

## PUBLIC FIDUCIARY FEE GUIDELINES APRIL 2008

The Arizona Rules of Probate Procedure (ARPP), effective January 1, 2009, allow for “reasonable” fee arrangements, whether hourly or otherwise. ARPP Rule 33, governing compensation to fiduciaries, states that a fiduciary may be required to submit a detailed statement of services provided, and if not on an hourly basis, explanation of the fee arrangements and how the fee amount was calculated.

The fee schedule below was approved by the Superior Court in Maricopa County for the Office of the Public Fiduciary in Maricopa County (Administrative Order 2008-053), in April 2008.

- It is not binding on private fiduciaries but may be useful as an informal guide as to what may be considered a reasonable fee.
- Note that the Office of the Public Fiduciary *will object to* a claim for excessive fees.

### A. EXAMPLE FEE SCHEDULE

Service Provided	Fee Allowed
1. <b>Setup fee</b> for a guardian, conservator, or guardian/conservator for referral, investigation, and setup, allowed in the first year only.	<b>\$900 total</b> (Allowed once)
2. <b>Annual Report/Accounting or Final Accounting</b>	<b>\$375/annually</b>
3. <b>Hourly Fees for Services:</b>	
Maricopa County Public Fiduciary	\$ 145.00
Assistant Public Fiduciary	\$ 125.00
Estate Administration Manager	\$ 95.00
Estate Operations Manager	\$ 95.00
Guardian Administration Manager	\$ 95.00
Estate/Guardian Administrators	\$ 85.00
Benefits Case Management	\$ 55.00
Burial Case Management	\$ 55.00
Benefits Case Investigation	\$ 55.00
Chief Investigator	\$ 85.00
Property Management	\$ 60.00
Tax Preparation [1040, 140, Final 1041, Final 141]	\$ 85.00
Tax Preparation [1040A, 140A, 140PTC, 1041, 141]	\$ 55.00

## NOTES:

- A. Extraordinary fees must be justified by a showing of necessity and billed at a reasonable hourly rate.
- B. Extraordinary costs must be necessary, reasonable, and documented.
- C. Any anticipated extraordinary fees must be explained in the estate management plan and on the fiduciary's itemized fee statement and affidavit.
- D. Companionship services should not exceed \$15.00 an hour plus mileage at \$0.29/mile. These are companionship services over and above the once monthly social worker contact already covered by the annual fee for guardian. (See #2 under suggested fee schedule.)
- E. Contract or "out-sourced" services (those services not performed by an employee of the fiduciary) provided to the ward or protected person for such things as accounting services, tax preparation, visitation, guardianship services, investment management and bookkeeping shall be billed to the ward in the same amount as paid by the fiduciary for each such service.

The Court does not endorse the practice of a fiduciary "marking up" or adding a profit margin to services which the fiduciary does not provide with the fiduciary's own employees. For example, if the fiduciary used an outside accountant to prepare the accounting for a fee of \$250.00, the fiduciary is allowed to charge the ward only the \$250.00. The fiduciary is allowed to charge for any related services provided by the fiduciary such as supervision or monitoring of the contract service provider.

## B. FIDUCIARY DUTIES - FIRST YEAR TYPICAL SERVICES

### 1. Pre-Court Appointment

- a. Meet prospective client and assess client's physical and mental status, need for guardianship, conservatorship, or both; assess placement needs.
- b. Contact family/friends regarding referral, prospective client's status, possible court proceedings, and willingness to serve.
- c. Obtain financial information. (When the referral is from Adult Protective Services or an attorney, this information is usually complete. If the referral is from another source, such as a hospital social worker, this information may be incomplete.) You may need to establish a relationship with the prospective client to review client financial records. (Financial records may be in "good condition" or in bags, boxes, and under beds.)
- d. Contact physician for medical opinion and to obtain medical report. (May require taking prospective client to physician' office).
- e. Meet with attorney to provide case information and begin legal proceedings.
- f. Monitor prospective client (when necessary) pending court proceedings.

### 2. Obtain Court Appointment

- a. Attend hearing.
- b. Obtain surety bond.
- c. Obtain certified copies of Letters.

### 3. Post Court Appointment

- a. Record Letters, if there is real property.
- b. Change the mailing address for client's mail.
- c. Obtain all insurance information.
- d. Contact all financial institutions to close accounts, transfer funds, supersede on accounts, restrict accounts and change mailing address for statements, etc.
- e. Change Payee for Social Security payments.
- f. Contact all sources of income to change mailing addresses.

