

Supported Decision-Making Quick Reference Guide

What is Supported Decision-Making?

Supported Decision-Making is helping someone to make their own decisions. It’s something most people do naturally on a regular basis. Support may help the person to understand their options, think through pros and cons, and communicate their decisions.

Is It the Same as Substitute Decision-Making?

Substitute Decision-Making

- Someone else is legally appointed to make the decision
- Applies to specific decisions
- Requires legislation and a formal process

Supported Decision-Making

- The person themselves remains the final decision maker
- Flexible and person-directed
- Can happen at any time, even alongside substitute decision-making in some cases

Everyone Accesses Support With Decision-Making

- Every adult in Canada is assumed to be able to make their own decisions, unless a legislative process shows otherwise
- Having a disability doesn’t automatically invalidate personal capacity to make decisions
- Supported decision-making focuses on the question *"What are the right supports that are needed to help someone make their own decisions?"*
- Even with a substitute decision maker some people can be supported to make some decisions

Why is Supported Decision-Making Important?

- It’s a **key principle** of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- It helps people have **autonomy over their own lives** to fulfill their vision for a good life
- Recognizes that decision-making is a **normal part of everyday life**
- **Decision-making remains with the individual**, with directed support of others
- It **fosters a culture and environment of respect and dignity**

Navigating Dignity of Risk

Dignity of Risk is the right to live life in a way that you choose, even with risk. When someone is considering a risky decision:

DO:

- **Build trust** so you can have **honest conversations**
- **Identify the underlying values** in the decision
- Help them plan for **safeguards, explore options**, and **test out** the decision
- **Consider** what’s typical for the person’s age
- **Share your concerns** clearly and respectfully
- **Respect their decision**, even if you don’t agree

DON’T:

- **Make the decision** for the person
- **Avoid** having the difficult conversation
- **Judge** the person for the decision they’re considering
- **Recruit others** to convince the person to make a different decision
- Use **undue influence** or **coercive tactics**
- **Leave people unprepared** without a plan

If you have questions, talk to your Team Lead