

Proposal for Snyder ISD Partnership with the Scurry County Guardianship Program

Purpose of Proposal: This proposal outlines a formal partnership between Snyder ISD and the Scurry County Guardianship Program to strengthen transition planning, guardianship support, and resource access for students with disabilities ages 13–21. The partnership will reduce existing barriers for families, enhance alignment with state and federal transition requirements, and streamline agency involvement for students transitioning to adulthood.

Background & Current Challenges

Because Scurry County has not had an active guardianship program in recent years, Snyder ISD families have been required to seek services outside the county, primarily in Lubbock or Abilene. This has created long wait times, often ranging from 14 to 18 months, for legal support or guardianship proceedings.

As a result:

- Families frequently struggle to navigate the guardianship process or alternatives such as supported decision-making.
- Students may not receive appropriate transition planning beginning prior to their 14th birthday, as required by law.
- Outside agency participation in ARDs has been inconsistent, occasionally creating compliance concerns.
- Our lack of an 18+ program means that students approaching adulthood experience a gap between school-based supports and adult services.
- Staff are independently coordinating a complex network of agencies without a structured county-level partner.

The revitalized **Scurry County Guardianship Program**, housed in the County Judge's Office, offers a sustainable, local solution.

Overview of the Scurry County Guardianship Program

The program currently serves 23 individuals (ages 18 to 85) in various residential settings, providing annual court oversight, financial and medical decision-making support, and home visits as needed. It partners closely with Themis for cases requiring more intensive case management.

The program also assists families with supported decision-making agreements, limited guardianship options, medical powers of attorney, and access to community services. It works holistically with families, Adult Protective Services, MHMR, food programs, placement services, and medical providers. Importantly, the program is designed to grow in partnership with local schools and other agencies. Ira ISD, Hermleigh ISD, and homeschool families have already expressed interest.

Because the program is based in the County Judge's Office, it has long-term stability and cannot deny students or families due to case volume.

Benefits to Snyder ISD Students & Families

- 1. Earlier, More Effective Transition Planning:** Beginning in Junior High, the program can participate in ARDs, ensuring that guardianship and transition requirements are addressed accurately and on time. This reduces confusion for families and alleviates the burden on district staff who currently manage these outreach efforts independently.
- 2. A Reliable Local Partner for Age-18 Transitions:** The program provides a coordinated handoff for students moving from school services into adulthood. Families receive guidance on whether their child needs full guardianship, limited guardianship, supported decision-making, or other legal supports.
- 3. Better Access to Community Services:** Students and families will have immediate access to a wide range of resources, including mental health support, food programs, adult service referrals, placement assistance, and medical coordination. These supports can begin well before the student turns 18 and continue seamlessly afterwards.
- 4. Minimal Operational Impact on SISD:** Snyder ISD's primary responsibilities would involve making referrals, obtaining parent consent, inviting agencies to ARDs, and providing documentation. Scurry County assumes all long-term case management and legal responsibilities.

Cost and Legal Representation

There is no cost to Snyder ISD for participating in this partnership.

For families, guardianship proceedings in Texas do not legally require an attorney, and courts cannot deny guardianship solely because a family cannot afford legal representation. However, because the legal procedures can be complex, legal representation is strongly recommended.

If a family proceeds without Legal Aid, the cost of guardianship is typically around \$5,000 with private legal counsel. Families who qualify for Legal Aid may reduce this cost to approximately \$500, depending on eligibility and available resources. The Scurry County Guardianship Program assists families in navigating Legal Aid paperwork, determining their options, and securing services that best fit the student's needs.

Supported decision-making, medical power of attorney, and similar alternatives often involve no cost and require no involvement from the court.

Proposed Partnership Structure

1. Point of Contact for Snyder ISD: Brandy Martin, Transition Coordinator

Secondary Snyder ISD Contacts:

- Ana Montoya (Parent Liaison)
- Stephanie Martinez (Junior High)
- Carla Derryberry (High School Administration)
- Mandy Kiner (Special Education Coordinator)
- Daron Worrell (Student Services)

Scurry County Lead: Brandy Benavides, Guardianship Program Coordinator

2. Monthly Coordination Meetings: SISD, Scurry County Guardianship, and MHMR will meet monthly to discuss referrals, updates, services, and alignment between K-12 and adult systems.

Recommendation

I recommend that Snyder ISD enter into a formal partnership with the Scurry County Guardianship Program. This partnership strengthens compliance, provides essential support to families, improves student transitions into adulthood, and establishes a reliable local system of care at no cost to the district.

If approved, we will move forward with developing the MOU and preparing the partnership for board consideration.