- g. Contact all medical insurance companies and other insurance companies to obtain information on coverage and to change mailing address.
- h. If real property, obtain condition of title report and appraisal, if necessary.
- l. If real property, contact Assessor and County Treasurer to change mailing address of all records.
- j. If there is an automobile, obtain title or duplicate title and check liability insurance coverage.
- k. If stocks and bonds, either transfer into street name in a brokerage account or change mailing addresses on all issues. Obtain "basis" information when possible.
- l. If furniture/personal property, list and obtain appraisal when necessary.
- m. Determine tax status, obtain copies of prior years' returns.
- n. Determine testamentary status, obtain original or copy of will.
- o. Determine funeral arrangements.
- p. Obtain information required for death certificate.
- q. Prepare inventory for filing with court.

**4. Nursing Home Placement. Supervise and coordinate client's needs.**

- a. Medical, dental and optical appointments.
- b. Medical treatments.
- c. Medication.
- d. Social and emotional needs.
- e. Clothing and personal items.

**C. FIDUCIARY DUTIES - EXTRAORDINARY SERVICES**

**1. Home Placement (Provide 24 Hours On Call Services)**

- a. Obtain staff.
- b. Supervise staff.
- c. Schedule staff.
- d. Prepare payroll.
  - i. Compute withholdings on paychecks.
  - ii. Prepare quarterly and yearly reports.
  - iii. Obtain workers' compensation coverage.
  - iv. Obtain unemployment coverage.
- e. Maintain house.
- f. Maintain auto, if necessary.
- g. Oversee household monies.
  - i. Obtain receipts.
  - ii. Reconcile monthly.
- h. Supervise and coordinate client's personal needs.
  - i. Nutrition.
  - ii. Hair appointments.
  - iii. Medication.
  - iv. Medical treatments.

**2. Adult Foster Care Placement: Supervise and Coordinate Client's Needs.**

- a. Medical, dental, and optical appointments.
- b. Medical treatments.
- c. Medication.
- d. Social and emotional needs.
- e. Clothing and personal items.

**3. Companionship Services (See Notes D and E above regarding charges)**

- a. Social visits.
- b. Accompany for lunch, walks, shopping.
- c. Prepare correspondence.
- d. Routine physician visits or follow-up and status reporting.

**D. FACTORS THAT MAY MAKE FIDUCIARY SERVICES EXTRAORDINARY**

1. Review of papers and documents, which are in disarray, to identify and locate assets.
2. Notification of banks and financial institutions of estate status.
3. Obtaining insurance record information.
4. Sorting through boxes or files for information.
5. Degree of ease in accessing information.
6. Sizeable number of financial institutions to contact.
7. Family disagreement or dissention.
8. Character and values of family members, business associates of the ward and others.
9. Level of cooperation from client/ward.
10. Medical or placement crisis with the ward.
11. Level of monitoring required by ward.

**E. CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATION OF FEES (for evaluation of cases with fees in question)**

1. What are the total administrative expenses? Attorney's fees, fiduciary fees, accountant, investment advisor, tax preparation, etc.
2. What is the make-up of the estate and its gross value? Cash, stocks, bonds, a business, real estate, art, antiques, collections.
3. What is the estate income?
4. What kind of management of assets was required?
5. Did real estate require more than routine management?
6. Did a business have to be run?
7. Who performed the various tasks? Were the tasks appropriate to the person performing them? Were billed tasks performed by an attorney which could have been performed by a paralegal, secretary, runner, accountant?
8. Was the time spent on any task excessive?
9. Were the tasks performed necessary? (In a probate, for example, could the property have been distributed by affidavit? Was a formal, court-approved accounting necessary?)
10. In a guardianship or conservatorship, what aspects of the ward's condition required unusual time and effort?
11. Who are the relatives/heirs/devisees? Did contentiousness among interested persons cause unusual expenditures of time and effort?
12. Is the hourly rate acceptable?
13. Are the attorney's and fiduciary's records of time spent and tasks performed complete and specific?
14. Are there duplications of time?
15. Was research billed in areas which should not have required research?
16. Are there steps an attorney should have taken to eliminate the need for litigation or unusual activities? A recent memorandum decision reverses a trial court's allowance of fees in a conservatorship because the attorney did not act "with reasonable care to avoid the unnecessary use of his service by the guardian and conservator". The attorney billed for services necessitated by the conservator's failure to perform and the attorney was therefore in breach of his fiduciary duties under Fickett because he did not act quickly to have the conservator (his client) removed. In the Matter of the Guardianship and Conservatorship of Harsh, Maricopa County Public Fiduciary v Finks, 1 CA-CV 92-0118 (1994).
17. Are the persons who received a copy of the accounting or petition for fees sufficiently competent or sophisticated to object, or is their interest (financial or otherwise) such that it's not worth the hassle?