

Supported Decision Making



Most people make important life decisions by turning to a family member or a close friend to help them weigh the pros and cons of making a particular choice. This process can be the same for a person with a disability.

Supported Decision Making (SDM) identifies trusted individuals who can support a person with a disability in making decisions.

It's that simple.

Honoring an Individual's Right to Make Choices

SDM is a way for individuals with disabilities to retain their rights to make their own choices and to have more control over their lives.

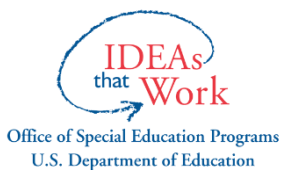
Tennessee passed a law in 2019 that states we should try less restrictive options before taking away a person's rights. So, instead of going to the critical step of removing someone's rights through a legal process like a conservatorship, TNSTEP hopes you will consider SDM.



SDM is similar to the different learning environments for students with disabilities, from being taught in the general education classroom (least restrictive) to attending an alternative (most restrictive) school. Many families believe that the only way to make sure their son or daughter with a disability is safe in school or the community is to limit their choices by setting up a conservatorship or guardianship. In some situations, this may be the most appropriate option.

But it's not the only option.

Just like school placement represents a continuum from least to most restrictive, there is a continuum of supported decision-making options.



SDM Continuum

Making your own decisions with no help
(least restrictive)

Making decisions with supporters you choose
(a little more restrictive)

Appointing someone to assist in the decision-making process, such as a power of attorney, healthcare surrogate, or representative payee
(more restrictive)

Decisions are made by someone appointed by the court
(most restrictive)

SDM is not just about supporting a young person in making decisions. Instead, an individual's "voice" in their choices should increase over time.

Infant/Toddler Birth - Preschool	Elementary Grades K - 5	Middle School Grades 6-8	High School Grades 9-12	Beyond High School
<p>SDM Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/Caregiver Family members Physicians 	<p>SDM Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/Caregiver Child Teachers 	<p>SDM Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/Caregiver Child Teachers 	<p>SDM Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young person Parent/Caregiver Teachers 	<p>SDM Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual/Adult Trusted friends Family Co-workers
<p>Types of Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food choices Games/toys Preferences of what they like or don't like 	<p>Types of Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedtime Activities with friends Social media interactions 	<p>Types of Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classes to take Friends to hang out with Sports Afterschool clubs Musical instruments 	<p>Types of Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career path Romantic partners Transition/IEP planning Post-secondary options 	<p>Types of Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing/College Wellness Leisure Social interactions

Allowing a person to participate in choice and decision-making at any age with whatever level of support they need is the least restrictive and most empowering gift for each individual.

To learn more about SDM, access these additional resources:

● National Resource Center for SDM
bit.ly/natl-resource-ctr-sdm

● TN Council on Developmental Disabilities
bit.ly/tncdd-sdm

● Supported Decision-Making
bit.ly/exploring-sdm-video