

# Supported Decision-Making (SDM)

## Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities

### 1 What is SDM?

A process in which people who need assistance with decision-making receive the help they need and want to make life decisions for themselves

A way to preserve rights and build on existing capacity with real life experience and learning

An essential element for achieving self-determination and meaningful inclusion in community

An empowering, skill building and transformative approach to assisting people



### 5 What can you do?

Acknowledge decision-making as a basic human right and natural part of the human experience

Expect that all children with disabilities will develop as decision-makers and ensure involvement in decision-making throughout the lifespan

Help people develop relationships and support systems necessary for accessing support in decision-making when needed (e.g. Friends, family, trusted professionals and generic service providers, etc.)

Learn to evaluate the need for intervention by weighing the risk of harm or failure with the risk of loss of dignity, self-direction and overall quality of life.

Educate people and families on the options available.

### 2 What happens now?

Little to no emphasis on "teaching" decision-making skills

Low expectations for children or adults with disabilities to be involved in decision-making in meaningful ways

Superficial use of "preferences" in structured programming

Bias toward use of **substituted** decision making methods (e.g., guardianship) as a primary support



### 3 Rethinking Support

How do all people become good decision-makers?

What role and responsibility do professional "helpers" have to support individual decision-making?

What about the role of families?

What could support look like? (one size will not work for all)



### 4 Providing Support

Take direction from the person and his or her will and preferences

Customize actions to and with the person

Find new tools for your toolbox  
 Communication  
 Peer Support  
 Practical Experiences  
 Life Coaching

Be flexible and try multiple ways



## Reference

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities: The Council on Quality Leadership, and Burton Blatt Institute. "Supported Decision Making: An Agenda for Action"-February 2014

 **Quality Trust**

[www.dcqualitytrust.org](http://www.dcqualitytrust.org)  
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