

What is a conservatorship in Tennessee, and how do you get one?

Key facts

- Tennessee law reserves the word guardian for someone appointed over a minor, and uses conservator for someone appointed over an adult with a disability (Tennessee Code Annotated Section 34-1-101, checked 2026-09-25).
- A conservatorship petition must be filed in the court in the county where the respondent lives (Tennessee Code Annotated Section 34-3-101, checked 2026-09-25).
- The court must find, by clear and convincing evidence, that the person is disabled and needs help, and must impose the least restrictive alternative rather than defaulting to full conservatorship (Tennessee Code Annotated Sections 34-1-126 and 34-1-127, checked 2026-09-25).
- The court appoints a guardian ad litem, usually a Tennessee-licensed attorney, to investigate the respondent's condition, property, and the proposed conservator's fitness (Tennessee Code Annotated Section 34-1-107, checked 2026-09-25).
- A conservator of the estate typically posts a bond, files a sworn inventory within 60 days of appointment, and files the first accounting within 30 days of the six-month anniversary, then every 12 months after that (Tennessee Code Annotated Sections 34-1-105, 34-1-110, and 34-1-111, checked 2026-09-25).
- In an emergency, a court can appoint an emergency conservator for up to 60 days; if done without prior notice, the respondent must be notified within 48 hours (Tennessee Code Annotated Section 34-1-132, checked 2026-09-25).
- Tennessee's Public Guardianship for the Elderly program can serve as conservator of last resort for people 60 and older with no willing or suitable family member, friend, bank, or corporation to act for them (Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging, checked 2026-09-25).

Printable conservatorship checklist

- ☐ Confirmed less restrictive options will not work
- ☐ Identified the county where the respondent lives
- ☐ Gathered medical records or a recent evaluation
- ☐ Identified a proposed conservator willing to serve
- ☐ Filed the petition with the court clerk
- ☐ Guardian ad litem appointed
- ☐ Hearing date confirmed and respondent notified
- ☐ Bond arranged, if required
- ☐ Letters of conservatorship received
- ☐ Inventory filed within 60 days
- ☐ First accounting reminder set for the six-month anniversary

☐ Copies of the order and letters saved to the family guide

<https://omliva.com/guides/conservatorship-in-tennessee/> | Checked 2026-09-25