



## Supported Decision-Making Empower Their Right to Vote!

### Family Members and Supporters

**There is no easier way to make  
an immediate, positive impact  
than through the power of our vote.**



### **Supported Decision-Making (SDM): Their Right to Vote Counts!**

**The right to vote in a democratic election is fundamental to every citizen - including your loved one with exceptional differences.** Supported Decision-Making empowers people with disabilities to choose supporters – such as trusted advisors, friends, family members, or professionals - to help them make choices to the *maximum of their unique abilities*. The supporters agree to help the person with a disability understand, consider, and communicate decisions, giving the person with a disability the tools to make informed decisions - like the right to vote!

### **How to Support Your Loved One with a Disability to Vote in this Election:**

As a Supported Decision-Making team member, you have the opportunity to be unbiased and support the person objectively according to their values and interests. Here, there is no better opportunity to practice than through the *non-partisan* support we give in helping someone decide how to vote - and **teach self-advocacy** in the process.

There are various ways to help your loved one vote. We can start by asking **what is important to them** (consider using visuals). Is it being included and respected in the community? Having a job? Access to transportation, education or affordable housing? Please use the suggestions below to relate their values to the ballot propositions and the candidates' policies. Here are some other ways to help your loved one vote:

1. Be present, be patient, wait, listen and check for understanding.
2. Relate issues on the ballot to their own life.
  - a. Does your loved one have an interest in cars? Disneyland? For example, Disney characters can be explained as the groups affected by certain propositions and policies.
3. Use examples of experiences the individual has had in their life.
  - a. Many issues on the ballot relate to the life of a person with a disability, whether it be health care, transportation, or education. Make sure they know how the issues on the ballot will affect them.
4. Use [Disability Vote California's plain-language voting resources](#) to explain concepts simply and clearly to your loved one.

5. Read voting resources slower, more than once, and emphasize different words
6. Read through plain language or visual guides to the ballot many times, over many days, so that the person can take time to think about the issues.
7. Connect with *other supporters* - be open to *all* views and encourage questions.

### **Accommodations for Voters**

In recent years, voting protections put in place for disabled people include **signing** the voter registration (1) with a mark, (2) a cross or (3) by means of a signature stamp. People with disabilities can also complete voter registration with a **supporter's assistance**. In fact, if "**accessible materials**" is marked during online voter registration, the person will be prompted to fill in the contact information of the person supporting them. Furthermore, California law now enables a disabled person to complete the voter registration form with "**reasonable accommodations**" **suited to their particular needs**.

### **Presumption of Competency to Vote**

**In California, a person is presumed competent to vote regardless of their conservatorship status.** Being conserved does not automatically entail losing one's right to vote. If you have any questions about the voting rights of a conservatee or a loved one, please call the Disability Rights California **Voting Hotline** at **(888) 569-7955** or click on this [Disability Rights California](#) resource about voting and conservatorship.

### **Additional SDM and Voting Resources**

Luckily, the [Disability Vote California](#) (DVC) Coalition - a collaboration of dedicated organizations - works to bring non-partisan resources that empower voters with disabilities. Here, you can access many of the tools you need to help walk you through the process and facilitate the right to vote for your loved one. **Most importantly, get out and vote! We are all in this together!**

- [A Supported Decision-Making \(SDM\) Overview](#) (One Page Overview of SDM by Exceptional Rights Advocacy)
- [Register Change Lives!](#) (One Page Self-Advocate Plain Language Guide)
- [Autism Self-Advocacy Network, Easy Read Edition, Your Vote Counts: A Self-Advocate's Guide to Voting in the U.S.](#) (visual, plain language voter guide for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities)
- [Easy Voter Guide](#) (See the DVC plain language resource above. This is an additional voter guide from the League of Women Voters Education Fund.)