



## Seattle Women's Commission

To: Commissioner Rebekah Zinn, Washington State Pattern Forms Committee Chair  
From: Seattle Women's Commission  
Re: Proposed Sterilization Order Form  
Date: 22 Jan 2018

---

**Summary:** The proposed court form specific to guardian requesting sterilization for their ward(s) will not raise awareness about this issue, but rather, will streamline the process to receive court approval for sterilization of one's ward. Education of the guardians, the courts, lawyers, and medical professionals is necessary, but we believe the proposed form will not achieve that aim. The Seattle Women's Commission urges you to **not** move forward with the proposed form.

The proposed form does not encourage a thoughtful discussion around the law. Rather, it gives guardians the ability to tick check boxes related to medical issues (i.e. consideration of all other contraceptive options) without consultation with a medical professional and without exploring the ability of the ward to offer consent.

As a commission of twenty-one women with a variety of educational, professional, and cultural backgrounds, including extensive professional and personal experience around reproductive rights, our decision is guided by the following beliefs.

We believe:

- Consent of the patient is of the utmost importance in issues of medical procedures, including preservation, temporary limitation, or elimination of one's fertility.
- Having options for managing one's fertility are central to reproductive rights.
- In an environment where there are limited social safety nets for those who may require care into adulthood, guardians face many difficult choices, but the needs and consent of their ward(s) must be prioritized.

From your letter requesting input on the proposed form we can see that we are aligned on some of the issues at the core of your proposal, even though **we do not believe the proposed form is the right way to address these issues.**

We support:

- Enhancing the family guardianship training to include explicit information about the illegality of sterilizing their ward(s).
- Educating the medical community about this law and encouraging medical institutions to hold their staff accountable.
- Educating people with disabilities on body autonomy.
- Incorporating a guardian ad litem into the formal process of requesting sterilization for one's ward.

**Conclusion:** As you mentioned in your letter, there is a concerning lack of awareness about this law on all sides. A form such as this one expedites the process to sterilize a ward without exploring their ability to consent and without engaging a medical professional. We strongly discourage you from continuing efforts to create a form to seek sterilization of one's ward. Instead, we encourage you to increase education of guardians, courts, lawyers, and medical professionals about the illegality of sterilizing your ward.