

Making Supported Decisions Legal

Making an SDMA is valuable in many ways, but “third parties”—doctors, bank officers, landlords, etc.—are still able to ignore the decisions that people with developmental disabilities make. One of SDMNY’s goals has been to show the legislature how, using an SDMA, a person can make decisions with the support of trusted people in their lives, and demonstrate the importance of making their decisions legal—that is, requiring third parties to treat them just as they would treat decisions made by everyone else.

Ten states and the District of Columbia already have “SDMA laws” and we think New York should too, but that it should be a really good law that reflects all SDMNY has learned over the past 5 years. We’ve developed “*Principles for SDMA Legislation*” which have been reviewed by our diverse and expert Advisory Council which, of course, includes Decision-Makers and other self-advocates. We got more input from 6 focus groups of parents around the state, and six more focus groups of self-advocates and people with developmental disabilities. So many people have contributed to this effort, and now ***we’re going live!***



Self-Advocates’ Panel on the Principles at the SDMNY Advisory Council Conference, November 2020

Two versions of the *Principles* are now on our website—a “short version,” and one with commentary. What makes them special, and different from the laws in other states, is that in order to make third parties accept decisions made with SDMAs, there needs to have been a process—like SDMNY’s 3-phase facilitation process—by which the SDMA was made. We’re looking forward to educating legislators and policy makers about what we have learned from the hard work of all our Decision-Makers, their supporters and facilitators.

You can watch self-advocates talk about SDM and the *Principles* [here](#), or read either version of the *Principles* [here](#).