

WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING

Here, you'll find information about the **Right to Make Choices** – the right we **all** have to make our own decisions and direct our own lives.

How would you feel if you had no say in where you live? Or where you work? Or who you spend time with? Or what you can buy and spend money on? That's what can happen to older adults and people with disabilities when someone else has the power to make decisions for them, like when they're put in a guardianship.

We believe that **everyone** has the Right to Make Choices. Supported Decision-Making is a way people can make their own decisions and stay in charge of their lives, while receiving any help they need to do so.

Supported Decision-Making: How We All Make Choices

Supported Decision-Making is just a fancy way of describing how we all make choices. We **all** need help making decisions, every single day. Think about it: when the doctor says you have a "somatic injury" or a "brachial obstruction," or 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 can you file your tax return? When the mechanic says your car has a "blown head gasket," how do you know whether to pay for repairs?

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.

When you do that, you're using Supported Decision-Making. You're getting the help you need and want so you can make the decisions you have to make.

How Do Older Adults And People With Disabilities Make Decisions?

The same way! Older adults and people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else, can work and live and love like everyone else. So, of course they use Supported Decision-Making like everyone else.

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

It also means that in almost all cases, people who use Supported Decision-Making do not need someone to make decisions **for** them or **instead of** them. As Jenny Hatch, who won 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!”

How Does Supported Decision-Making Work?

So, how can you use Supported Decision-Making? The most important thing to do is understand that we all have the Right to Make Choices. And, even if a person has a lot of trouble making decisions, it doesn’t always 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.
- Then, when the person needs to make a decision and needs help to understand it, the person and supporter get together so the person can get the help and make the decision.
- 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.”

We Can Help!

The National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making can help you find information on Supported Decision-Making, connect you with people and organizations that may be able to help you, and answer your questions.

Look around: you’ll find videos and stories of people who use Supported Decision-Making in their lives. Use the education and training material to help you learn about Supported Decision-Making and decide if it’s right for you, your family, or someone you support. Follow the links to laws and policies and organizations in your state. And join Supported Decision-Making Interactive!, where you’ll be able to connect with people facing situations like you and ask questions of national experts.

Once again, welcome to the National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making. Remember: EVERYONE has the Right to Make Choices and EVERYONE needs a little help.