Introduction of Panelists:
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What is Supported Decision-Making?
A set of strategies that help individuals with disabilities have more control over their life and future. It involves family and friends' working together with individuals to support them in making complex decisions.

What does Wisconsin’s Supported Decision-Making law do?
- Lets a person with a disability get help making decisions without losing all their rights.
- The person is always in control of their own decisions and their Supported Decision-Making agreement.

Why rethink Guardianship?
It simply does not do what we want it to do!
- Avoid public declaration of incompetency
- Dignity, freedom of choice
- People deal with guardian – not person
- Time and expenses – attorneys, hearings, evaluations
- Courts do not always follow law or family wishes
- Very difficult to change or end
- Attorneys and guardian ad litems may not have much training
- There are no guardian “police” and no evidence guardianships make people safer
What Keeps People Safe?

- Caring and involved family/friends
- Community networks/connections
- Opportunities to Practice And Build Decision-Making Skills

Having Choices is important

- Having choices means having control over your life.
- When you have choices, you feel better and have more control of your life.
- Choosing to do something means taking responsibility for your actions.

Supported Decision-Making Agreements

- ...can be used for any decisions the person needs help with.
- ...are flexible and easily updated.

What Supported Decision-Making agreements do NOT do.

- They do not restrict a Person's rights to make any decisions.
  - You are still in charge of making your own decisions
- It does not give Supporters any new rights to make decisions
  - The Supporter does not have the right to make the decisions for you. The Person makes all their own decisions.
  - Supporters cannot sign legal documents or make any legal agreements for the person.

A person can have someone they trust to help them make decisions. That person is called a “Supporter”

You can have more than one Supporter.

What Does a Supporter Do?

The possible roles of the Supporter are limited to:

1. Helping the person understand their options, understand big words or complicated ideas.
2. Researching information to help you decide.
3. Helping the person understand that information.
4. Helping the person communicate their decision.
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Release forms
• Person signs release forms authorizing a specific person(s) access to certain kinds of records (health, financial, etc.).
• Some release forms may allow a person to select certain records to be released while retaining privacy over others.
• Some release forms may provide one-time or time-limited access to records, others releases may remain in effect in perpetuity.

Supported Decision Making agreements (Wisconsin)
• Person makes all their own decisions. Person identifies area of the life in which they want support, identifies a Supporter(s) to help them gather information, compare options, and communicate their decisions to others.
• The Supported Decision-Making agreement outlines what types of decisions the Person wants support and the role of the Supporter.
• Agreement can be changed or stopped at any time by the Person or Supporter.

Representative payee
The Social Security Administration (SSA) appoints an individual/organization to receive SSI/SSDI benefits for a person who cannot manage or direct the management of their own benefits.
To change a Representative Payee, the Person must complete an application process with the SSA.

Power of Attorney, medical proxy
• Formal legal arrangements that permit others to act on the Person's behalf.
• Powers of Attorney (POA) designate another (a POA) individual to make certain decisions (generally health care or financial) on the Person's behalf. POAs can be set up in different ways. Some POAs are activated only when a person is incapacitated. Or a POA can be written so an individual other than the Person is always the designated decision maker in certain areas.
• Medical Proxy documents appoint a proxy/agent to express a person's wishes and make health care decisions for the person if the person cannot speak for themselves.

Limited or Full Guardianship
• Transfers some or all decision-making authority from the Person to a court-appointed Guardian.
• Once guardianship is granted by the courts it is difficult (and costly) to modify or reverse the guardianship; any changes must be made through a formal court process.

Tell us why you use Supported Decision Making.

How do you make decisions?

What do you think parents worry about when their kids are about to turn 18?

Did your teachers talk to you about guardianship and/or Supported Decision Making?

Tell us about your experience with the actual agreement.
Why was Supported Decision Making the right decision for you?

What do you hope people will take away from this presentation?

Questions?

Supported Decision-Making Resources

• Tool Kit, presentations, information sheets and materials for families: [http://www.wi-bpdd.org/SupportedDecision-Making/](http://www.wi-bpdd.org/SupportedDecision-Making/)

• Supported Decision Making Agreement form: [https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f02377.pdf](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/f02377.pdf)

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