



For Immediate Release

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The Arc Wisconsin Says State's Supported Decision-Making Law to Be Among First in the Nation

Madison, WI – When Governor Walker puts pen to paper on Monday, April 16 to sign Wisconsin's Supported Decision-Making Bill ([AB 655](#)) into law, Wisconsin will become just the third state in the nation to provide this important alternative to guardianship for people with disabilities and older adults.¹

[The Arc Wisconsin](#) worked closely with Wisconsin BPDD, Disability Rights Wisconsin and the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) to advocate for the new law which lets older adults and people with disabilities keep control over their life decisions and choose to have trusted people provide them with the support they need in areas like finances, housing and health care.

“Supported Decision-Making doesn't replace Wisconsin's guardianship system, but is another option for people and families,” says Lisa Pugh, Executive Director of The Arc Wisconsin. “Many families of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities feel pressured to choose guardianship when their son or daughter turns 18. Supported Decision-Making now will give people more autonomy and allow them to grow in their decision-making skills, just like we all do.”

What the Wisconsin Supported Decision-Making Law Does:

- Defines Supported Decision-Making as: “a process of supporting and accommodating an adult with a functional impairment to enable the adult to make life decisions, including decisions related to where the adult wants to live, the services, supports, and medical

¹ Texas and Delaware currently have Supported Decision-Making laws.

care the adult wants to receive, whom the adult wants to live with, and where the adult wants to work, without impeding the self-determination of the adult.”

- Allows a person with a functional impairment (who could be a person with disabilities or older adult who needs help with decision-making) to enter into a formal agreement with a “supporter”.
- Provides the outline of a form that will become a recognized Supported Decision-Making Agreement. Forms will be made available by the Department of Health Services.
- Ensures that the person with a disability or older adult retains all decision-making rights and authority.
- Allows the person with a disability or older adult to create Supported Decision-Making Agreements with multiple qualified individuals who they choose to help them to understand information, communicate their decisions or ask questions on their behalf. A supporter may only act in areas outlined in the Agreement.
- Includes provisions that protect a person from inappropriate actions by the Supporter or misuse of the Supported Decision-Making Agreement.
- Requires judges to consider whether Supported Decision-Making has been attempted for an individual prior to granting guardianship.
- Requires schools to talk to parents about supported decision-making as an alternative to guardianship.

Want to learn more about Supported Decision-Making and Wisconsin’s new Law?

- Register for The Arc Wisconsin’s May 21 webinar:
<https://arcwi.org/2017/10/30/supported-decision-making-hear-exciting-new-legislation-wisconsin/>
- Watch [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBNL_R4sJPo&feature=youtu.be) produced by The Arc:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBNL_R4sJPo&feature=youtu.be

The Arc Wisconsin advocates for and serves people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc Wisconsin has 15 local chapters and is connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.

Editor’s Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.

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