

	Guardianship	Conservatorship	Power of Attorney (POA)	Representative Payee
Declaration of disability?	Person must be declared by a jury as either (wholly) disabled or partially-disabled. This is not the same as declaration through Social Security, Veterans Affairs, or employer (for disability retirement).	Person must be declared by a jury as either (wholly) disabled or partially-disabled. This is not the same as declaration through Social Security, Veterans Affairs, or employer (for disability retirement).	There is no declaration for a general power of attorney. Durable power of attorney continues or becomes effective when the person becomes incapacitated as outlined in the POA documents.	Social Security, Veterans Affairs, or employer (for disability retirement) makes decision about disability. This is not the same as a legal declaration by court.
How appointed?	Court appoints individual or an agency after a person is declared as (wholly) disabled or partially-disabled.	Court appoints individual or an agency after a person is declared as (wholly) disabled or partially-disabled in managing financial resources.	The individual authorizes someone else to make certain decisions on his/her behalf	Social Security and Veterans Affairs appoints an individual or agency. This may be different than the guardian, conservator, or power of attorney.
Authority?	(Full) Guardian has the complete authority over a person's needs and finances. Limited guardian has authority over court-specified areas.	Conservator has the complete authority over a person's finances placed over supervision. Limited conservator has authority over court-specified areas.	Power of attorney has the authority to make decisions specified in the POA documents.	Representative payee has the authority over the individual's check.
Duties?	(Full) Guardian makes all legal decisions about individual's life – healthcare, place of abode, finances, etc. The guardian (unless someone else appointed) also pays the individual's bills out of the individual's funds. Required to make formal financial reports back to the appointing court.	Conservator makes all legal decisions about the individual's finances placed over supervision. He/she pays the individual's bills out of the individual's funds. Required to make formal financial reports back to the appointing court.	Power of attorney duties are only over the areas specified by the individual.	Representative payee is required to pay the individual's bills out of his/her check and provide spending money to the individual, if there is any left over. Required to do formal accounting of check disbursement back to appointing agency.
Duration?	Courts can appoint guardian for "unlimited duration" but limited guardianship shall not be for more than 5 years. Petitions may be done any time to change or remove guardianship.	Courts can appoint conservator for "unlimited duration" but limited conservator shall not be for more than 5 years. Petitions may be done any time to change or remove conservator.	General power of attorney ends when the individual becomes disabled. Durable power of attorney extends beyond that time.	Representative payee can be changed by appointing agency. Requests for changes may be made directly to appointing agency.

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