## **Supported Decision-Making**

**An Alternative to Guardianship** 

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is a process that allows individuals with disabilities to make their own choices with help from trusted supporters.

Its purpose is to empower adults with disabilities to have control over their lives while getting the support they need.



Promotes
independence and
self-determination by
keeping control over
their own decisions
instead of having a
guardian make
decisions for them.



Encourages
inclusion in
community life and
can be used in
along with
guardianship,
Power of Attorney
& other documents.



Supports the individual's rights to make decisions about their health, finances and dayto-day decisions.

## How it works in 4 easy steps:



**Pick Supporters** - individuals choose trusted people who can help them when and where they need it.



**Decide How They Help** - define what kind of help is needed, like explaining options or help with communication.



**Make the Decision** - the individual stays in control while their supporters help them.



Make Changes as Needed - the plan can change as the needs of the individual changes over their lifetime.



Hawaii passed a bill in 2025 to allow banks and healthcare providers to recognize SDM agreements.

Scan the QR code for a sample of a Supported Decision-Making agreement from Colorado.

## **Other Alternatives to Guardianship**

A Supported Decision-Making agreement can be one option of an individual's formal and informal choices to make decisions for themselves. Other options can include:

- medical and financial power of attorney
- · ioint bank accounts
- living wills/special needs trusts
- health care surrogacy
- representative payees
- limited guardianship (for health & personal decisions)
- conservatorship (for money & property decisions)

