

### **Getting Help with Making Choices**

Supported Decision Making (SDM) is a term used to describe a process 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. This opportunity to make informed decisions is something that is important to every individual, with or without disabilities.

For too long families have been led to believe that the only way to make sure their son or daughter with a disability is "safe" after they turn 18 is to seek conservatorship. Now, people with disabilities and advocacy organizations have been working to ensure that family members, legislators, educators, and community members have accurate information on subjects around this topic.

The age of majority in Tennessee is eighteen (18) years of age or older. A new law about decision making was passed in Tennessee on April 2, 2018.

Learn more about this concept and how it works with these fantastic resources:

- The TN Council on Developmental Disabilities has a SDM resource page here: https://bit.ly/tncdd-sdm
- National Resource Center for SDM: <u>supporteddecisionmaking.org</u>
- Parent Guide to Getting Ready for the Age of Majority: <u>bit.ly/2nssKCX</u>
- Supported Decision Making Call to Action Video: <u>voutu.be/ vqF3NiTeWg</u>
- Supported Decision Making Gabby's Story Video: youtu.be/duyJJkZ2mIQ
- TNSTEP's Transition Guide on Decision Making: bit.ly/step-transition-sdm

#### No Help With Decisions

No "formal" process in place for trusted advisors, friends, family members or professionals to serve as supporters.

# Supported Decision Making

- Agreement with supporters in a written plan
- Can be changed as needed
- No court process
- Could include finance, healthcare, education, employment, housing or other area of need
- Person with a disability makes informed decisions

## Power of Attorney

- Gives up some of your power
- Person with a disability must be competent to sign this legal agreement
- Person gives decision making authority to someone else in specific areas

### Conservatorship

- Individual is determined by a court to be incompetent to make decisions in certain areas
- May be in all areas or only specific areas
- Person may have some say in their daily activities but final decisions are made by someone appointed by the court
- Very hard to change
  Costs money and is hard to reverse

Less Restrictive

**Supported Decision Making Continuum** 

More Restrictive