

This document was developed in partnership with the Disability Rights Program of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Supported Decision-Making may sound like a new idea. But most families, people with disabilities, and advocates are already using supported decision-making, even if they don't call it that. In fact, most people *without* disabilities are also already using supported decision-making!

Supported decision-making means helping a person understand, make, and communicate their own decisions. This will look different for everyone. This tool can help people brainstorm ways that they are already using supported decision-making and think about new ways supported decision-making could help the person with a disability learn to make their own safe, informed choices.

How to Use this Tool

Go through each area of the individual's life. Brainstorm whether you work together to make choices in this area. You might not yet be using supported decision-making in all of these fields. If you think of supports you could start using, write these down too.

If you are considering guardianship or conservatorship:	Supported decision-making can sometimes be formalized into arrangements that prevent the need for guardianship or conservatorship. For example, the person with a disability could sign a form to let you access their medical records so that you can make health care decisions together.
If you are planning for the future:	This tool can help you think about ways to learn and practice decision-making. Learning to make good decisions is a skill and people can learn to make better, safer, and more informed choices with practice and support.
If a lawyer, doctor, school official, banker, or anyone else is worried that the person with a disability cannot make their own decisions:	This tool can help you explain to the person the ways in which the decisions of the person with a disability are informed and safe.

How Does the Person with a Disability Manage Their Money?



- ✓ If no one ever talks about money with the person with a disability and they do whatever they want, that's independent decision-making and not supported decision-making.
- ✓ If someone takes all the person's money and gives them no choices about how it's spent, that's not supported decision-making either.
- ✓ Anything else—opening a joint bank account, making a budget together, having an SSI Representative Payee and then discussing how to spend money – is supported decision-making.

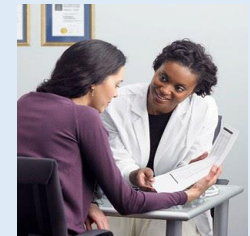
How do we currently work together to help the person with a disability manage their money?



What are some additional supports that we might want to start using? (Examples include appointing a representative payee, opening a joint bank account, making and implement a budget together, taking a money management course, etc.)

How Does the Person with a Disability Make Healthcare Decisions?

- ✓ If the person makes their own decisions without talking to anyone else, that's independent decision-making and not supported decision-making.
- ✓ If someone else makes all the person's medical choices for them without discussing their preferences and opinions, that's not supported decision-making, either.
- ✓ Anything else - attending medical appointments together, explaining healthcare choices in plain language, sharing access to medical records -- is supported decision-making.



How do we currently work together to help the person with a disability make healthcare choices?



What are some additional supports that we might want to start using? (Examples include authorizing the sharing of medical records, attending medical appointments with a supporter, providing complicated health information in simplified plain language, etc.)

How Does the Person with a Disability Decide Where They Live and Who They Live With?

- ✓ If the person with a disability makes their own choices without consulting any friends, family, or other resources, that's independent decision-making and not supported decision-making.
- ✓ If someone else makes all living choices for the person with a disability without talking to them or considering what they prefer, that's not supported decision-making.
- ✓ Anything else - visiting possible homes together, making lists of pros and cons, setting up "trial runs" visiting different homes, meeting possible roommates, discussing support staff needs – is supported decision-making.



How do we currently work together to help the person with a disability make choices about where they live and who they live with?

What are some additional supports that we might want to start using? (Examples include working with housing organizations, case managers, or centers for independent living to find housing options; discussing priorities in housing; exploring special housing programs like vouchers, etc.)

How Does The Person With A Disability Decide What To Do During The Day?

- ✓ If the person with a disability does whatever they feel like and no one ever discusses their work, activities, or social life with them, that's independent decision-making and not supported decision-making.
- ✓ If someone else decides what the person with a disability should do and who they should see and forces them to do it regardless of what they want, that's not supported decision-making.
- ✓ Anything else - helping the person find a job based on their interests, responding to their preferences about what to do every day, teaching them to take transit to get where they want, talking about safety, consent, and choice in relationships, helping them think about different options and decide which is the best fit - is supported decision-making.



How do we currently work together to help the person with a disability make choices about what they do during the day?



What are some additional supports that we might want to start using? (Examples include help finding and applying for jobs, helping learn to take public transportation, setting up “trial runs” or internships in workplaces, choosing where to go for dinner, etc.)

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