

---

# SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE

by Michael Kendrick



*Michael Kendrick is an independent international consultant in human services and community work who resides in Massachusetts. His interests have included leadership, service quality, the creation of safeguards for vulnerable persons, social integration, change, innovation, values, advocacy, the role of individual persons and small groups in creating solutions, alternatives to bureaucracy, personalised approaches to supporting people, and reform in the human service field amongst others. In this article, Michael discuss the importance of creating and revising intentional safeguards to ensure a person's quality of life, possible reasons for failing to safeguard, assessing shortcomings of certain safeguards and provides a criteria for assessing safeguards.*

## For More Information:

**Email Michael:** [kendrickconsult@icloud.com](mailto:kendrickconsult@icloud.com)

**Visit:** [www.kendrickconsulting.org](http://www.kendrickconsulting.org)

A range of Michael's presentations and interviews are also available in Talks that Matter [www.belongingmatters.org](http://www.belongingmatters.org)

---

“Notwithstanding the fact that many people may, at times, fail to safeguard important matters into the future, it is nevertheless potentially quite feasible to safeguard the wellbeing of a person with a disability in both the near term and in the long term.”

It is quite common that people routinely develop safeguarding strategies that can benefit them in the present and the future. For instance, people may act to safeguard their health, money, property, future work and career prospects, children and many other matters of importance to them. At the same time, it is also true that many people fail to securely safeguard their future due to any number of reasons. Such factors include:

- A failure to fully appreciate what is important and valuable in one's life,
- Presuming that things will always go well and thus there is no need to safeguarding what is valuable,
- Any number of ways that we can procrastinate,
- A lack of intentionality and conscientiousness in how we might manage important aspects of our lives,
- Inexperience with safeguarding specific matters,
- Not seeking good counsel and advice on important matters,
- Relying on safeguards that are insufficient for the task, and
- Waiting too long to take action that is proactive and prudent.

## CREATING OR UTILISING INTENTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

Notwithstanding the fact that many people may, at times, fail to safeguard important matters into the future, it is nevertheless potentially quite feasible to safeguard the wellbeing of a person with a disability in both the near term and in the long term. We do this by crafting or adopting

---

“If the intent is to safeguard the various elements of “a good life” for a person with a disability now and in years to come, it is useful to create a “good life safeguarding plan” with the person and their allies.”

---

“intentional safeguards”. These are measures that are consciously taken in everyday life both in relation to the present and the future to safeguard something of value in our own lives or the life of someone we care about.

Safeguards can be applied to any domain of our lives or the lives of others including matters such as financial wellbeing, health, relationships, personal growth and development, managing vulnerabilities, assuring mobility and transport, acquiring and updating adaptive devices and supports, communication assistance, assuring a real home of one’s own, enhancing autonomy and competence, obtaining and protecting valued social roles, upholding and expressing rights, leisure, meaning and spirituality, community membership and participation, nutrition etc.

In essence, any crucial needs of a person can be safeguarded, though there may exist many challenges in doing so. For instance, there are many specific vulnerabilities that cannot be entirely foreseen, as no one can predict the future.

However, we can know enough about being prepared that we can intentionally have people in place in our lives who can act to defend our interests even when we cannot. For instance, while we cannot anticipate the details of future economic developments, we can have in place mentors and advisors on financial matters who can assist us to take precautions now that can help us in possible future adverse financial times. Similarly, in terms of our health or that of specific people we care about, we can develop targeted supports to address preventive health practices now and going forward. This could also include having in place people who can assist when health setbacks occur.

### **CREATING AND REVISING SAFEGUARDS INTENTIONALLY**

Whether always conscious of it, most people try to create life circumstances that tend to generate good life outcomes and in the process, they often formulate safeguards that help with this task. The advantage of intentionally creating safeguards is that it makes us more aware of what is most needed and helps to differentiate between effective and ineffective safeguards.

