

The What, How, and Why of Supported Decision-Making

What is Supported Decision-Making?

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) are **supports and services** that help a person with a disability make his or her own decisions, by using friends, family members, professionals, and other people they trust to **help them to know** the issues and choices, **ask questions, receive explanations** in language he or she understands, and **communicate** his or her own decisions to others.

SDM is an alternative to guardianship that allows a person to **keep** their decision-making authority without appointing a substitute decision-maker.

How is SDM done?

There is **no “one size fits all” method** of SDM. SDM looks different for different people and families.

A person may select a person or a team to help them think through, decide, communicate, and make decisions. Supporters ask, listen, provide advice, translate, and respect the person's decision. However, the person keeps their right to make decisions.

“People use trusted friends, family members, and professionals to help them understand the situations and choices they face, so they may make their own decisions – it is a means for increasing self-determination by encouraging and empowering people to make their own decisions about their lives to the maximum extent possible.”

National Resource Center on Supported Decision-Making

Why SDM?

Studies show that people who exercise greater self-determination have improved life outcomes, including:

- Living Independently
- Working in the community at higher paying jobs and making greater advances in employment
- Being “more likely to identify situations where they could be abused and less likely to suffer abuse.”
- Have greater financial independence
- Have greater community integration

SDM Resource Websites:

National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making: www.SupportedDecisionMaking.org

Disability Rights Maryland: www.DisabilityRightsMD.org

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities: www.DCQualityTrust.org

PPMD SDM Videos:

[Supported Decision Making](#) (sponsored by the Maryland Hub for Inclusive Higher Education)

[Supported Decision-Making](#) (Disability Rights MD)