

Transition Guide: Decision Making



Getting Help Making Choices

What Is Supported Decision Making?

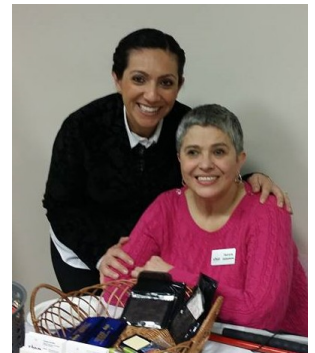
Supported decision making (SDM) is a tool that allows people with disabilities to retain their decision-making capacity by choosing supporters to help them make choices. A person using SDM selects trusted advisors, such as friends, family members, or professionals, to serve as supporters. The supporters agree to help the person with a disability understand, consider, and communicate decisions, giving the person with a disability the tools to make their own informed decisions.

How does Supported Decision Making Work?

Supported Decision Making will look different for different people.

It means finding tools and supports to help a person with a disability understand, make, and communicate their own choices. Some examples might include:

- ❖ Finding materials written in a way the person can understand
- ❖ Finding materials in a different format — like videos or recordings
- ❖ Allowing extra time to talk about and think about their choices
- ❖ Creating lists of the good and bad parts of the options
- ❖ Bringing a supporter to appointments or meetings to help with:
 - ❖ Taking notes
 - ❖ Asking questions
 - ❖ Discussing options
 - ❖ Encouraging self-determination



Check Out These Resources

Websites:

- ♦ **National Resource Center** for Supported Decision Making: www.supporteddecisionmaking.org
- ♦ **Autistic Self Advocacy Network:** autisticadvocacy.org/tag/supported-decision-making
- ♦ Parent Guide to **Getting Ready for the Age of Majority:** <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/age-of-majority-parentguide/>

Videos:

- ♦ Supported Decision Making — **Call to Action** Video: youtu.be/vqF3NiTeWg
- ♦ Supported Decision Making — **Gabby's Story** Video: youtu.be/duyJJkZ2mIQ

Publication:

- ♦ Supported Decision Making — **Creating a Continuum of Choice** - Options in TN: bit.ly/2oerpzA

How is Supported Decision Making Different?

- ♦ Supported Decision Making is an extension of self-determination, meaning an individual directs the plan for their life.
- ♦ Supported Decision Making does not require a court process.
- ♦ Supported Decision Making is not a contract. It is an authorization or agreement that can be tailored for an individual's needs and changed along the way.
- ♦ Supported Decision Making is a flexible option that can be handled by the person with a disability and their family or friends.
- ♦ Supported Decision Making is an option that falls between no help and giving up the right to make decisions to a conservator or a guardian or through a Power of Attorney.
- ♦ Some other options — like Conservatorship and Powers of Attorney — are complex and may require hiring an attorney or even going to court to have them written and to make them legally binding.
- ♦ Some other options for people who need help making decisions gives the authority (power) from the person with a disability to a different person who will be the substitute decision maker.
- ♦ Conservatorship is very difficult to reverse once it is in place. It is also expensive for the family and the state.

Steps Toward Supported Decision Making

There are forms and templates available for Supported Decision Making Agreements.

In Tennessee, SDM and a form may soon become part of the TN Code through SB0264.

1. **Choose** — The person with a disability decides who will be involved in supporting them. The supporters must also agree to be involved.
2. **Discuss** — The person and the supporters talk about how the person will be supported. This can include finances, healthcare, education, employment, housing, and other areas of their life.
3. **Plan** — The person and the supporters create a document that outlines how the person will be supported. This is called the Supported Decision Making Agreement.
4. **Sign** — The person and the supporters sign the Supported Decision Making agreement. The agreement can be revised later, if necessary. Everyone who signs it gets a copy of the agreement.