



People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) must make many daily and major life decisions, just like people without disabilities.

This can include decisions about buying things they need, managing a budget, and talking with doctors about their health care.

There are many ways people with IDD make decisions, both on their own and with support. But a person's ability to make decisions can change throughout their life.

It is important to have a plan for how decisions are made and to update this plan regularly.

This way, everyone can make the decisions they want.

The Arc's Center for Future Planning has created free resources to help.

Download the free documents below to: [Learn about decision-making options](#) for people with IDD

Understand the [myths and limits of guardianship](#)

Learn how to [make, review, and adjust a decision-making plan](#) throughout a person's life to maximize their ability to make their own decisions



Guardianship Myths

Don't Most People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Need a Guardian?

Though each state creates its own rules for guardianship, there are some general rules:

- To become someone's guardian, you must go to court.
- A judge will decide whether the person can make their own decisions or needs a guardian.
- The judge will decide who the guardian will be and what decisions the guardian will make.

Guardianship can be expensive and time-consuming. It invites the court into the lives of the person with a disability, their family, and caregivers, for as long as the person is under guardianship. Guardianship typically lasts until the person under guardianship dies or has their right to make their own decisions restored. Guardianship can make it harder for a person to learn how to make good decisions on their own.




Future Decisions

Why Should I Plan for Decision-Making in the Future?

Everyone's ability to make decisions changes across a lifetime, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

- Young people can learn to make better decisions as they grow up and no longer need someone to make decisions for them. They make small decisions and then bigger decisions as they learn from the good and bad consequences of their choices.
- As people get older, they may lose the ability to make decisions as well as they used to. People with IDD are at particular risk for dementia and Alzheimer's as they get older. They may need more help from others to make decisions.

People with IDD and their families must plan for those changes, so that decisions can be made, even in a crisis.






Decision-Making Supports

What Supports Are Available To Help People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Make Decisions?

People with IDD have the same right to make decisions about their lives as people without disabilities. It is important to recognize and respect that right.

INDEPENDENT DECISIONS
Most people with IDD make day-to-day decisions on their own without supports. They decide what they want to wear. They decide what they want to eat. They decide where they want to go. They decide who they want to talk to and spend time with.

SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING
Just like people without disabilities, sometimes people with IDD need support to make decisions.

- They may need someone to explain their options.
- They may need someone to explain the good and bad things that can happen when they make a choice.
- They may need help understanding the information that doctors, lawyers, their providers, employers, and others are telling them.
- They may need help communicating what they want to people who don't understand them.