

# Supported Decision Making

## Information for families and friends

We all need help sometimes to make decisions. We may turn to friends, family or professionals to get the support we need. This support is particularly important for people with disability to help them build their decision making skills and empower them to take control of their lives.

### What is supported decision making?

- Supported decision making is helping someone to make their own decisions so they have control over the things that are important to them.
- The person with disability is the decision maker and decisions are driven by *their* will and preferences.
- Just like a ramp provides access to a building, good support helps people make their own decisions.
- Decision making is a human right and supported decision making has its basis in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

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*Decision making is a human right and having support to make decisions upholds this right*

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Making decisions is empowering. Having the opportunity to make decisions is critical to building decision making skill, ability and expertise. People living with disability don't always get the opportunity to make decisions because others fear they will make a mistake or be hurt, but thinking about consequences and taking reasonable risks is often the best way to grow and learn. Helping people come to an understanding of how to deal with risk is part of providing good decision making support.

### What is your role in supported decision making?

People with disability have the right to the support they need to make decisions and to choose who provides that support. Families and friends play an important role in providing or identifying support. They are also essential in helping others get to know the person and sharing what they believe is important to them.

Good support has the person at the centre and provides just the right amount of support. The supporter and decision maker should have a relationship based on trust. The supporter's own values and beliefs should not unduly influence the decision maker.

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*Good support builds decision making ability*

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Your contribution to the decision making process might include:

- **Knowing the person** including their likes and dislikes, goals, communication style, experiences and values.
- **Providing opportunities for decision making** to develop decision making skills.
- **Providing information** in a way that the person understands.
- **Weighing up the options** with the person including any risks.
- **Remaining neutral** and trying not to influence the decision.
- **Assisting the person to make and implement the decision** and communicating it to others.
- **Reflecting** with the person on the decision making process.
- **Talking** with the person about what decision making was like for them.

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*Effective communication is central to the success of supported decision making*

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## How does supported decision making relate to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)?

Support for decision making aligns with the NDIS which aims to give people choice and control over their lives. If the person is accessing the NDIS they will have the opportunity to make decisions about the services they receive and identify areas where they would like to build capacity. They also can request to have someone provide them with decision making support through their individual funded package. Family and friends can support them to make their own decisions, particularly when thinking about and developing their NDIS plan.

## What if there is a legally appointed substitute decision maker?

Supported decision making should always be tried first and the appointment of a substitute decision maker used only as a last resort. People under guardianship can still make most of their own daily decisions because guardians are appointed in specific areas only. A guardian may be appointed to make health or lifestyle decisions and a financial manager may be appointed to make money decisions. In these situations the guardian should make every effort to understand the person's will and preference before making a decision on their behalf. The guardian can also help to identify the person's support network so that the person's decision making ability can be built.

The assumption should be that everyone can make their own decisions. Supporting a person to make their own decision is always preferred to substituted decision making.

## Where can I get more information?

Contact the Public Guardian's Information and Support team on 02 8688 6070 or visit our website for factsheets on Supported Decision Making <http://www.publicguardian.justice.nsw.gov.au/>