

# Supported Decision-Making: The Role of the Supporter

When your family member with a disability wants and needs help to make important decisions about their life, the people they choose to help are called supporters. Your loved one has the right to choose who their supporters are, and it can be one person or several. It is important to remember that the supporter is not the decision-maker. **The individual with the disability is the decision-maker.**

## What is the Supporter's Role?

The supporter's role is to help your loved one make decisions. The supporter does not make decisions for them. The person with a disability has control over the type of support they get. Below are examples of how a supporter can help:

- Help me get information about a decision I want to make. If I want my supporter to help me get confidential information, I will need to sign a separate form to give them access to that information. Confidential information is private information like medical records.
- Help me understand information and my choices so I can make the best decision for me.
- Help me think about all the choices I have and the pros and cons of my decision.
- Help me understand the effect of my decision.
- Help me make sure I can communicate my decisions for myself to the people who need to know.
- Be part of conversations where I talk to others about my decision.
- Provide me the support I need to advocate for my decision myself.

## Who Can Be a Supporter?

A supporter can be anyone your family member chooses. Here are some examples:

- Friends
- Neighbors
- Family members
- School staff members
- Church or community members
- Professionals or specialists
- Paid support
- Disability organizations



## Questions to Consider When Choosing a Supporter:

When your loved one is deciding who they would like as a supporter, here are some important questions to guide the process:

- Is this person trustworthy and honest?
- Do they have expertise in areas where help is needed?
- Will they listen, communicate effectively, and understand how the individual with the disability expresses themselves?
- Will they respect the personal choices for their life?
- Is this person willing to provide support and be available when needed?
- Will they respond to messages and be dependable?

## What Makes a Good Supporter?

A good supporter will:

- Understand their role in the decision-making process.
- Be familiar with how the individual with the disability communicates.
- Make it clear to others that the individual with the disability is the one making decisions.
- Ask how the individual with the disability would like to be supported.
- Help find other experts if more specific knowledge or assistance is needed.



## Rules for Supporters:

1. Support can be provided with or without a formal written agreement.
2. If there is a written agreement, there are certain rules about maintaining records and guidelines on who can serve as a supporter.
3. A supporter under a supported decision-making agreement cannot:
  - a) Make decisions for the individual with the disability
  - b) Carry out [implement] their decisions
  - c) Act for the decision-maker or on their behalf

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



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