Department of Developmental Disabilities

The ABC's of SDM

Supported Decision-Making Terms, Abbreviations, and Acronyms

A

Assistive Technology (AT)

Any interactive electronic item that can help someone increase or maintain independence, skills, and involvement in the community. There are many ways to use AT, including completing work tasks, communicating with friends, reminders to take medication, etc. AT can be a useful tool in helping a person who uses supported decision-making to manage and implement their choices.

B

Bill of Rights (or DD Bill of Rights)

Passed in 1986 in Ohio, a list of undeniable rights that an individual has, regardless of their developmental disability. There are 25 listed rights, including the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

C

Capacity

The ability to make decisions about one's life. This typically includes understanding relevant information, appreciating the effects of one's acts and decisions, and reasoning through the risks, benefits, and alternatives of the options.

Charting the LifeCourse

A framework designed to support families to maximize their capacity, strengths, and unique abilities to best nurture, love, and support their family member to achieve goals. The LifeCourse Framework operates under the core belief that all people have the right to live, love, work, play, and pursue their life aspirations.

D

Decision Making Plan (or SDM Agreement)

A plan (often written) between the person making the decision and their supporter(s) outlining the areas in which they want support.

Dignity of Risk

All people deserve the opportunity to experience some risks instead of being “protected” from every possible risk. No one can live a life that is free of all risks. In fact, there can be great benefits to facing reasonable risks and learning from the outcomes of those situations.

Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR)

A medical order written by a health care provider that instructs providers not to do CPR if a patient's breathing stops or if the patient's heart stops beating.

E

Emergency Guardianship

A legal process which allows a court to intervene to appoint a guardian for a short and definite period of time. The initial Emergency Guardianship lasts for only 72 hours, but can be extended by the probate court for an additional 30 days after a hearing. An emergency guardian may be appointed if immediate action is required to prevent significant injury to the person or their estate.

Expert Evaluation (EE or Statement of Expert Evaluation)

A document completed by a doctor or other qualified person who will give their professional opinion about whether a person needs a guardian.

G

Guardian

An adult person or organization appointed by a probate court to act on behalf of a person who has been determined by a court to be incompetent.

Guardian of the Person

A guardian with broad authority to make decisions and provide support in most areas of an individual’s life, including but not limited to health care decisions, residential placement decisions, day to day programming decisions and many more. Such decisions would include arrangements for food, clothing, residence, medical care, recreation, education, and other concerns. It also includes medical consents, consents to Individual Service Plans (ISPs), consents to participate in recreational activities like Special Olympics, to have a photo of the individual used, and so on. The vast majority of individuals who have a developmental disability and who need a guardian will only need Guardianship of the Person.

Guardian of the Estate

A guardian with authority to make decisions about a person's finances and property, as well as initiating and defending legal proceedings.

I

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

A tool that schools use to capture supports being provided within the school system for a student with a disability. It provides specialized instruction and related services to meet the unique needs of a child.

Individual Service Plan (ISP)

A document written by the Service and Support Administrator (SSA) or the Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional (QIDP) that is the plan between the person and their provider for the services that will assure the health, safety, and welfare of the individual. This document is to be completed annually and updated as often as needed.

Informed Consent

Permission granted knowing the possible consequences, typically given by a patient to a doctor for treatment with full knowledge of the possible risks and benefits. Informed consent can also apply to non-medical decisions or agreements someone enters into after understanding all relevant facts, including risks involved or alternatives to the decision.

Incompetent

Any person who is so mentally impaired – as a result of a mental or physical illness or disability, as a result of intellectual disability, or as a result of chronic substance abuse – that the person is incapable of taking proper care of the person's self or property, or fails to provide for the person's family or other persons for whom the person is charged by law to provide.
*Note: Other legal definitions apply outside of guardianship, such as in criminal cases.

Interim Guardian

Allows a court to appoint someone on a temporary or interim basis because the former guardian is no longer available. An Interim Guardian can be initially appointed for a period of 15 days, and for good cause the Interim Guardianship may be extended another 30 days.

L

Limited Guardianship

A guardian who has decision-making authority only over a portion of the ward's life. Only certain specific rights are impacted. Some examples include:

- Limited Guardianship for medical purposes only, to provide consent for medical procedures
- Limited Guardianship for placement purposes only
- Limited Guardianship for approving behavior plans and/or psychotropic medications.

Because this is the least restrictive form of guardianship, it should be used whenever possible when some form of guardianship is necessary. Limited Guardianship may also be limited to a time frame (e.g., one year) instead of for a purpose.

Living Will

A type of advance directive that states the specific types of medical care that a person wishes to receive if that person is no longer able to make medical decisions because of a terminal illness or being permanently unconscious. A living will usually has instructions about whether to use certain treatments to help keep a person alive, such as the use of dialysis (kidney) machines, breathing tubes, feeding tubes, and CPR.
*Note: The laws for living wills are different for each state, and not every state allows them.

N

Natural Support

Relationships typically developed in the community that enhance the quality of life for individuals. Natural supports may include family members, friends, neighbors, and others in the community or organizations that serve the general public who provide voluntary support to help a person with a developmental disability.

P

Payee

A representative payee is a person or company appointed by the Social Security Administration, Veterans Administration, or other entity to manage financial benefits for an individual with a disability. A representative payee receives and manages the monthly payments for the benefit of the individual. The representative payee can then pay bills and distribute money for the benefit of the individual. If the beneficiary's needs do not consume the monthly payment, the representative payee saves the money for later use. It is important to note that even if a person is under a guardianship or has appointed a Financial Power of Attorney Agent, a representative payee may still be used. The same person can serve as both guardian or agent and representative payee.

Person with Lived Experience

A person who has knowledge and expertise derived from components of their personal identity and perspective.

Power of Attorney

The authority to act for or on behalf of another person (the "principal") in specified legal, healthcare, or financial matters.

Principal

The person with a disability who makes the decisions with the support of others.

Q

Quality of Life

A person's satisfaction with their life and the many areas that make up their life including hopes, desires, mental and physical well-being.

R

Reasonable Risk

An action or behavior that may involve a level of potential threat or harm deemed appropriate. Reasonable risks may include the types of risks that most people face, or that most people would still choose to face even after considering the potential harm.

Restoration to Competency

The process of having a guardianship terminated based on a determination that the person is not incompetent.

S

Self-Determination

Process of making decisions with independence and free-will that are not unduly influenced by other people.

STABLE Account (or ABLE Account)

A financial account that allows eligible individuals with disabilities to save and invest money without losing eligibility for certain public benefits programs, like Medicaid, SSI, or SSDI.

Successor Guardian

A person appointed by the court to act as a legal guardian when the prior guardian is no longer able to serve as guardian.

Supported Decision-Making

A framework in which individuals seek input from trusted family members, friends, advisors, and supporters to make decisions for themselves. It can be structured with legal documents or occur naturally without any legal documents.

Supporter

A person who assists an individual with a disability in making their own decisions through Supported Decision-Making. A trusted friend, family member, or professional chosen by the individual to help them navigate complex choices.

T

Transition Age

Period of development between age 16-25 when a person goes from being an adolescent to a young adult. Service systems may recognize specific milestones, such as age 16, 18, 21, or 22.

W

Ward (or Person Under Guardianship)

An adult for whom a probate court has appointed a guardian.

Information for this resource was gathered from a variety of sources including: Cuyahoga County Board of DD, Disability Rights Ohio, Miami County Board of DD, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, National MCH Workforce Development Center, Ohio DD Council, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, and the Ohio Department of Medicaid.