

# Supported Decision Making

What happens when an adult child is capable of some independence—but still needs a trusted voice and guidance to help think things through? Supported Decision Making (SDM) is a way for people with disabilities to make their own decisions — with a little help from people they trust. Instead of turning decision-making over to a guardian, SDM lets individuals stay in control while family members, friends, or professionals help them understand information, weigh their options, and communicate their choices. Support can cover any area of life — healthcare, finances, housing, education, or daily living — and it's completely flexible. A person can get help in one area or many, and the support always reflects their individual needs and goals.



## Benefits of Supported Decision Making

- Supports independence and autonomy
- Can reduce or prevent the need for guardianship (limited or full)
- Agreements can be flexible, covering only the areas where support is needed



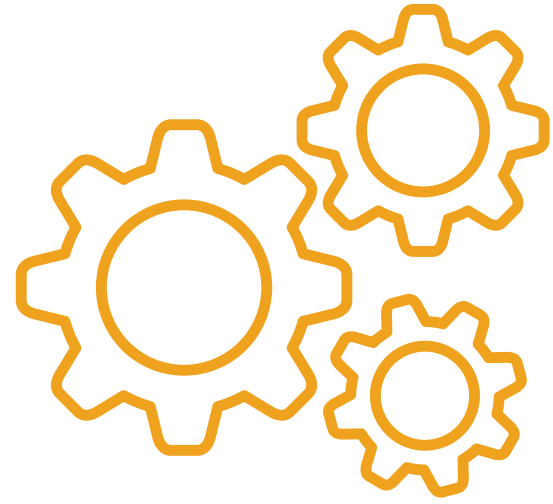
## What Does a Supported Decision-Making Agreement Include?

- Name and contact information of the person and supporter(s)
- Types of decisions supporter(s) may help with
- The supporter(s)' role (explaining information, helping communicate decisions, etc.)
- Signatures of the person and supporter(s), and two witnesses or a notary



## Agreements May Cover Decisions Related To:

- Medical care
- Finances
- Housing
- Education
- Daily living



## Decision-Making Support Tools

- Release of Information forms
  - Allows supporters to access medical, educational, or financial information
- [Supported Decision-Making Agreement](#)
  - Outlines who helps and how
- Representative Payer
  - Manages SSI/SSDI benefits on behalf of the person.
- Power of Attorney (Health Care or Finance)
  - Allows someone to make decisions only if the person cannot.

# Get Started with Supported Decision Making

## 1. Start a conversation

- *Discuss strengths, areas where support is helpful, and goals for independence*

## 2. Identify “Supporters”

- *Choose trusted people who are willing and able to assist*

## 3. Talk through what support looks like

- *What decisions need help? How will information be shared? How will decisions be communicated? When will things be revisited?*

## 4. Create an individualized [agreement](#)

- *Tailor it to the person’s needs and preferences*

## 5. Share the agreement

- *Provide copies to all relevant places (e.g., schools, doctors, service providers, financial institutions, etc.)*