

Supported Decision Making Tip Sheet

Supported Decision-Making (SDM)

Supported Decision Making is what we should do to maximise the control a person has over making choices and decisions in their life.

We all have support to make decisions, through family, friends, workmates etc... and its important that we empower people to make their own decisions where and when they are able.

People who haven't had the opportunity to make decisions will need extra support to feel confident to do this. This process takes time and the end goal is for people to feel empowered to make choices and decisions about their life as much as possible.

Everyone has the right to make decisions and support to do this will look different depending on the decisions to be made and based on their individuals support needs.

What is Supported Decision Making?

Simply speaking, it means to help someone take steps to make more of their own decisions. The NDIS defines it as a process of providing support to people to make decisions to remain in control of their lives.

Principles of Supported Decision Making

1. People should work with you to find out what you want.
2. People should make sure you are safe.
3. To minimise conflicts of interest.
4. People should think you can make decisions.
5. People with intellectual disability have the right to make decisions about their lives

(Source: [Easy Read version](#) of VALID Position Statement on Supported Decision Making)

Ways to build person-centred Supported Decision Making (SDM) into everyday practice and support:

Empower the person by:

- Including them in as many choices and decisions about them as possible
- Giving them the opportunity to make small choices to build their confidence
- Supporting them to prepare for meetings e.g. think about what is going to be talked about
- All staff/family following a SDM Agreement if there is one

Build individual self-advocacy skills and setting them up to succeed, e.g.

- By asking people who they want involved in decisions and meetings
- Ensure that anyone who they have had a negative experience with is excluded
- By not rushing people to make a choice or decision
- Ensuring that the environment is appropriate e.g. no distractions; others not listening (if important choice); comfortable and familiar environment (i.e. not managers office)
- Ensuring that communication tools (e.g. picture board; device) are used
- Supporting them to undertake self-advocacy training

‘Know the person’

- Get a ‘whole of life plan’ i.e. full Person-Centred Plan about their whole life developed (can use NDIS funds to buy this support)
- Ensure staff have orientation to the individual’s needs including ‘agency’ and casual staff
- Update the Support Plan at each of the service’s used each year and fully review it with significant people involved every two years

Maximise involvement in choice and decisions

- Ensure communication assessments are regularly done so that communication ‘tools’ are up to date and suiting the individual’s needs
- Always ensure that the communication tools (e.g. picture boards/cards; Personal Communication Dictionary; device) is available for the person to use and that staff/others allow the person to use them

Have good information about the person and their needs easily available for staff, e.g.

- Create a ‘One page profile’ and have it located in easy access e.g. in bedroom, or bag
- Orientation information for casual staff includes SDM Agreement and ‘What Works Well’

Develop a Supported Decision Making (SDM) Agreement

- Make a start on a SDM agreement with basic choices and always involving the person
- Include the important and significant people in the person’s life
- Ensure that all workers and services have a current copy of the SDM and are following it
- If you have a SDM Agreement, then review it annually

SDM resources:

- Making Decisions Real www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/make-decisions-real/start-here/
- SDM resources and stories www.supporteddecisionmaking.com.au/
- VALID resources include a template for decision making SDM agreements.
Supported-Decision-Making-Agreement-TEMPLATE-with-EXAMPLE-for-supporters
- Decision-Making Profile tool from Helen Sanderson Associates
www.helensandersonassociates.com/decision-making-profile/



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