

Brandon J. Patty

Clerk of the Circuit Court and
Comptroller



Mark P. Miner

Chief Deputy Clerk

**Clerk of the Circuit Court
and County Comptroller
St. Johns County, Florida**

Instructions for Completing a Simplified Annual Accounting

Our goal at the Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office is to support you in your focus on watching out for the best interests of the person in your care (the Ward). Many guardians are also guardians over the ward's belongings (Guardian of Property), where the guardian's duty is to protect and account for the ward's assets.

We take seriously our responsibility to audit accountings, and we want to help you make sure your accounting is right, the first time—in order to avoid unnecessary delays, fees, and/or court appearances.

To that end, we've created these instructions; mandatory easy to use forms (downloadable from our website, <https://stjohnsclerk.com>, (or available for pickup in our office); and an easy checklist to make sure you have it right...the first (and—hopefully—only) time you submit each annual accounting.

Procedure:

Step 1: Make sure you have the correct dates for the accounting period (Cover Page).

- ✓ If this is the first year's accounting, the "Start" date is the day the Letters of Guardianship was signed by the Judge.
- ✓ To determine the "End" date for the first year, let's say the Judge signed the Letters of Guardianship on March 17th, count twelve (12) months from the end of the month in which the Letters of Guardianship was signed. The accounting period for the first year would be March 17, 2018- March 31, 2019.
- ✓ The following year, the dates would be April 1, 2019- March 31, 2020.

Step 2: Make sure to have the correct starting balance (Cover Page).

- ✓ If this is the first year, the starting balance is the total of all the ward's belongings

on the date the Letters of Guardianship was signed by the Judge.

- ✓ For example, let's say the ward is a minor and has no valuable possessions on the date the Letters of Guardianship was signed, but received a settlement one month *after* the guardian was appointed. In that instance, the starting balance is \$0 because that's the total amount of belongings owned by the ward on the date the Letters of Guardianship was signed by the Judge.
- ✓ If this is *not* the first year's accounting, the starting balance is the same as the ending balance of the prior year.

Step 3: Describe (by date) each time money is received (Part A)—such as deposits and interest (but not transfers between accounts—that's a later step).

- ✓ If there is more than one bank account, make a separate page (as provided) for each bank account for the money coming in for each particular account.

Step 4: Enter correct TOTAL of all the money that is received during the year (Cover Page).

- ✓ Add up all the money that came into each bank account and enter that total on the Cover Page.

Step 5: Correctly describe the money that was spent (Part B).

- ✓ If there is more than one bank account, make a separate page (as provided) for each bank account for the money that was spent for each particular account.

Step 6: Enter correct TOTAL of all the money that was spent during the year (Cover Page).

- ✓ Add up all that money that was spent out of each bank account and enter that total on the Cover Page.

Step 7: List all money transfers (Part C-1).

- ✓ If you moved money from one account to another, give the date each transfer was made and the two accounts involved in the transfer.
- ✓ This information should *not* be included in the totals on the Cover Page since you're only making a transfer.
- ✓ If it is a reoccurring transfer, that can be indicated on one line and stated that it reoccurs and the frequency.

Step 8: Correctly list all gains/losses in value for non-cash belongings (Part C-2) and enter the TOTAL amount gained (or lost) on the Cover Page.

- ✓ For each valuable that is not cash (such as an investment account, automobile, or

house) that gained or lost value, list the amount gained or lost.

- ✓ Be sure to provide the appraisal or bank statement that shows the amount gained or lost.
- ✓ Add up all the gains and subtract all the losses. You will end up with an overall amount of gain (+) or an overall amount of loss (-). Enter this overall amount on the Cover Page.

Step 9: Work the *easy* math on the Cover Page to get correct ending balance.

- ✓ Add the Starting Value of all the ward's belongings with the total amount of money that came in.
- ✓ Subtract the total amount of money spent.
- ✓ If the ward owns other non-cash items that changed in value, either add the total amount gained in value for non-cash beings or subtract the total amount of value lost for non-cash belongings.
- ✓ Enter this Ending Balance (value) of all the ward's belongings on the Cover Page.

Step 10: Show the value of each of the ward's assets for the last day of the accounting period (Part D).

- ✓ The total ending value of assets (Part D) of all the ward's belongings should match the ending balance (Cover Page).

An annual accounting is only the history of how the starting balance changed to the ending balance over the past year.

Purchases should be made *only* for the ward's benefit. For anything other than ordinary, day-to-day purchases, auditors look to determine whether the guardian asked (petitioned) and received permission (order) from the court.

Be sure to use our checklist. If you have a non-legal question, please contact our office.

- ✓ Probate office: 904-819-3655
- ✓ Email: Probate@stjohnsclerk.com