



Supported Decision Making (SDM) for People with Developmental Disabilities (DD)

A guide to how Supported Decision-Making works in Colorado, how to get started, and a free template to begin the process.

Supported Decision Making in Colorado

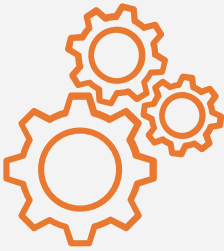
In Colorado Law (C.R.S. § 15-14-801)

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What is Supported Decision Making (SDM)?

SDM is when an adult with a disability, called the **decider**, chooses people they trust called **supporters**, to help them understand information and make choices about certain parts of their life.



How does it work?

In Colorado, an SDM **agreement** is a written document created by the person with a disability, with help to write it from someone they trust if needed. It lists their supporters, such as family, friends, professionals, or others they trust, and what decisions they want help with.



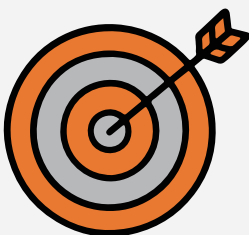
Supporters can help with decisions around

- Health care
- School or employment
- Money and bills
- Relationships and social life
- Everyday life decisions and **MORE!**



Supporters can help with decisions many ways

- Gather information
- Explain information
- Discuss pros and cons
- Help communicate decisions with others
- **AND MORE!**



Why Explore SDM?

SDM lets the person with a disability stay in charge of their life while still getting decision making support from people they trust. It is less restrictive than guardianship, so many people look at SDM as an alternative or try it first. SDM helps the person learn and grow, supports independence, and does not take away their rights the way guardianship can.

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Who sees the agreement?

An SDM agreement can be **shared with anyone involved** in the decider's life, such as doctors, schools, employers, case managers, banks, benefit offices, etc.

Copies can be made and given out. The original should be kept in a safe place.



Does it cost money?

An SDM agreement **does not cost money**, and you don't go to court to start it. The only cost may be if the decider pays someone to help write the agreement or paying a notary. Some banks offer free notary services for account holders. **Supporters do not get paid.**



How often is the SDM Agreement updated?

There is no requirement in CO law to update an SDM agreement, but **reviewing it once a year is recommended.** The agreement can be updated at any time.



Learn more about
other decision
making supports

thinkchange.info/DecisionMakingTOOL

SDM with Guardianship, Power of Attorney, and More

SDM can be used on its own with other tools like power of attorney, guardianship, conservatorship, and more. SDM does not replace these tools. SDM adds extra support by helping the decider understand information and make their own choices.

How to start an SDM Agreement

In Colorado Law (C.R.S. § 15-14-801)

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The decider chooses supporters

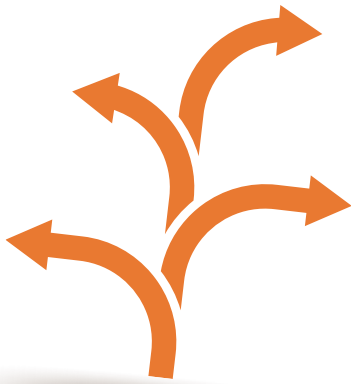
The decider picks people they trust, such as family, friends, professionals, or others. These trusted people can also help the decider write the agreement if support is needed.



2

The decider chooses what decisions they want help with

The decider thinks about the parts of life where support is wanted, for example, health care, money, housing, work, education, services, community, social life and beyond.



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The agreement is written

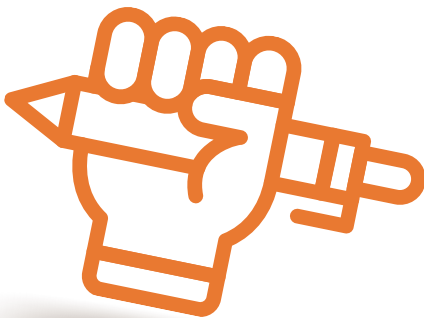
The agreement lists the decider, their supporters, and what the supporters will help with. Supporters agree to help the decider while respecting that the decider makes the final decision.



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Everyone signs the agreement

The decider and supporters sign voluntarily, and the agreement is witnessed by two people or stamped by a notary. Once signed and dated, the SDM agreement becomes a legal document.



What should be in an SDM Agreement

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Name of the adult with a disability “the decider”

To include address, phone number, and email *(if they have one)*.

Name and contact information for each supporter

To include address, phone number, and email.

Decisions the decider wants support with

What areas the supporter(s) will help with.

Mandatory Reporters Statement

A statement that mandatory reporters must report any suspected mistreatment by Supporters.

Did you know?

An SDM agreement can look however you want. It just has to include what’s on this page.

A Statement that Supporters will:

- Share info in the way the person wants
- Give clear and up to date info
- Respect the person and their final decision
- Support the person without pressure

The date the agreement was made

It can be updated or revoked at any time.

Signatures

Signed voluntarily by the decider and each supporter

AND

Witnessed by two adults **or** notarized.

Jose, age 47, lives in a host home

Jose communicates using simple English and Spanish words, facial expressions, gestures, and eye gaze or pointing.

Jose has supporters who help him understand information and make his own decisions. His brother supports family, cultural, and medical decisions. His host home provider helps with daily life and community choices. His residential manager helps him understand Social Security money information. His advocate supports him with his rights and disability services.

Jose's supporters help him understand information, think through choices, and talk about the pros and cons.

[Click here for an example of Jose's agreement.](#)



In SDM, supporters help, but the person with the disability still makes their own choices.

Bonnie, age 23, lives with her husband who has a disability

Bonnie's partner, parents, neighbor, advocate, and family friend to help her understand decisions about health care, housing, work, money, disability services, legal matters, and her social life.

Her supporters help her understand information and think through different choices. They respect her decisions, even if they do not agree with them, and they do not make decisions for her.

Bonnie used to have a guardian. The court ended the guardianship because she no longer wanted or needed it. Bonnie prefers Supported Decision Making so she has her rights back.

[Click here for an example of Bonnie's agreement.](#)



Self-determination means having a say in your own life!

Download a Supported Decision Making template below

Use our sample template below as a starting point—or create your own. Just be sure it includes the required information on page 4 of this packet.

Download at:
<https://thinkchange.info/COSDM>
or scan the QR code.



THINK+change is The Arc of Aurora's training and education program that strives to change knowledge, attitude, and behavior to ultimately improve the quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), their families, and the professionals in their lives.

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