

How Does Supported Decision-Making Work?

The most important thing to do is understand that we all have the Right to Make Choices to the best of our abilities. And, even if a person needs some help to make decisions, it does not mean he or she needs a guardian. Once you make that commitment:

- Think about the type of decisions you or the person you support need help making, and the type of help needed.
- Talk to people who can help and discuss what type of help is needed and when.
- You may want to, but don't have to, create a written plan saying the people who will provide support, when they will provide it, and how. And you may want to share that plan with others.
- So, if you want your sister to support you in making medical decisions, you'd write up a plan between you and your sister saying she'll help you do that and how. Then you could share that plan with your doctor, so the doctor knows that your sister is a part of your health care "team."



Need Support? Have Questions? Ask us!

The **National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making** can help you find information on Supported Decision-Making, help you create Supported Decision-Making plans, connect you with resources, and answer questions. For more information, please visit our website at www.SupportedDecisionMaking.Org and find our page on Facebook and follow us <https://www.facebook.com/nrcsdm?fref=ts!!>

About the National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making (NRC-SDM) The National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making (NRC-SDM) is a national effort to advance the use of supported decision-making in practice for people needing assistance making life decisions. Project activities are designed to ensure input is obtained from all relevant stakeholder groups including older adults, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), family members, advocates, professionals and providers. The NRC-SDM partners bring nationally recognized expertise and leadership on SDM, representing the interests of and receiving input from thousands of older adults and people with I/DD. They have applied SDM in groundbreaking legal cases, developed evidence-based outcome measures, successfully advocated for changes in policy and practice to increase self-determination and demonstrated SDM to be a valid, less-restrictive alternative to guardianship. This project is supported, in part by a cooperative agreement (HHS-2014-ACL-AIDD-DM-0084) from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.

About Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities: Quality Trust is an independent advocacy organization that works with individuals and family members to solve problems, identify opportunities for learning and contribution, find creative ways to minimize "differences" and make the most of each person's abilities. Quality Trust's vision is a community where everyone is respected, belongs, contributes, is valued and shapes his or her own present and future.

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EVERYONE has the Right to Make Choices

National Resource Center for Supported Decision-making

 **Quality Trust**
for Individuals with Disabilities


Burton Blatt Institute
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

 **KU** LIFE SPAN INSTITUTE
Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities

What if someone said you're not allowed to go home today?

Or you can't go to work?

Or visit your friends?

All because someone else doesn't want you to.

That's what can happen to older adults and people with disabilities when someone else has the power to say where they live, what they do, and who they see or when they're put in a guardianship.

We believe that everyone has the Right to Make Choices, to make their own decisions and direct their own lives to the best of their abilities, without the "need" for guardianship. This brochure talks about one way to use your Right to Make Choices, called Supported Decision-Making.

How do You Make Decisions?

When the doctor says you have a "somatic injury" or a "brachial obstruction," or says something else that sounds like a foreign language, what do you do? When you don't know the difference between "itemized" and "standard" deductions, how do you do your taxes? When the mechanic says your car has a "blown head gasket," how do you know whether to pay to get it fixed?

You probably ask a friend or family member what to do or if they know someone who can help you cut through the jargon so you can understand what's going on and what you need to do. It's just common sense, right? When you don't know enough to make a good decision, you find people who can help you. It could be going to your brother the accountant with tax questions or talking to your friend the nurse when you need medical information – you make sure you understand your situation, so you can make the best, most informed decision.

This process is called Supported Decision-Making. A fancy name for something you've been doing all your life, isn't it?

How do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Make Decisions?

The same way! That's not surprising, is it?

Older adults and people with disabilities have the same legal rights as everyone else, can work and live and love like everyone else. So, of course they use Supported Decision-Making like everyone else, by getting help understanding the situations and choices they face so they can make their own decisions.

Some people may need different types of help or more help than you to make their own decisions. But this doesn't mean they can't make their own decisions. It just means they make their own decisions using help they need and want. Just like you.

This also means that in almost all cases, people who use Supported Decision-Making do not "need" a guardian to make decisions for them. As Jenny Hatch, the first person to win the right to use Supported Decision-Making instead of being put in a permanent guardianship said, "I don't need a guardian. I just need a little help!"

