

About Supported Decision-Making Agreements

A supported decision making agreement (SDMA) is a process initiated by a person with a disability (the focus person) to assist that person with making decisions in one or several key areas of life. The agreement is recorded as a written document. This process ensures the individual's choices are protected but is also mindful of areas of vulnerability. Supported decision-making agreements are tools to strengthen existing relationships and involve others. The existence of this agreement at the very least creates a moral authority and if enough people begin to use them could nudge into the area of legal authority as has happened with living wills. It can also be useful in cases of petitioning for partial guardianship.

Key Components

- Initiated by the person with a disability (called "focus person" by FIF in this document)
- Based on that person's experiences, interests, preferences, and values
- Identifies the individual's communication style
- Is meant to help an individual make a decision or choice, not make it for them
- Documents in writing for others what the decision(s) and preferences are

Three Areas that can be covered by (separate) SDMA's

- Financial/Business
- Health/Medical- if a Healthcare Power of Attorney exists, the SDMA Advisor would logically be the same person (Emergency, and non-emergency)
- Daily living or Personal

What Is The Process?

Identify:

- The Advisors – people playing an advisory role, may be Lifetime Connections personal network members
- Each Advisor's area of responsibility among the three possible areas of agreement
- Who speaks on behalf of the Advisor if s/he is unavailable
- A process by which disagreements will be handled

Draft an agreement:

- The Advisor and focus person can communicate about the content of the agreement and record it on the form.
- The focus person has a responsibility to express their understanding of the agreement and what kind of help they will be receiving from their Advisor because of the agreement.
- The focus person retains the right to retract the agreement at any time
- The focus person has the responsibility to communicate to the Advisor about any concerns that arise in their life that are areas covered by the Agreement

Recommended by FIFNC, appoint a monitor to:

- Ensure the SDMA is working effectively
- Provide a double layer of prevention against abuse and exploitation
- Provide support and assurance to the focus person
- Act as a contact for the focus person and/or the Advisor(s)