Supported Decision Making
An Alternative to Guardianship
Learning Objectives

• Coming of age
• What is Supported Decision Making
• How can you support someone to make their own decisions
• Tools and resources
How did we get here?
Coming of Age
We all need help making decisions!

As a large group, discuss the following:

- Big life decisions
- Daily life decisions
Help and Assistance

“Needing assistance means you are a person. Asking for assistance means you are wise.”

(Jonathan Martinis, Legal Director-DC Quality Trust)
Support and Decisions

• We all need support, it just looks different for each of us at different times throughout our life.
Autonomy refers to the right of a person to make informed decisions about what happens to him or her.

– Autonomy is expressed in U.S. federal law as *individual liberty*. 
“Making decisions is central to a person’s autonomy and the essence of what is regarded as personhood, and is a crucial component in enabling an individual to have control over their life and engage with society.”

Supported Decision-Making for Persons with Mental Illness: A Review Soumitra Pathare, MD, Laura S. Shields, MsC, Public Health Reviews, Vol. 34, No 2
Research

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities who do not have a guardian are more likely to:

- Have a paid job
- Live independently
- Have friends
- Go on dates and socialize
- Practice chosen religion

from National Core Indicators 2013-2014
People with greater **self-determination** tend to be:

- Healthier
- More independent
- More motivated
- Better job
- Better able to recognize and resist abuse

*Khemka, Hickson, & Reynolds, 2005; O’Connor & Vallerand, 1994; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998.*
Dignity of Risk
What is SDM?

Values and history
Why is it important (trajectory)
What is Supported Decision Making?

When people receive assistance from one or more trusted friends, family members, professionals or advocates to help them understand the situations they face and choices and options they have, so they can make their own decisions.

Values of Supported Decision Making

• People’s right to choose is presumed
• Person has full control and involvement
• Assistance is available when wanted and needed
• Use guardianship only when absolutely necessary

From National Resource Center for Supported Decision Making
How can you support a student to make their own decisions?
Types of Support

What specific type of support is most useful and when/how?

- Discovery & Navigation (Info and Training)
- Connecting & Networking (Talking to someone that has been there)
- Goods & Services (Day to Day, Medical, Financial Supports)
Buckets of Support

Group brainstorming activity:

Generate creative potential supports using the 3 Buckets!
Student Specific

• How does the student process information?
• How does the student communicate their choices?
• Who is important in the student’s life?
• How does the student ask for help?
• When does the student need help?
Guiding Questions

• What kind of decision is being made?
• Has the student made a similar decision before?
• Has the student been assisted to understand the risks and benefits?
• How big is the impact of this decision in the student’s life?
Guiding Questions

• How long would the person live with the decision?
• How hard would it be to undo?
• What is the least restrictive level of support that might work?
# Charting the LifeCourse

## Tool for Exploring Decision Making Supports

This tool was designed to assist individuals and supporters with exploring decision making support needs for each life domain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Individual:</th>
<th>Name of person completing this form:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Relationship to individual *(circle one)*: Self  Family  Friend  Guardian  Other:  

How long have you known the individual?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For each question below, mark the level of support you need when making and communicating decisions and choices in the Charting the LifeCourse life domains.</th>
<th>I can decide with no extra support</th>
<th>I need support with my decision</th>
<th>I need someone to decide for me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can I decide if or where I want to work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I look for and find a job <em>(read ads, apply, use personal contacts)</em>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I plan what my day will look like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I decide if I want to learn something new and how to best go about that?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Decision Making Profile and Agreement tools
SDM and Legal SDM

• Is it a legal document?
• Is it a process?
• Who can use SDM?
Alternatives to guardianship

**General Supports** – natural, unpaid, and community resources

**Decision-Making Supports** – create legal documents (such as Power of Attorney)

**Money Management Supports** – help manage financial obligations and avoid exploitation

**Personal Safety Supports** – useful for people at risk for being abused/neglected
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