



Supported Decision-Making Fact Sheet

"Everyone has the right to make decisions about their own lives."



As we go through life, we all ask for help from people we trust when making decisions and choices – friends, co-workers, family, neighbors, professionals, members of a faith community. The decisions and choices are about lots of things – where to live or work, medical or healthcare, spending money. We ask people for advice and then we make our own decisions. Everyone needs help when making decisions.

What is Supported Decision-Making?

- It's a way for a person with a disability (PWD) to get the help they need with thinking about options, making choices, and letting others know what decisions they made.
- It involves a person identified (also called an Identified Supporter) as a helper by a PWD.
- It increases power and control in the life of a PWD.
- It can lead to better health and well-being of a PWD and improve family and community relationships around a PWD.
- It is not a new idea! The District of Columbia and several states have laws in place for Supported Decision-Making: Alaska, Delaware, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wisconsin.

What is an Identified Supporter?

- An Identified Supporter is someone the PWD knows and trusts.
- The Identified Supporter can be a friend, family member, co-worker, colleague, or a person with professional skills.

How Supported Decision-Making Works

- The PWD fills out a form called a Supported Decision-Making Agreement.
- The Supported Decision-Making Agreement says what support is needed by the PWD based on the person's needs and wants.
- The Supported Decision-Making Agreement makes sure that decisions are made by the PWD.
- The Supported Decision-Making Agreement is signed by the PWD, the Identified Supporter, and two (2) witnesses.

When Does Supported Decision-Making Happen?

- Supported Decision-Making happens when the Identified Supporter helps a PWD according to the signed Supported Decision-Making Agreement. This can include finding information about
 - Living situations
 - Work
 - Medical and Healthcare
 - Relationships
- Supported Decision-Making can also happen when the PWD asks the Identified Supporter to
 - Find and obtain benefits and resources to consider
 - Focus a team
 - Communicate information
 - Assist with questions
 - Assist with making a final decision

Does Illinois Have a Law about Supported Decision-Making?

- There is no law in Illinois about Supported Decision-Making.
- Illinois law already has language that matches Supported Decision-Making.
- Disability advocates in Illinois really like Supported Decision-Making.
- Supported Decision-Making will not replace legal guardianship. Legal guardianship will continue to be an option for a PWD who needs that level of support in making decision.

Helpful Links

National Center for Supported Decision-Making

www.supporteddecisionmaking.org

Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gac/Pages/default.aspx>

Illinois Guardianship Association

<http://illinoisguardianship.org>

National Guardianship Association

<https://www.guardianship.org/>

Illinois Probate Act Section on Adult Guardianship

[http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=075500050HArt%](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=075500050HArt%20)



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