed statutory changes.

These changes are the following:
1. A mandate to consider alternatives that carry the least restrictions for the lives of people facing potential guardianship.
2. A need to make sure all parties are fully informed about relevant rights.
3. The ability of courts to monitor guardianships and call for hearings if needed.

A consensus bill for guardianship reform was filed by the NC Bar Association for the 2023 long session of the NC General Assembly. Senate Bill 308, otherwise known as the Guardianship Rights Bill, was passed unanimously in the Senate (74-0) and is currently in the House, awaiting movement during either the long or short sessions of the General Assembly.

Next steps in the statutory reform work include potentially introducing updating guardianship terminology in the 2024 short session, and introducing GAL system reform in the 2025 long session.

RG-Mar By the Numbers

1,419 individuals reached through trainings from July 2020 to June 2023

156 DSS social workers and public guardians enrolled in or completed Fundamentals of Guardianship training

60 NC Clerks of Court trained on Supported Decision-Making

179 members of the RG-MAR Statewide Workgroup

26 individuals who served on the RG-MAR Steering Team

28 individuals who contributed to Senate Bill 308

6 individuals with I/DD participating in RG-MAR

12 families advocates participating in RG-MAR

15,556 unique website views
To our many Statewide Partners:

And to our Backbone Entity: