



GUARDIANSHIP AND ALTERNATIVE MODELS: DECISION-MAKING WITH YOUR LOVED ONE IN MIND

RESOURCE GUIDE



About NTCN

The Northeast Transition Collaborative Network (NTCN) was created in response to gaps in communication and collaboration between school districts, agencies/providers, young adults, parents/caregivers, and community groups. NTCN hosts monthly virtual sessions about adult services and opportunities in the community as well as quarterly professional development opportunities for educators on topics related to person-centered transition, and workshops for families/caretakers around the person-centered planning process.

About This Guide

This guide was created by the Community Resource Center at Northeast Arc. We recognize that not every program on this topic may have been highlighted here. Services and programs are constantly changing. This is meant as an overview of services available to people in Northeastern Massachusetts. We may update these resource guides periodically; if you know of a resource that can be highlighted here, please reach out to us at CommunityResourceCenter@ne-arc.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Guardianship Information & Forms.....2**
- Alternatives to Guardianship Information.....3**
- Alternatives to Guardianship Forms.....4**
- Supports/Guidance.....4**
- Personal Stories & Advocacy.....5**
- Advocacy Tools/Tools for Person Centered Planning.....6**



Guardianship Information

Get The Facts #2: Decision Making Supports

https://employmentfirstma.org/files/getfacts_issue2_F.pdf

A visual created by the Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment of options for decision-making supports (including full guardianship), listed in order of autonomy available to the individual.

Guardianship & Conservatorship of Incapacitated Persons

<https://www.mass.gov/guardianship-conservatorship-of-incapacitated-persons>

Information on who can become a guardian of an incapacitated adult and the guardianship process.

Guardianship Myths

<https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guardianship-Myths-Center-for-Future-Planning-1.pdf>

The Arc's Center for Future Planning goes through 5 myths related to guardianship for individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities.

Massachusetts Guardianship Association

<https://www.massguardianshipassociation.org/>

The Administration for Community Living provides information on formal and informal alternatives to guardianship to support loved one(s) finance and medical needs.

Guardianship Forms/Paperwork

Forms for Guardianship of Adults & Conservatorship

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/additional-resources-about-guardianship-of-incapacitated-persons#forms-for-guardianship-of-adults-&-conservatorship->

The forms, resources, and rules about guardianship. Information and paperwork related includes paperwork for guardianship, changes in guardianship, and rules on guardianship between states.

Probate & Family Court Forms for Guardianship and Conservatorship

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/probate-family-court-forms-for-guardianship-and-conservatorship>

This website provides a list of guardianship and conservatorship legal forms for cases in Probate and Family.

Guardianship Checklist

<https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/mgh/pdf/children/down-syndrome-guardianship-packet.pdf>

The MGH Down Syndrome Program's informational checklist of the steps to guardianship including frequently asked questions and responses.



Alternatives to Guardianship Information

Alternatives to Guardianship

<https://acl.gov/programs/empowering-advocacy/alternatives-guardianship>

The Administration for Community Living provides information on formal and informal alternatives to guardianship to support loved one(s) finance and medical needs.

Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice

<https://youth-voice.org/>

The Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice is a national resource center for youth with disabilities. The Center does research, advocacy, and teaches about alternatives to guardianship (A2G). Their website provides resources for self-advocates and youth, parents/caregivers, and educators/professionals. Examples of resources provided are: information on alternatives to guardianship, personal example narratives, and research articles.

OUR PRESENTER

Disability Law Center's - Alternatives to Guardianship and Guardianship

<https://www.dlc-ma.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Alternatives-to-Guardianship-and-Guardianship.pdf>

This document from the Disability Law Center outlines the definition of Guardianship and what alternatives exist (health care proxies, durable power of attorney, etc.).

Get The Facts #2: Decision Making Supports

https://employmentfirstma.org/files/getfacts_issue2_F.pdf

A visual created by the Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment of options for decision-making supports (including full guardianship), listed in order of autonomy available to the individual.

Guardianship Alternatives and Transfer-of-Rights (GATOR)

<https://gator.communityinclusion.org/>

Publications and resources to support families and educators in understanding of what to expect when their loved one turns 18 (age of majority), how to plan for, and support their loved ones.

Transition Talks Workshop: A Comprehensive Guide to Guardianship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrYVfV7sQQ4>

A presentation done by Perkins Transition Center's Ann Phelan and Attorneys Fred Misilo and Anne E. Grenier from Fletcher Tilton, PC, Attorneys at Law. The presentation provided information on guardianship, and alternatives to guardianship such as supported decision making, durable power of attorney, representative payee, conservatorship, and shared educational decision-making.



Alternatives to Guardianship Forms/Paperwork

Court Supported Decision Making Agreement Form & Instructions

<https://supporteddecisions.org/getting-started-with-supported-decision-making/sdm-agreement-form/>

A Supported Decision-Making Agreement form created by the Center for Public Representation.

Healthcare Proxy Form

<https://www.honoringchoicesmass.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Health-Care-Proxy-Instructions-Documents-ENGLISH-2025-09-01.pdf>

The form includes directions on information to fill out and who to give it to when it is completed.

