



SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING:

AN ALTERNATIVE TO GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP

What is Supported Decision Making?

Supported Decision Making (SDM) is a way for people with disabilities to make their own decisions and direct their lives without a guardian or conservator. When people use SDM, they work with people they trust, who help them understand the situations and choices they face, so they can make decisions that are best for them.

SDM is how *everyone*, with or without disabilities, makes decisions. Think about what you do when you need to make a tough choice, or a decision about something you don't know a lot about, or just want to "talk it out." You may ask a friend or family member for advice or a professional for information. They help you "think through" the issues and discuss the "pros and cons" of your choices. That way, you can understand your options and choose the one that's best for you. *When you do that, you're using SDM.*

Does SDM Eliminate Guardianship and Conservatorship?

No! SDM does not and will not eliminate guardianship or conservatorship. SDM just gives parents and friends another option and a way to remain involved in their loved one's life without involving the court.

Would CT be the first State to recognize SDM?

No! 26 states – the majority – and the District of Columbia recognize SDM as an alternative to guardianship and conservatorship.

What are the Benefits of SDM?

More Independence and a Better Quality of Life for People with Disabilities: When people use SDM, they make their own decisions, with support, instead of having a guardian or conservator make decisions for them. Research has repeatedly found that people with disabilities who make more of their own choices – who are more *self-determined* – have a better quality of life. For example, studies show that people with disabilities who are more self-determined are more likely to be independent, employed, and active in their communities [1]. Research also finds that women with disabilities who are more self-determined are better able to recognize and avoid abuse [2]. The National Core Indicators Study found that, among similarly situated people with disabilities, those *without* guardians were more likely to live in their own homes, work, be active members of their communities, have their rights respected, work, date, and marry than those *with* guardians [3]. Finally, a pilot study found that young adults who used SDM were more independent and confident, were better at making decisions, and made objectively better decisions [4].

Less Spending and More Public Resources: Every person and family who chooses to use SDM will save taxpayer funds and free up public resources that would have been used to establish and supervise their guardianship or conservatorship.

[1] e.g., Karrie A. Shogren et al., Relationships Between Self-Determination and Postschool Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities, 4 J. Special Educ. 256 (2015); Laurie Powers, et al. My Life: Effects of a Longitudinal, Randomized Study of Self-Determination Enhancement on the Transition Outcomes of Youth in Foster Care and Special Education, 34 Child. & Youth Services Rev. 2179 (2012); Janette McDougall, et al. The Importance of Self-Determination to Perceived Quality of Life for Youth and Young Adults with Chronic Conditions and Disabilities, 31 Remedial & Special Educ. 252 (2010).

[2] Hickson, L. et al. (2015). Randomized control trial to evaluate an abuse prevention curriculum for women and men with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Am. J. on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities 120(6), 490. Khemka, I. et al. (2005). Evaluation of a decision-making curriculum designed to empower women with mental retardation to resist abuse. Am. J. Mental Retardation 110, 193; Khemka, I. (2000). Increasing independent decision-making skills of women with mental retardation in simulated interpersonal situations of abuse. Am. J. on Mental Retardation 105(5), 387.

[3] Bradley, V., et al. (2019). What does NCI data reveal about the guardianship status of people with IDD? The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute.

[4] Martinis, J. & Beadnell, L. (2021). "I learned that I have a voice in my future": Summary, findings, and recommendations from the Virginia supported decision-making pilot project. Available at: <https://thearcofnova.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/02/SDM-Pilot-Project-Final-Report-2.2.21.pdf>



CT Supported Decision-Making Coalition

Website: <https://ctsilc.org/supported-decision-making/>

Phone: 860.681.7599

Members

Molly Cole, Executive Director, CT State Independent Living Council (Co-Chair)

Gretchen Knauff, Director, Office of Services for Persons with Disabilities, City of New Haven (Co-Chair)

Chris Blake, Self-Advocate/Board Vice President, The Arc CT

Stephen Byers, Attorney, Disability Rights CT

Deborah Dorfman, Attorney/Executive Director Disability Rights CT

Win Evarts, Executive Director, The Arc CT

Pam Fields, CEO, MidState Arc

Kathy Flaherty, Attorney/Executive Director, CT Legal Rights Project

Walt Glomb, Executive Director, CT Council on Developmental Disabilities

Attorney Kathleen Hayes, Chair, Elder Law Section, Ct Bar Association

Laura Knapp, CT Parent Advocacy Center

Shannon Jacovino, Ombudsperson for The Department of Developmental Services

Jonathan Martinis, SDM Project Consultant

Adrianna Ramirez, Executive Director, The CT Family Support Network

Bonnie Myers, Director of Programs and Services, Brain Injury Association of CT

Alyssa Norwood, Director, CT Age Well Collaborative

Ruth Nuss, PATH/ Family Voices of CT

Sammi Nuss, Self-Advocate with an SDM plan

Linda Rammler, UConn UCEDD

Carol Scully, Director of Advocacy, The Arc CT

Kim Smith, Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut

Missy Wrigley, Consultant, State Education Resource Center