

Supported decision making in action

Jake*, and his Mum Mary, went to his routine dental appointment at the local hospital. When they met the dentist, she asked Mary questions. She asked Mary to sign a surgery consent form on her son's behalf for his upcoming dental surgery. Mary said that Jake needed to make the decision and sign the form. The dentist insisted that the form required a signature that day so the surgery could be booked.

Mary said she and Jake needed time to discuss the form and the reason for signing it. Mary suggested that while the dentist continued her appointments, Jake and Mary could discuss the form while still at the hospital and then they could come back with a decision. The dentist agreed. This gave Jake and Mary the time to discuss the surgery and the information on the form. Mary asked Jake if he would like to speak to his step-brother Rob to talk about it some more. Jake agreed, and Mary used her mobile phone to call Rob. Jake had a further discussion with Rob about the surgery and consequences of having it and not having it. Jake was also reminded about the last time he had dental surgery. After talking to Rob, Jake said "I say yes."

When Jake's dental appointment resumed, Mary said that Jake was ready to sign the form. The dentist asked Jake to confirm. Jake repeated, "I say yes!"

This situation shows that the dentist was surprised that Mary did not have legal authority to make decisions. While the dentist could have allowed the form to be taken away and returned at a later date she did enable the supported decision making process. By carrying on with her next patient she gave Jake and Mary time to undertake a process which enabled Jake to make his decision. The dentist wanted confirmation that Jake had made the decision.

Mary supported Jake to make his own decision by:

- **By being an effective communication partner:** Mary was able to talk about the dental treatment required and what signing the form meant in a way Jake could understand.
- **Linking Jake to another member of his support network:** Mary also gave Jake the opportunity to have further support by asking him if he wanted to speak to Rob and then phoning him.
- **Making Jake's options real:** Jake was reminded of a previous dental surgery experience he'd had, which was similar to the one he was facing.

**Names have been changed.*

supported
decision
making

Let's talk about Supported Decision Making



Office for Disability issues

Te Tari Mō Ngā Take Hauātanga
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

ADL would like to acknowledge our
Conversation Partners:



For more information visit: www.aucklanddisabilitylaw.org.nz

What is supported decision making?

Supported decision making for disabled persons means making your own decisions about your lives. Sometimes you need support to make this happen. Supported decision making assists disabled persons to have control and choice in your lives.

Why is supported decision making important?

Supported decision making is a human right. Successful supported decision making empowers disabled people to have control over their lives, on an equal basis with others. It is consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other human rights conventions. Everyone:

- has the right to make decisions affecting their own lives.
- is entitled to appropriate support when making decisions.

What does supported decision making mean for us?

Supported decision making is a right, and needs to take account of your will and preferences. Sometimes we need support to make decisions. At times others may not agree with your decisions. Information about your options needs to be given to us in a way that we understand, and we need to have ways to communicate which work for us. We might need time to think about the choices, and we should have the opportunity to weigh up the pros and cons before making decisions.

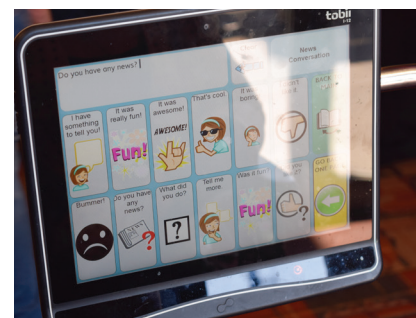
What does supported decision making mean for our whānau/family?

Most whānau/families know and understand their disabled family members' wants and needs. Sometimes whānau/family members need to change their thinking about your ability to make decisions. At times we need to encourage support workers or others to see that we can make decisions, even if this takes a bit more time or patience.

Supported decision making tools

There are a variety of ways and tools to assist supported decision making. These include:

- Circles of support, support networks and effective communication partners.
- Information available in accessible formats, for example, Easy Read, braille or large print.
- Augmentative and alternative communicators (AAC) which are low and hi tech. These include electronic speech generation devices and apps, plus talking mats and other visual aids.
- Time to discuss the options. Time to make the decisions.



AAC device



Talking mat