

Transition

Supported Decision-Making: Getting Started

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As your loved one works towards building their own vision for life, they may want more control over decisions about where they live, work, learn, and spend their time. It is an exciting step toward independence, but it is natural to wonder how to get started.

Supported decision-making can be a powerful tool. Youth with disabilities can explore, learn, and practice supported decision-making skills so they are ready, once they turn 18. Supported decision-making (SDM) is a way for adults to get help from other people to make choices and decisions for themselves. You must be an adult (over age 18) to use supported decision-making. You can use supported decision-making with or without a written agreement. Here are some steps to help guide your family:

- 1. Explore What Matters:** Help your family member think about what is important to them. Encourage conversations with trusted friends, family, and others about their goals and dreams. Discuss how others make decisions in their own lives. How can your loved one start doing that too?
- 2. Identify Areas for Support:** What areas of life might they need help with? Is it housing, education, work, or social activities? Help your family member make a list of these areas and the kind of support they need to make decisions. For example, "I will need support with social activities and the kind of support I need will be help with picking my schedule so I do not miss anything important that I like to do."
- 3. Choose Supporters:** Who do you want to help your loved one to support them with making decisions? This might include family, friends, or professionals. Talk to these people to see if they are willing to provide support.
- 4. Decide How Help is Given:** How does your family member want to receive support? Do they prefer advice in private, shared discussions, or written notes? Help them let their supporter know how they can be most helpful.
- 5. Consider Additional Resources:** Are there tools, technology, or communication aids that could make decision-making easier? Make sure your family member has everything they need to feel empowered.
- 6. Create a Plan:** Once the supporters and resources are identified, write everything down in a plan or [agreement](#). This way, everyone is clear on how to support the person with the disability's choices.

For more information, contact PPMD by visiting our [website](#) or calling (410)768-9100.