Intentional safeguards are created by:

- Taking time to deeply understand the person and what might make them vulnerable in all relevant life domains at a given point,
- Exploring safeguards that have already proven to be beneficial to people with and without disabilities and evaluating the ones that might be beneficial for a given person with a disability,
- Seeking to apply such worthwhile safeguards in regard to the vulnerabilities of the person in their current life circumstances,
- Regularly evaluating whether existing safeguards are proving to be beneficial or not, and

---

“People should not be dispossessed of their voice and right to speak on their own behalf in the name of safeguarding their best interests, as ultimately nothing is to be gained from disrespecting the person.”

---

- Continuously modifying and replacing safeguards to maintain effectiveness in a given person’s life.

### **THE NEED FOR PLANS AND ACTIONS TO SAFEGUARD A PERSON’S ULTIMATE QUALITY OF LIFE**

If the intent is to safeguard the various elements of “a good life” for a person with a disability now and in years to come, it is useful to create a “good life safeguarding plan” with the person and their allies. While in some instances it may pose challenges to obtain sufficient appreciation and cooperation of a person with a disability on matters of safeguarding, it is nonetheless important to plan and put in place intentional safeguards “with” the active engagement of the person rather than “impose” them.

People should not be dispossessed of their voice and right to speak on their own behalf in the name of safeguarding their best interests, as ultimately nothing is to be gained from disrespecting the person. It is also the case that most people will, on occasion, resist using otherwise sensible safeguards until they are eventually persuaded of their merits. Thus, partnering with people on planning and putting in place safeguards that could be beneficial, might be better framed as developing an ongoing ethical relationship. This might involve negotiations of various kinds to move forward and find safeguards that are mutually agreed. Progress can still be made even when some disagreements still exist.

### **ASSESSING WHAT SAFEGUARDS CAN SPECIFICALLY BE ASSURE IN A PERSON’S LIFE**

It is also important to recognise that many things may initially be perceived or assumed to be safeguards, but in practice might contain unappreciated hazards. For instance, having access to formal services may be seen by many families, people with disabilities and advocates as advantageous, as it may be assumed that services will always act in beneficial ways. However, formal services of various kinds are well known to routinely have many shortcomings in quality, persistent limitations in performance and are often complicit in acting in quite damaging ways. This is not to say that in every instance services are unhelpful, but rather that they can be harmful on enough occasions that it is prudent to be very selective about whether a given service is trustworthy or not. For instance, there has long been evidence of individuals in the client role (and their advocates and families) being neglected, mistreated, ignored, deceived and manipulated. Hence, a measure of caution should be taken in unduly trusting any given program, person or organisation unless one has substantial evidence of their long-term integrity, competence and commitment to people’s wellbeing. Even then, leadership changes in services can effectively change the organisation’s culture.

---

“Hence, a measure of caution should be taken in unduly trusting any given program, person or organisation unless one has substantial evidence of their long-term integrity, competence and commitment to people’s wellbeing.”

---

---

“Consequently, the most prudent outlook to take would be to very cautious in who you trust to safeguard people’s lives.”

---

It could also be the case that we can project our wishes and needs on to services and other arrangements of support and safeguarding. For instance, a family may need to believe that a given service will meet the needs of the person, when in reality it is their needs that are more likely to be met than those of the person with the disability. Similarly, many may see the presence of governmental funding and regulation of a given service as a reliable sign of the security and quality of a service. However, governments are quite routinely proven to be complicit in the shortcomings of services and the damaging consequences in people’s lives that can result. It’s understandable that people hope and wish that governments could be ultimate safeguard when families are no longer able to protect and support their family member yet counting on this would be extremely unwise.

