

Supported Decision Making

Supported Decision Making helps individuals with disabilities and aging adults make important decisions about their lives. A less restrictive alternative to guardianship, it is a process where individuals can get help by consulting with trusted individuals to make decisions and help them understand the choices they face so they can maintain their independence. With Supported Decision Making, the ultimate decision is still made by the individual with a disability.

Supported decision making agreements can be used for many kinds of decisions such as:

- Medical
- Psychological
- Financial
- Educational
- Occupational
- Social decisions

Why Supported Decision Making?

Overbroad or undue guardianship can have negative impacts on an individual's self-esteem, physical health, and mental health. Self-determination is important in an individual's life. Making decisions, especially big decisions is hard for everyone. Supported Decision Making can help support people through the process of making decisions, while still ensuring they have self-determination.

How to get started with Supported Decision Making:

Step 1: Identify Areas of your Life You Might Want Support with Making Decisions

This may be types of decisions, like decisions that impact your finances, or medical decisions. If you have trouble identifying areas where you may want some help, think about places where you feel you make good decisions and places where it is hard to make decisions.

Step 2: Ask Trusted Persons to be Your Supporter

Make a list of people you like, trust, and who are good at communicating with you and listening to you. Then, ask those people to be a supporter. Tell them it means they will help you make decisions where and when you need help. Supported decision-making does not require one individual to take on full responsibility for all decisions a person needs help with. Multiple trusted individuals can be supporters.

Step 3: Speak With Your Supporters About Supported Decision-Making Options

Talk with your supporters about how they can help you with specific decisions.

Help from a Supporter Can Look Like:

- Help read complicated documents and explain their meaning.
- Attend meetings and help share questions or concerns.
- Help communicate the person's decisions and preferences to others.
- Help you make decisions by researching choices and sharing what is good and bad about each choice.

Step 4: Write Your Agreement

Supported Decision Making Agreements can look as different as the people who are using them. Here are some sample agreements for you to look at while you draft your own:

The ARC of Colorado: Supported Decision-Making Sample Agreement <https://thearcofco.org/supported-decision-making/>

Center for Public Representation Agreement Form
[SDM Agreement Form - Supported Decision-Making \(supporteddecisions.org\)](https://supporteddecisions.org/sdm-agreement-form)

American Civil Liberties Union Sample Agreement
[ACLU Supported Decision-Making Agreement | American Civil Liberties Union](https://www.aclu.org/other/supported-decision-making-resource-library)

If you need to change your agreement, let your supporter(s) know. Together you and your supporter(s) can change the agreement if you need to. Just make sure to write it down and have everyone sign the changed agreement.

Step 5: Let Others Know

Once the supported decision-making agreement is signed, share copies with doctors, financial institutions, schools, and others who are involved.

Other resources on Supported Decision-Making: ARC of Colorado: Supported Decision-Making Resources <https://thearcofco.org/supported-decision-making/>; Center for Public Representation: Getting Started with Supported Decision-Making <https://supporteddecisions.org/getting-started-with-supported-decision-making/>; American Civil Liberties Union: Supported Decision-Making Library <https://www.aclu.org/other/supported-decision-making-resource-library>

***** This resource sheet is for informational purposes only.
Nothing herein shall be understood to be legal advice.
For specific legal advice an attorney should be consulted.**