

Supported Decision-Making

An Alternative to Guardianship

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is a process that allows individuals with disabilities to make their own choices with help from trusted supporters.

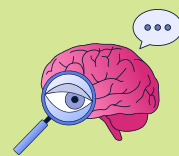
Its purpose is to empower adults with disabilities to have control over their lives while getting the support they need.



Promotes independence and self-determination by keeping control over their own decisions instead of having a guardian make decisions for them.

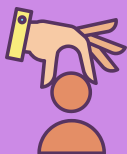


Encourages inclusion in community life and can be used in along with guardianship, Power of Attorney & other documents.



Supports the individual's rights to make decisions about their health, finances and day-to-day decisions.

How it works in 4 easy steps:



Pick Supporters - individuals choose trusted people who can help them when and where they need it.



Decide How They Help - define what kind of help is needed, like explaining options or help with communication.



Make the Decision - the individual stays in control while their supporters help them.



Make Changes as Needed - the plan can change as the needs of the individual changes over their lifetime.



Scan the QR code for a sample of a Supported Decision-Making agreement from Colorado.

Hawaii passed a bill in 2025 to allow banks and healthcare providers to recognize SDM agreements.

Other Alternatives to Guardianship

A Supported Decision-Making agreement can be one option of an individual's formal and informal choices to make decisions for themselves. Other options can include:

- medical and financial power of attorney
- joint bank accounts
- living wills/special needs trusts
- health care surrogacy
- representative payees
- limited guardianship (for health & personal decisions)
- conservatorship (for money & property decisions)