Supports/Guidance

Lurie Center for Autism

<https://www.massgeneral.org/children/autism/lurie-center>

The Lurie Center for Autism offers caregiver workshops related to guardianship to help support caregivers going through the guardianship process and keeping up to date on paperwork. The website provides information on the different workshops available, cost, and frequency offered.

Ombudsman Service Program (OSP)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ombudsman-service-program-osp>

The Ombudsman Service Program (OSP) is a service of the Office of Adult Guardianship and Conservatorship Oversight (OAGCO) that assists the public with questions related to guardianship and conservatorship of adults.

Orientation Program Training Modules for Guardians and Conservators

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/orientation-program-training-modules-for-guardians-and-conservators-of-adults>

The Office of Adult Guardianship and Conservatorship Oversight (OAGCO) has developed an online orientation program to assist guardians and conservators of adults. This program is free and reviews the expectations, ongoing paperwork for guardians/conservators, and the alternatives to guardianship. The series has 9 training modules, each under 15 minutes.

Probate & Family Court Lawyer for the Day Programs

<https://www.mass.gov/location-details/essex-probate-and-family-court-lawyer-for-the-day>

<https://www.mass.gov/location-details/middlesex-probate-and-family-court-lawyer-for-the-day>

Probate and Family Courts in Essex County and Middlesex County offer the opportunity for people to receive basic legal advice, help with understanding laws and rights, and assistance with filling out forms.



Personal Stories & Advocacy

“Alternatives to Guardianship” by Kim Plaut

<https://www.wearemass.org/mass-blog/alternatives-to-guardianship-by-kim-plaut>

Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) Board member Kim Plaut wrote the following paper promoting Supported Decision Making (SDM) and considerations for less restrictive decision making options.

Alternatives To Guardianship Videos created by the Center for Family Involvement

https://supporteddecisionmaking.org/resource_library/video-alternatives-to-guardianship/

The Benefits of Guardianship: Rita’s Story

<https://guardianship.institute/ritas-story/>

Read about Rita's story and how her appointed guardian advocated for her health, allowing her to continue living in her own apartment.

Decision-Making

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBNL_R4sJPo

A video by the Arc of Massachusetts on decision making that encourages young adults to think about what decisions they would like to take and may need support on.

Gabby’s Story: Supported Decision-Making

https://youtu.be/duyJkZ2mIQ?si=w9gTPuQDik8NX_tm

This film uses Gabby’s story to illustrate the benefits of the strategy, both in the decision making process and as a way to maintain personal autonomy.

Supported Decision-Making Stories

<https://supporteddecisions.org/stories-of-supported-decision-making/>

Read stories from individuals from across the state of Massachusetts about how they have been able to thrive with the supported decision-making model and the independence it allows for them to have.



Advocacy Tools/Tools for Person Centered Planning

Charting the LifeCourse: Decision Making

<https://lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/supported-decision-making/>

Charting the LifeCourse materials related to decision making. The materials/worksheets are designed to help a person, family, or a professional explore areas where any person might need decision making support, plan for what it looks like and how it can happen, and seek out the needed supports.

Tool for Exploring Decision Making Supports-Explore the areas of life where people make choices and decisions, and decide when and how much support might be needed for making and communicating decisions. The tool helps create a trajectory Supported Decision-Making-Organize and express a vision for decision making, as well as what is not wanted.

Future Decisions Guide from The Arc's Center for Future Planning

<https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Future-Decision-Center-for-Future-Planning.pdf>

Information on why planning for the future is important, decision making options, and steps to take in the planning process.

LetMeDoIT App

<https://letmedoit.org/>

LetMeDoIT breaks down complex decisions into simple, accessible steps, providing personalized tools and networks that respect each individual's needs. The app assists in empowering self-reliance and keeping caregivers informed without taking control.

Making My Own Healthcare Decisions -A Letter to My Doctors

<https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Making-My-Own-Health-Care-Decisions--A-Letter-for-to-My-Doctors.pdf>

A template of a letter that can be used to give to doctor's with information from the patient on decisions they will make, supporters may participate in and their needs as a patient.

Supported Decision Making Toolkit

https://drcnh.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-DRC-NH_SDM_toolkit-webF.pdf

A workbook to guide individuals and caregivers through supported decision making and how to plan for it with their loved one at the forefront.

Supported Decision Making Advocacy by Self-Advocates in Massachusetts

<https://www.wearemass.org/supported-decision-making>

Information from self-advocates from Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) on the advocacy they have done related to Supportive Decision Making.

Supported Decision-Making in Health Care Settings – Webinar from the Arc of Massachusetts

<https://youtu.be/vyWYMwyFe0>

A webinar presented by the Center for Public Representation and hosted by The Arc of Massachusetts, gives a simple overview of supported decision-making. It explains the benefits and challenges of using this approach in health care, reviews legal issues such as health care proxies and related tools, addresses concerns raised by medical professionals, and shares strategies for effectively supporting decision-making in health care settings.