The same might be said in regards to unduly trusting the behavior of many elements of the community, as communities too can have failings. For instance, elements of communities that could be unhelpful may include prevailing attitudes and prejudices, exploitation, rejection and segregation and in some instances some individuals may abuse and mistreat persons with disabilities. Consequently, the most prudent outlook to take would be to very cautious in who you trust to safeguard people’s lives. At the same time, there are also many elements in both communities and governments that can be quite helpful, so it is important at any point, to not overlook the fact that virtuous people and organisations can exist and it is worthwhile to seek them out once it is clear that they can be more trustworthy than other choices on hand.

---

“...the task is not to have “perfect” safeguards, but rather “beneficial” safeguards that ensure greater wellbeing...”

---

### **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDS**

*Seeking safeguards that are better than the alternatives:* The need to evaluate the worthiness of any given safeguards is unavoidable, as all safeguards will have their limitations and shortcomings. However, the task is not to have “perfect” safeguards, but rather “beneficial” safeguards that ensure greater wellbeing than might be the case with comparatively less worthy alternatives.

---

“It is important to seek out safeguards that leave people’s lives comparatively more enriched and satisfying in comparison to safeguards that fail to reliably do so.”

---

*Seeking safeguards that are guided by leaders who are ethical and values based:* The presence of ethical and positive values-based leaders in advocacy, services, communities and networks will ensure that the safeguards they create are consistent with enhancing people’s wellbeing and long term best interests. This is because, the quality of ultimate outcomes in a person’s life will be guided by the fundamental values and principles that are embraced by leaders.

*Seeking safeguards that reduce rather than heighten a given person’s vulnerabilities:* While intentional safeguards are typically imperfect, they nonetheless can considerably reduce people’s vulnerabilities. Thus, a



---

“Safeguards that are consciously revised or replaced to better enhance and protect the well-being of people as the world changes around them are much more likely to be adaptive and effective.”

---

---

“...it has always been necessary to construct or adopt safeguards that are effective “one person at a time””

---

good measure of desirable safeguards would be those that reliably lessen people’s vulnerabilities in comparison to safeguards that are likely to make people more vulnerable.

*Seeking safeguards that enrich people’s lives rather than not:* It is important to seek out safeguards that leave people’s lives comparatively more enriched and satisfying in comparison to safeguards that fail to reliably do so i.e. that in comparison result in impoverished and deprived lives. These would be “life giving” safeguards rather than “life limiting” safeguards and can be evaluated as such.

*Seeking safeguards that protect people from harm rather than those that make people comparatively more at risk of being harmed:* There is much in life that can be harmful as well as many elements of life that are both beneficial and that insulate people from what is harmful. Hence, studying the ways that a given safeguard may help to expose people to harm rather than protect them from harm will enable better decisions about what safeguards are helpful and those that heighten the likelihood of harm.

*Seeking safeguards that adjust to changing realities by effectively evolving into more timely and beneficial safeguards:* Safeguards have a way of being made less relevant and effective because of changing realities in the world. Safeguards that are consciously revised or replaced to better enhance and protect the wellbeing of people as the world changes around them are much more likely to be adaptive and effective.

*Seeking safeguards that largely “work” in regards to the distinct needs of a given individual:* The lives of people are not identical and it has always been necessary to construct or adopt safeguards that are effective “one person at a time” rather than presuming that any given safeguard will somehow work irrespective of the varying requirements of specific individuals.

*Seeking safeguards that generate heightened vision and appreciation for a given person’s true potentials such that new life opportunities are continuously spawned:* It has always been true that the expectations for the lives of people with disabilities have been consistently low, thereby depriving people with disabilities from deeper possibilities for a more fulfilling life. This can only be corrected by safeguarding measures that proactively ensure that there are ongoing efforts to “imagine better” so that something truly better enlivens people’s lives.

## CONCLUSION

It is not a futile task to seek out and put in place intentional safeguards that might assure a person better life possibilities and outcomes. Nonetheless, intentional safeguarding has many challenges that can make the task difficult at times. Nonetheless, despite these limitations, much good can come about when such safeguarding is done well. This paper only briefly addresses the many questions involved but can serve as beginning.