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.

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:
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)

See also Bradley et. al., National Core Indicator Data Brief, 2019.