



DECISION-MAKING SUPPORT

# Empowering Patients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



Everyone deserves to make choices about their lives, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Some individuals with IDD need more help than others when making decisions, so various levels of support are available.

We encourage health care providers and those working with individuals with IDD to allow them to make their own choices when possible. Tennessee’s Supported Decision-Making legislation requires using the “least restrictive alternative” – the decision-making technique or process that preserves as many of a person’s decision-making rights as possible.

Learn more about possible decision-making techniques, ranked from least to most restrictive, below:

LEAST RESTRICTIVE

### Independent Decision-Making

Your patient can provide appropriate information without decision-making support.

### Consent and Release Forms

The individual signs a release form giving a specific person access to certain information or records.

### Supported Decision-Making (SDM)

A person using SDM selects trusted advisors, like family members, friends or professionals, to support them as they make decisions.

We’ve included more information about SDM on the next page.

### Power of Attorney (POA)

This is a formal legal arrangement where a person chooses someone else to make decisions for them. A POA can be general or limited. A Medical Power of Attorney allows the individual to select a person they want to make health care decisions if and when they’re unable to make them.

MOST RESTRICTIVE

### Health Care Surrogate

Health care providers decide if a health care surrogate is needed and appoint one if so.

### Conservatorship

If an adult with a disability can’t make their own decisions, the court can legally assign someone else to make decisions for them.

### Guardianship

This is a relationship a court grants for an individual (the “guardian”) to care and make decisions for a minor.

Supported decision-making (SDM) offers freedom of choice for individuals with IDD while still allowing them to benefit from support and guidance.

## Understanding SDM

We all occasionally turn to others for advice when making a decision, and supported decision-making is no different. It allows those with IDD to make their own decisions with the guidance of trusted friends, family members and others they choose. Using SDM, the person's support team helps them:

- › Better understand information presented
- › Communicate their preferences
- › Examine their choices and the possible outcomes of each one

Tools used in SDM may differ depending on each person's needs. According to the TN Center for Decision-Making Support, they may include:

- › Setting aside extra time for the person to discuss or try options before making a decision
- › Presenting information in a visual or auditory form instead of a written form
- › Creating lists of likes, dislikes, pros and cons about each option
- › Role-playing activities to increase understanding



For more information about SDM and how to use it in your practice, please visit the **TN Center for Decision-Making Support** at <https://www.tndecisionmaking.org/> or review the **Health Care for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Took Kit** at [iddtoolkit.vkcsites.org/](http://iddtoolkit.vkcsites.org/).



