



Supported Decision-Making

A Guide to Making Your Own Choices



What is Supported Decision-Making?

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is a way for people with disabilities or older adults to make their own choices with help from someone they trust. It's an alternative to guardianship, allowing you to maintain control over your life and decisions. SDM empowers you to make your own choices, even when you need assistance understanding information or communicating your decisions. You choose a supporter to help you, rather than having someone else make decisions for you.

Who is Involved?

The Individual:

- You are the central person.
- You make your own decisions.
- You choose your supporter.
- You lead the process.

The Supporter:

- Someone you trust.
- Helps you understand information.
- Helps you communicate your decisions.
- Respects your choices

What is an SDM Agreement?

An SDM agreement is a written document that outlines the support you want from your chosen supporter. It specifies the areas where you need assistance and the types of support they will provide.

Who Signs It? You and your supporter.

Witnessing: The agreement must be witnessed by a neutral third party to ensure everyone understands the document and signs it willingly. Requirements for who can witness it vary by location.

How Does It Work?

1. **Identify your needs:** Determine what kind of support you require in making decisions.
2. **Choose a Supporter:** Select someone you trust and who understands your values and preferences.
3. **Create an Agreement:** Work with your supporter to outline the specific support they will provide.
4. **Make Decisions:** Your supporter helps you gather information, understand options, and communicate your choices. **You make the final decision.**

** **The Supporter's Role:** Your supporter's role is to help you understand and communicate your decisions, **not** to make decisions for you.

Why Use SDM?

Supported Decision Making offers numerous benefits:

- **Maintains your autonomy:** You retain control over your life and decisions.
- **Promotes self-determination:** Empowers you to make choices that align with your values.
- **Reduces the need for guardianship:** Offers a less restrictive alternative.
- **Strengthens relationships:** Builds trust and collaboration with your supporter.
- **Enhances quality of life:** Enables you to live a more fulfilling and independent life.

Your Rights

As an individual using Supported Decision Making, you have the right to:

- Choose your own supporter.
- Make your own decisions, even if others disagree.
- Modify or terminate the SDM agreement at any time.
- Seek legal advice and representation.
- Be treated with respect and dignity.