

A Guide on Supported Decision-Making

What is Supported Decision-Making?

Supported decision-making is a practice of developing decision-making skills with the support of a team of trusted individuals (referred to as “supporters”) to assist a person in collecting information, processing information, and coming to an informed decision. Supported decision-making preserves autonomy, promotes self-determination, and creates a trusted environment for people who are seeking decision-making assistance. Supported decision-making is among several less restrictive alternatives to guardianship.

Why Supported Decision-Making?

Guardianship removes a person’s right to make decisions about their life. In contrast, supported decision-making is flexible and can change with the needs of the person to provide more opportunities for independence and autonomy.

How Can Supported Decision-Making Be Used in Georgia?

Under Georgia law, guardianship should be used as a last resort. Probate Court judges are required to encourage self-reliance and independence, and to explore less restrictive alternatives to guardianship. Engaging in the process of supported decision-making is a less restrictive alternative to guardianship. O.C.G.A. 29-4-1(f).

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Key Principles of Supported Decision-Making

1. The **person with a disability** is the ultimate decision maker.
2. The person with a disability is helped to identify the areas of their life where they want and need assistance with making decisions.
3. The person with a disability decides whose support they want – the supporter – in making decisions. It may not be the same supporter for every decision.
4. The **supporter's** fundamental task is to strengthen the voice and role of the person as the key decision maker in their own life. Other roles of the supporter are:
 - a. To help the person define their own interests and priorities without acting to promote the agendas and influence of others.
 - b. To earn and respect the trust of the person being supported and to not betray that trust.
 - c. To preserve the person's autonomy in respect to decision-making.
 - d. To pursue and utilize supports that build on the person's existing skills and capabilities.
 - e. To strengthen the person's capabilities with decision-making and enhance the degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency they experience through the practice of making decisions.
 - f. To create opportunities for the person to gain experiences that enrich their life and maximize their true potential.

For resources on supported decision-making,
including templates for
supported decision-making agreements,
please visit:
www.supporteddecisionmaking.org