

Supported Decision Making

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 it's 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 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.

Key Principles of Supported Decision Making

1. Everyone has the right to make decisions about the things that affect them
2. Capacity to make decisions must be assumed
3. Every effort should be made to support people to make decisions
4. Capacity is decision specific
5. People have the right to learn from experience
6. People have the right to change their minds
7. People have the right to make decisions others might not agree with

(Source: *A guide to Supported Decision Making, Department of Human Services Victoria 2012*)

Building person-centred Supported Decision Making into everyday practice

Empower the person by:

- including them in all choices and decisions about them
- 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 following a SDM Agreement if there is one

Build their self-advocacy skills and set them up to succeed, e.g.

- By asking them who they want involved in decisions and meetings
- Ensure that anyone who they have had a negative experience with is excluded
- By not rushing them 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)

Tip Sheet

- 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 (NDIS funds)
- ensure staff have orientation to individual's needs including agency and casual staff
- update the service's Support Plan annually and fully review it with significant people involved every 2 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 allow the person to use it

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

- Create a 'One page profile' & have it located in easy access e.g. in bedroom
- 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 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
- review the SDM Agreement at least annually

VALID resources:

- One Page Profile Template – <https://valid.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/One-Page-Profile-templates- for-FAMILIES-who-havent-done-course-Aug-2021.doc>
- Supported Decision -Making Agreement Template – <https://valid.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Supported-Decision-Making-Agreement-TEMPLATE-with-EXAMPLE-for-supters.docx>
- <https://www.valid.org.au/ndis-and-making-decisions/>
- <https://www.valid.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NDIS-Making-Decisions-Story-SF-June-2019.pdf>

Links to additional resources:



Helen Sanderson has a great template for decision making agreements. Watch the video at the link below and think about how you can apply it to the people you are supporting.

<http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/person-centred-thinking-tools/decision-making-agreement/>



DFFH have a quick reference guide on Supported Decision Making for disability support workers, you can find it at the link below as well as practical examples.

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-07/Supporting-decision-making-quick-reference-guide.pdf>



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