



Office of Developmental Primary Care

Improving outcomes for people with developmental disabilities

Supported Health Care Decision-Making for Self-Advocates

- You can make choices about your health.
- We all need help making choices.
- You can choose people you trust to help you.
- You can choose one supporter or more.
- Your supporter doesn't have to agree with your choices.
- You can choose a different supporter any time.

What is Supported Decision-Making?

Supported Decision-Making is a way you can make choices with someone you trust helping you. With Supported Decision-Making, you can make decisions about your health with help from someone you trust. Anyone can have a hard time making important decisions about their health. People often need help managing their health care. You have the same right to make choices, getting the help you want, as everyone else.

Things You Should Know About Your Supporters

The people you choose to help you are called supporters. You can have as many supporters as you wish. They can be your family members, friends, people who work with you in the community, or anyone else you trust. For example, maybe your brother does a great job helping you talk to the doctor, but at home, your roommate reminds you to take your medicine. Both your brother and your roommate could be your supporters.

You don't have to get support for every part of your healthcare, or every time you go to the doctor. You get to choose when you are supported, the people who support you, and how you get this support. When you choose to use a supporter, they can assist you in many other ways as well. They might call your doctor when you are sick or help you get onto an exam table from your wheelchair.

You will have a very important relationship with your supporters. They promise to help you get the information you need to understand your options. You can make choices even when your supporter does not agree with them. But, just like everyone else, you must accept the consequences of your choices.

Who Cannot Serve as Your Supporters?

If you don't want someone to be your supporter, they can't be one. Also, some people may be unable or unwilling to support the decisions you make about your health. They cannot be your supporter. Other people who cannot be your supporters include staff members of a residential institution or someone who is arguing in a court case against you.

What are Supported Health Care Decision-Making Agreements?

Supported Health Care Decision-Making Agreements are a new and exciting way to make Supported Decision-Making work for you. In the future, these signed forms will let you name supporters to help you and your doctors and other health care workers work together. Doctors will know that these supporters can help you understand your options, but you will still have the right to make decisions about a plan of care that works for you.

How do the Agreements Work?

These agreements will let you choose who helps you and how they will do it. You can choose to have one or more agreements for different parts of your healthcare. You may want to have different supporters. You might not want one person to know everything about your body or your health. Every agreement may be a little different depending on how you choose to be supported. The key is that you choose the type of support you want and who will give it to you.

What if You Have a Problem with a Supporter?

If you feel your supporter is not helping you the way you like, then you can choose a different supporter. Also, you can change or cancel an agreement if you think a supporter is trying to talk you into something that you don't like or makes you feel uncomfortable. You will be able to change or cancel each agreement at any time, for any reason. Also, if your doctor feels a supporter is not respecting your decisions or has not given you enough information, he or she may ask to speak to you alone. Your doctor might also want to speak to someone else.

Remember, your health is important!

You have the right to get the help you need to make decisions about your body and your healthcare!

To view a Supported Decision-Making video for people with disabilities, please visit: [SDM Video for Self-Advocates](#)

For more information on the [Model Legislation](#) and a [Questions and Answers Resource](#), please visit: <http://autisticadvocacy.org/2014/07/asan-unveils-toolkit-for-advocates-on-health-care-and-the-transition-to-adulthood/>