

NEBRASKA
TRANSITION



Supported Decision Making: Practical Applications

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So What's this all about?

- It all started in 1988....



Erin Phillips: Self Advocate



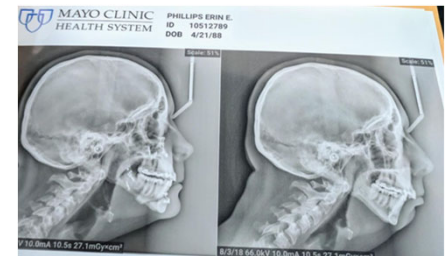


Awards and Accolades



And yet... the rest of her story is...

- Need for support with Financial decision making
- Need for support with Medical decision making
- Need for support with Vocational decision making
- Need for support with ADL's and self cares at times
- Need for support with transportation
- Need for support with coping strategies at times



Our Story - Why did we not seek Guardianship?

- Family Focus - Inclusive practices and community integration
- “Normalcy” - same experiences as other children and adults
- Social Validation of Erin as an individual, a caring person
- Enable Erin to use HER voice to express her desires, wishes, concerns, etc.
- Prepare her for when we are no longer able to support her, not keep her in a state of “perpetual childhood”

Why we set up Supported Decision-Making as an Alternative

Erin gets to keep her rights and her decision-making capacity.

Erin selects supporters who *help* her make *her own* choices.

- Her trusted advisors include friends, family, or professionals to serve as supporters.
- They help her understand, make, and communicate her own choices.
- They coach and explain issues, brainstorm solutions, discuss consequences, and ultimately make sure she is fully aware of her choices.
- They care about her as an individual, and what is in her best interests.



What Barriers Did We Have to Overcome

- Fear of the individual making mistakes.
- Fear of “rocking the boat” - asking for supports based on individual needs
- Belief that we need to “protect” the individual.
- Ignorance - not knowing any other alternatives
- Cultural Norms - we’ve always done it this way



The Tool Available to All

Charting Your Life Course: A Guide for Individuals, Families and Professionals.

Training provided on the DHHS website

Erin's Charting Results: I need support with my decisions
(vs. I can decide with no support or I need someone to decide for me)



We all make mistakes. Mistakes help people learn

People with intellectual disabilities who have more opportunities to make choices make better decisions.

The more someone makes their own decisions, the better they can learn new skills, including problem-solving, goal-setting, and taking more responsibility.

According to the 2010 Department of Health Services Handbook, *Guardianship of Adults*, “We all learn by making mistakes. If a person is denied the right to take risks, he or she is also denied the opportunity to learn and grow.”

Making mistakes prepares us for future decision-making. There is dignity in being able to both succeed and fail, and to learn from our failures.



All people have rights, including those with disabilities

- Have the right to make decisions about things that affect their life.
- Can learn new skills to be more independent over time when they have the right supports.
- Have the right to choose: who will provide their decision-making support, what types of decisions they want support to make, and how this support will be provided.
- Learning is a lifelong process and does not end at age 21.
- People with disabilities can learn new skills to increase their independence throughout their lives.



Benefits to SDM

Supported Decision Making is an **extension of self-determination**:

- Erin gets direct practice in planning for her life which helps her understand natural consequences of her decisions.
- Erin sets goals, and with the support of her team, works to achieve those goals in order to live the most fulfilling life possible.

Studies have found that people who exercise more self-determination are more likely to **live independently**, have **greater financial independence**, be **employed** at higher paying jobs, and **make greater advances** in their employment.

- In addition, **self-determination has been shown as a predictor of post-high school success in employment and independent living**

What does SDM Look Like for Erin

Erin Uses Supported Decision-Making on a daily basis. For example, she talks with family and friends before making big decisions, such as...

- Talking to her support circle about where she wants to live
- Talking to her doctors about medical decisions.
- Talking to her team to help her understand her budget
- Talking to her team about arranging transportation
- Talking to her team about vocational matters



Erin has played important roles as a self advocate

- She started using assistive technology at age 2 to help us understand her wants, needs, and desires.
- She participated in Girl Scouts, 4-H, School clubs with regular peers
- She attended general education classes, with co teachers and modifications throughout her school career
- She applied and interviewed for her job where she has worked the last 12 years with support of a job coach.
- She selects the community based program she wants to attend based on what they could offer her, and changed her mind when that offering was done.
- She is involved with community organizations such as People First of NE, the DD Council, the Arc of Lincoln, the PCP Initiative, etc to advance rights for people with disabilities.
- She has given testimony, with written support, to legislatures on proposed bills that impact lives of people with disabilities.



Final Thoughts

#1: An individualized approach is best

#2: It's really about self determination. Use the Charting Your Life Course curriculum (or similar transition curriculum) to grow independence.

Thank you for having me!

