

Shirley Bondon, office
of Public Guardianship

A Robust Statewide Program is Needed to Provide Targeted Supported Decision-Making Alternatives

The following news article illustrates why this is needed:

North Bend couple accused of fraud, abusing blind, disabled teen

By [David Ham](#)

North Bend, Wash. — Posted: 8:16 p.m. Friday, April 18, 2014 – KiroTV.com

<http://www.kirotv.com/news/news/north-bend-couple-accused-fraud-abusing-blind-disa/nfdGq/>

King County prosecutors say Jeffrey and April Henderson stole about \$19,000 of Medicaid money meant for a 19-year-old they were caring for. Detectives said that when they found the teen, who is blind and has cerebral palsy, she was covered in vomit, weighed only 67 pounds, and was moaning like an animal.

Detectives said the Hendersons spent lavishly on flat-screen TVs, computers, an iPad, iPods and an extensive reptile collection.

"The only time I saw them was the Fourth of July. They spent an extraordinary amount of money on fireworks," said Dustin Anderson, who lives near the North Bend home where the Hendersons lived.

After investigators took the teen out of the house in October 2012, the Hendersons moved to Florida.

"The house was gutted and trashed and cat piss everywhere, feces -- I mean it was horrible. He said you couldn't go in there without a respirator," said Anderson.

We tracked down Jeffrey Henderson in St. Augustine, but he kicked us off the property. King County prosecutors said they had to wait almost a year and a half to file charges because they had to put together details of the financial fraud. We asked prosecutors why the couple has not been arrested.

"They have been served notice to return for that date, regardless whether they are in Florida or not. There is a warrant for their arrest. When we file cases where the defendants are at large, the warrant is there to ensure that if they are arrested before

arraignment, they are brought to our jurisdiction as well as dealing with any new criminal allegations they may face. If they fail to appear for arraignment, then we will call on authorities in Florida to act on the warrant and may ask our Fugitive Task Force to intervene," said Ian Goodhew, spokesperson for the King County prosecutor's office.

Since the teen was taken out of the care of the Hendersons, detectives said, she has gained at least 30 pounds, and has had 19 root canals to fix teeth that were rotten. She is also attending school.

Department of Social and Health Services officials would not confirm or deny if the teen or the Hendersons were receiving Medicaid money, but said this about fraud.

"DSHS has an aggressive approach to investigating reports of fraud in its program. We solicit tips from the public, and vulnerable clients are reviewed regularly to make sure that appropriate care is being administered properly. When we find that is not the case, we inform the AG's office immediately and pass along our findings. If you know or suspect fraud in social programs, including Medicaid, you can notify DSHS by phone or email," said Kathleen Spears, a spokesperson for DSHS.

The Attorney General's Office said it investigated this case alongside federal officials but could not say how they found out about the alleged abuse.

October 2012 police enforcement removed a 19 year old female from a home where she had been in the care of foster parents since she was 7.

When she was found the 19 year old was sitting in a filthy wheelchair covered in vomit.

She was dressed in a dirty diaper only.

She weighed 67 pounds and was reported to have been moaning like a wounded animal.

Her room was covered with piles of garbage and vomit and permeated with stench.

The 19 year old is vision-impaired as a result of severe cataracts in her right eye and possible retinal detachment from a previous botched attempt to correct vision in the left eye.

She has cerebral palsy.

She had approximately 19 rotten teeth.

She hadn't been attending school and had never learn to speak or read braille.

The couple was reported to be receiving \$4,100 per month in Medicaid funds for her care, which they appeared to have spent on themselves – for iPads, big screen TVs, laptops and more. Neither foster parent had a job and are alleged to have stolen more than \$19,000 from her.

A public guardian was appointed and working with other professionals accomplished the following:

- She was moved to an Adult Family Home in the community, not an institution, where she is not isolated from others.
- She is receiving proper nourishment and nutrition. She has gained 27 lbs.
- She is receiving medical care to address:
 - A hernia.
 - Rotting teeth – She is scheduled for 27 root canals.
- There was an attempt to evaluate her eyes, which needed to be rescheduled, as it was determined that she is so frightened she needed to be sedated.
- She is receiving speech therapy.
- She was enrolled in and attended high school.

Although this individual needed extensive decision-making support to help her repair a life that has been damaged and broken as a result of the harmful action of others, all victims of abuse don't need the same support or the same amount of support to move toward success.

An individual who isn't able to manage money may need a **representative or protective payee** who is trained to provide guidance, instruction and assistance that when possible will provide the individual the skills needed to manage his or her own funds.

Another individual may be unable to understand the risks and benefits of **health care** procedures he or she may need, so they may need someone to explain the risks and benefits in a way they can understand and perhaps provide informed consent.

Another individual may need assistance completing applications for services he or she needs.

The decision supports needed will vary depending on the capability of each individual needing assistance, so it's important to have a statewide program that is robust and has the ability to respond in a flexible manner.

Washington has program, the Office of Public Guardianship that is not statewide. It is underfunded, and lacks the ability to be flexible and provide targeted services. It is authorized to provide guardianship services only.

Thank you.

For more information, please contact Shirley Bondon, Manager, Office of Public Guardianship, Administrative Office of the Courts, 360.705.5302, shirley.bondon@courts.wa.gov