RCW 11.130.605 Appointment and role of court visitor. (1) On filing of a petition under RCW 11.130.580 for a protective arrangement instead of guardianship, the court shall appoint a court visitor. The court visitor must be an individual with training or experience in the type of abilities, limitations, and needs alleged in the petition.

(2) On filing of a petition under RCW 11.130.580 for a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship for a minor, the court may appoint a court visitor to investigate a matter related to the petition or inform the minor or a parent of the minor about the petition or a related matter.

(3) On filing of a petition under RCW 11.130.580 or a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship for an adult, the court shall appoint a court visitor unless the respondent is represented by an attorney appointed by the court. The court visitor must be an individual with training or experience in the types of abilities, limitations, and needs alleged in the petition.

(4) The court, in the order appointing a court visitor, shall specify the hourly rate the court visitor may charge for his or her services, and shall specify the maximum amount the court visitor may charge without additional court review and approval. The fee shall be charged to the person subject to a guardianship, conservatorship, or other protective arrangement proceeding unless the court finds that such payment would result in substantial hardship upon such person, in which case the county shall be responsible for such costs: PROVIDED, That the court may charge such fee to the petitioner, the person subject to a guardianship or conservatorship proceeding, or any person who has appeared in the action; or may allocate the fee, as it deems just. If the petition is found to be frivolous or not brought in good faith, the court visitor fee shall be charged to the petitioner. The court shall not be required to provide for the payment of a fee to any salaried employee of a public agency.

(5)(a) The court visitor appointed under subsection (1) or (3) of this section shall within five days of receipt of notice of appointment file with the court and serve, either personally or by first-class mail, the respondent or his or her legal counsel, the petitioner or his or her legal counsel, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.080 with a statement including: His or her training relating to the duties as a court visitor; his or her criminal history as defined in RCW 9.94A.030 for the period covering 10 years prior to the appointment; his or her hourly rate, if compensated; whether the court visitor has had any contact with a party to the proceeding prior to his or her appointment; and whether he or she has an apparent conflict of interest. Within three days of the later of the actual service or filing of the court visitor's statement, any party may set a hearing and file and serve a motion for an order to show cause why the court visitor should not be removed for one of the following three reasons:

(i) Lack of expertise necessary for the proceeding;

(ii) An hourly rate higher than what is reasonable for the particular proceeding; or

(iii) A conflict of interest.

(b) Notice of the hearing shall be provided to the court visitor and all parties. If, after a hearing, the court enters an order replacing the court visitor, findings shall be included, expressly stating the reasons for the removal. If the court visitor is not removed, the court has the authority to assess to the moving party

attorneys' fees and costs related to the motion. The court shall assess attorneys' fees and costs for frivolous motions.

(6) If the respondent objects to the petition or requests appointment of an attorney, the court visitor shall petition the court to have an attorney appointed within five days of meeting the respondent.

(7) A court visitor appointed under subsection (1) or (3) of this section shall interview the respondent in person and in a manner the respondent is best able to understand:

(a) Explain to the respondent the substance of the petition, the nature, purpose, and effect of the proceeding, and the respondent's rights at the hearing on the petition;

(b) Determine the respondent's views with respect to the order sought;

(c) Inform the respondent that all costs and expenses of the proceeding, including respondent's attorneys' fees, may be paid from the respondent's assets;

(d) If the petitioner seeks an order related to the dwelling of the respondent, visit the respondent's present dwelling and any dwelling in which it is reasonably believed the respondent will live if the order is granted;

(e) If a protective arrangement instead of guardianship is sought, obtain information from any physician or other person known to have treated, advised, or assessed the respondent's relevant physical or mental condition;

(f) If a protective arrangement instead of conservatorship is sought, review financial records of the respondent, if relevant to the court visitor's recommendation under subsection (8)(b) of this section; and

(g) Investigate the allegations in the petition and any other matter relating to the petition the court directs.

(8) A court visitor under subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section promptly shall file a report in a record with the court and provide a copy of the report to the respondent, petitioner, and any interested party entitled to notice under RCW 11.130.580 (1) through (3), at least 15 days prior to the hearing on the petition filed under RCW 11.130.585, 11.130.590, or 11.130.595, which must include:

(a) To the extent relevant to the order sought, a summary of self-care, independent living tasks, and financial management tasks the respondent:

(i) Can manage without assistance or with existing supports;

(ii) Could manage with the assistance of appropriate supportive services, technological assistance, or supported decision making; and

(iii) Cannot manage;

(b) A recommendation regarding the appropriateness of the protective arrangement sought and whether a less restrictive alternative for meeting the respondent's needs is available;

(c) If the petition seeks to change the physical location of the dwelling of the respondent, a statement whether the proposed dwelling meets the respondent's needs and whether the respondent has expressed a preference as to the respondent's dwelling;

(d) A statement whether the respondent declined a professional evaluation under RCW 11.130.615 and what other information is available to determine the respondent's needs and abilities without the professional evaluation;

(e) A statement whether the respondent is able to attend a hearing at the location court proceedings typically are held;

(f) A statement whether the respondent is able to participate in a hearing and which identifies any technology or other form of support that would enhance the respondent's ability to participate; and

(g) Any other matter the court directs. [2026 c 177 s 12; 2020 c 312 s 311; 2019 c 437 s 506.]

Effective dates—2020 c 312: See note following RCW 11.130.915.