

SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING: A QUICK GUIDE

& Other Alternatives to Guardianship—For Adults with IDD



Supported Decision-Making

Everyone should be able to make choices about their own life, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) means people with IDD can make their own decisions about their lives **with help** from people they trust, like family, friends, or professionals.

These supporters help explain options, talk through the choices, and support the person in sharing what they want.

SDM respects the person's voice, helps them stay in charge of their life, and teaches skills they can use forever.

What is SDM?

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is a process many adults, both with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), use every day to **make decisions with support** from people they trust.

In 2020, Colorado passed legislation **officially recognizing** SDM as a valid way for adults with IDD to make choices and stay in charge of their lives.

Many free, easy-to-use SDM Agreements can be found **online!**

Medical Durable Power of Attorney (MDPOA)

Medical Durable Power of Attorney (MDPOA) is a **legal** document that allows a person to name someone they trust to make **medical decisions** for them if they become unable to do so.

It must be completed **in advance**, while the person still has decision-making capacity. Support can be provided to help the person understand and complete the form.

The MDPOA can also include specific instructions about when and how the person wants support with their medical care.

Many free, easy-to-use MDPOA forms are available **online.**

Medical Proxies

Medical Proxies are **representatives** that are agreed upon by concerned parties during a critical time when no one is designated as an MDPOA or decision-maker to direct medical care. Once someone regains their decision-making ability, a proxy is relieved of their duties. There are a variety of free Medical Proxy forms that are available **online.**



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Representative Payee, Trusts, & Asset Management

Representative Payee: This is someone chosen to manage a person's SSI income. They receive the funds and make sure bills and basic needs are paid.

Trust Accounts: Special types of trusts allow a person with a disability to save money without affecting their benefits. Each trust has its own rules. Make sure to understand how the money can be used and what happens to any remaining funds.

Other Financial Supports: A person with IDD can also name a trusted co-signer on a bank account or debit card to help manage money day to day.

ABLE Accounts: ABLE Accounts in Colorado help people with disabilities save money for things like housing, education, and health care without losing their SSI or Medicaid benefits. These accounts are tax-free.

Person-Centered Planning & Release of Information (ROI)

Local **Case Management Agencies (CMAs)** are required to use Person-Centered Planning. This approach puts the individual at the center of the planning process, focusing on their strengths, preferences, and goals.

The planning team should be built around what the **person wants and needs**, and should include the people they choose to support them in reaching those goals.

CMAs and other providers may also ask the person to complete a **Release of Information (ROI)** form each year. This form allows the person to say who they want involved in their services, supports, and decision-making.

How The Arc Can Help

Teach and Guide: We help families learn about Supported Decision-Making and other choices instead of guardianship.

Plan With You: We support creating plans that focus on your goals and who you want on your team.

Help with SDM Forms: We can help you use or customize the Supported Decision-Making agreement.

Support at Important Times: We offer help when your child turns 18 or needs new support options.

Work with Others: We talk with agencies, schools, and providers to make sure your choices are respected.

Connect with us!



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