

Brainstorming Guide:

How Are We Already Using Supported Decision-Making?

Supported Decision-Making can sound like a new, foreign idea. But most families, people with disabilities, and advocates are already using supported decision-making, even if they don't call it that. In fact, most people *without* disabilities are also already using supported decision-making!

Supported decision-making means helping a person understand, make, and communicate her own decisions. This will look different for everyone.

This tool can help people brainstorm ways that they are already using supported decision-making, and think about new ways supported decision-making could help the person with a disability learn to make her own safe, informed choices.

How to use this tool:

- Go through each area of the individual's life. Brainstorm whether you work together to make choices in this area. You might not yet be using supported decision-making in all of these fields. If you think of supports you could start using, write these down too.
 - *If you are considering guardianship/conservatorship:* supported decision-making can sometimes be formalized into arrangements that prevent the need for guardianship or conservatorship. For example, the person with a disability could sign a form to let you access her medical records so you can make health decisions together.
 - *If you are planning for the future:* this tool can help you think about ways to learn and practice decision-making. Learning to make good choices is a skill, and people can learn to make better, safer, and more informed choices with practice and support.
 - *If a lawyer, doctor, school official, banker, or anyone else is worried that the person with a disability cannot make her own decisions:* this tool can help you explain to the person the ways in which the decisions of a person with a disability are informed and safe.

How does the person with a disability manage his money?

- If no one ever talks about money with the person with a disability and they do whatever they want, that's not supported decision-making.
- If someone takes all of the person's money and gives him no choices about how it's spent, that's not supported decision-making either.
- Anything else – opening a joint bank account, making a budget together, having an SSI rep payee and then discussing how to spend money – is supported decision-making.

How we work together to help the person with a disability member manage his/her money:

Additional supports that we might want to start using (examples include: appointing a representative payee, opening a joint bank account, making and implementing a budget together, taking a money management course): _____

How does the person with a disability make healthcare decisions?

- If he makes his own decisions without talking to anyone else, that's not supported decision-making.
- If someone else makes all of the person's medical choices for him without discussing his preferences and opinions, that's not supported decision-making, either.
- Anything else – attending medical appointments together, explaining healthcare choices in plain language, sharing access to medical records – is supported decision-making.

How we work together to help the person with a disability make healthcare choices:

Additional supports that we might want to start using (examples include executing a HIPAA authorization to share medical records, attending medical appointments with a supporter, providing complicated health information in simplified plain language): _____

How does the person with a disability decide where she lives and who she lives with?

- If she makes her own choices without consulting any friends, family, or other resources, that’s not supported decision-making.
- If someone else makes all living choices for the person with a disability without talking to her or considering what she prefers, that’s not supported decision-making.
- Anything else – visiting possible homes together, making lists of pros and cons, setting up “trial runs” visiting different homes, meeting possible roommates, discussing support staff needs – is supported decision-making.

How we work together to help the person with a disability make choices about where he/she lives:

Additional supports that we might want to start using (examples include working with Regional Center staff to find housing options, discussing priorities in housing): _____

How does the person with a disability decide what to do during the days?

- If she does whatever she feels like and no one ever discusses her work, activities, or social life with her, that’s not supported decision-making.
- If someone else decides what she should do and who she should see and forces her to do it regardless of what she wants, that’s not supported decision-making.
- Anything else – helping the person find a job based on her interests, responding to her preferences about what she does every day, teaching her to take transit to get where she wants to be, talking about safety, consent, and choice in relationships, helping her think about different options and decide which is the best fit for her – is supported decision-making.

How we work together to help the person with a disability decide how to spend his/her time:

Additional supports that we might want to start using (examples include help finding and applying for jobs, help learning to take public transportation, setting up “trial runs” or internships in workplaces):
