

Supported Decision Making

— All Georgians deserve to have control over their own lives—

What is Supported Decision Making?

Supported Decision Making is a **combination of support that empowers people to make their own decisions**, by intentionally selecting a small group of **supporters** made up of friends, family members, professionals, other people they trust who know them well.

Supporters do not make decisions for the person, but rather assists the person to:

- **Understand** the issues and choices
- Ask **questions**
- Receive **explanations** in a way they understand
- **Communicate** their own decisions to others

An alternative
to guardianship

Why do we need Supported Decision Making?

Too often, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are **presumed incapable** of making or communicating their own decisions about their health and safety. This means that a lot of people are **unnecessarily placed under guardianship**.

Unlike guardianship, which strips an adult of their ability to have control over their life, Supported Decision Making serves as a method whereby an adult is **supported to make their own decisions**.

Georgia law already requires that the courts explore the least restrictive alternative before guardianship is put in place. However, for many people this does not happen. When people retain their rights, they are less likely to experience abuse & neglect but more likely to have better health outcomes, jobs, and relationships¹.

What Georgia Needs:

We believe that all people, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, have the right and capacity to make their own decisions. We endorse supported decision-making as a method for ensuring people have access to real decisions and a self-determined life.

¹ Whitlatch, M. (2016). Supported Decision Making: What, Why, & How (PowerPoint Slides). Retrieved from http://supporteddecisionmaking.org/sites/default/files/event_files/MD-Arc-2016-Convention.pdf