

Recent legislation has greatly changed and expanded the role of court investigators in conservatorship cases.¹ At this time and for the next several years while the committee works on projects to implement the legislation, including new programs for the initial and continuing education of court investigators, this advisory committee particularly needs contributions from this important profession.

The committee proposes to amend rule 10.44(c) to create a separate membership category for court investigators, thereby ensuring that at least one court investigator be represented on the committee at all times. This proposal would also amend the rule to separate the private manager of probate estates from the category of persons knowledgeable in mental health or developmental disabilities, to provide greater emphasis on mental health and developmental disability issues within the committee's purview.²

The advisory committee is currently authorized to have 16 three-year-term members.³ This proposal would not involve an increase in full-term members.

A copy of the proposed amended rule 10.44 is attached.

Attachment

¹ The Omnibus Conservatorship and Guardianship Reform Act of 2006, Stats. 2006, chapters 490–493, particularly, chapter 493 (Assembly Bill 1363).

² The definition of the membership category of persons knowledgeable in mental health or developmental disability issues would also be modified to emphasize that the knowledge in these areas should be of the law that pertains to them. The committee's focus in the mental health field is primarily on the Lanterman-Petris Short Act (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 5000, et seq.), principally the provisions governing the conservatorship of persons gravely disabled as the result of mental illness or chronic alcoholism (Welf. & Inst. Code, §§ 5350–5371). The committee's interest in developmental disability issues concerns limited probate conservatorships for persons with developmental disabilities (see Probate Code section 1828.5).

³ The committee currently has 15 full three-year-term members, plus one one-year-term advisory member. The sixteenth 3-year member, a court investigator, resigned shortly after his appointment in 2006 because he left the profession and court employment. The committee hopes to replace this former member with another court investigator.

Rule Proposal

Rule 10.44 of the California Rules of Court would be amended, effective January 1, 2008, to read:

1 **Rule 10.44. Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee**

2
3 **(a) Area of focus**

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5 The committee makes recommendations to the council for improving the
6 administration of justice in proceedings involving:

- 7
8 (1) Decedents' estates, trusts, conservatorships, guardianships, and other
9 probate matters; and
10
11 (2) Mental health and developmental disabilities issues.

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13 **(b) Additional duty**

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15 The committee must coordinate activities and work with the Family and
16 Juvenile Law Advisory Committee in areas of common concern and interest.
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18 **(c) Membership**

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20 The committee must include at least one member from each of the following
21 categories:

- 22
23 (1) Judicial officer with experience in probate;
24
25 (2) Lawyer whose primary practice involves decedents' estates, trusts,
26 guardianships, conservatorships, or elder abuse law;
27
28 (3) ~~Lawyer, or examiner, or probate investigator~~ who works for the court
29 on probate or mental health matters;
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31 (4) Investigator who works for the court to investigate probate
32 guardianships or conservatorships;
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34 ~~(4)(5)~~ Person knowledgeable in mental health or developmental disabilities
35 disability law; or
36
37 (6) Person knowledgeable in private management of probate matters in a
38 fiduciary capacity; and

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~~(5)(7)~~ County counsel, public guardian, or other similar public officer
familiar with guardianship and conservatorship issues.