

# Transition Guide: Decision Making



## Getting Help Making Choices

### What Is Supported Decision Making?

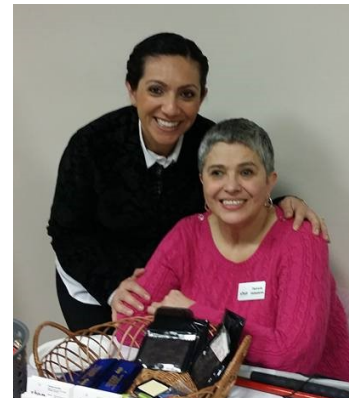
*Supported decision making (SDM) is a tool that allows people with disabilities to retain their decision-making capacity by choosing supporters to help them make choices. A person using SDM selects trusted advisors, such as friends, family members, or professionals, to serve as supporters. The supporters 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](http://www.supporteddecisionmaking.org)
- ◆ **Autistic Self Advocacy Network:** [autisticadvocacy.org/actioncenter/issues/choices/sdm/](http://autisticadvocacy.org/actioncenter/issues/choices/sdm/)
- ◆ **Age of Majority: A Parent's Guide:** [www.parentcenterhub.org/age-of-majority-parentguide/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/age-of-majority-parentguide/)
- ◆ **TN Center for Decision-Making Support** is a NEW virtual resource center that provides decision-making information, resources, and tools to assist individuals with disabilities, their families, and support providers when planning for their future. [www.tndecisionmaking.org/](http://www.tndecisionmaking.org/)

#### Videos:

- ◆ Supported Decision Making — **Call to Action** Video: [youtu.be/ vqF3NiTeWg](https://youtu.be/vqF3NiTeWg)
- ◆ Supported Decision Making — **Gabby's Story** Video: [youtu.be/duyJJkZ2mIQ](https://youtu.be/duyJJkZ2mIQ)

#### Publication:

- ◆ Supported Decision Making — **Creating a Continuum of Choice** - Options in TN: [bit.ly/46Rfr2V](http://bit.ly/46Rfr2V)

## 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. who signs it gets a copy of the agreement.