

Living In  
Friendship  
Everyday Inc.

# Connections Newsletter

Fall Issue  
September 2010

## Supported Decision Making

### Welcome

Hello everyone and welcome back to another fall with LIFE! The summer has flown by and we continue to hear lots of wonderful stories of holidays, barbecues, parties and just plain play and relaxation.

Our staff team has been busy planning for the next year. In our last newsletter we talked about succession planning for Support Networks and how important it is to sustaining strong networks. In this newsletter, we are going to focus on **Supported Decision Making**. I'm sure that everyone has heard that term before because it is an integral part of the In the Company of Friends philosophy, but do we really understand what it means? In this newsletter we will explore some of the fundamental pieces of Supported Decision Making. Here is a quick story:

*We, meaning Support Network members are supporting our friend to purchase a new computer. One of us is taking her shopping—we have asked her what she wants the computer for (recipes, email and games!) so that she can find the best one to suit her needs. We made sure she has a clear understanding of her budget so she could decide how much she wants to spend. Does that still leave enough money for Christmas presents? Moose games? Girls night out? With support, she has called to find out what the monthly costs will be for the internet. Finally, she is ready to move forward with her purchase—She knows what she wants the computer for, how it will impact her savings and monthly budget and who will help her to purchase! Time to shop!*

Did you know that this is an example of Supported Decision Making? It is such an important concept that it is part of the Vulnerable Persons' Act. It says:

*Supported Decision Making refers to the process whereby a vulnerable person is enabled to make and communicate decisions with respect to personal care for his or her property and in which advice, support or assistance is provided to the vulnerable person by members of his or her support network.*

### Supported Decision Making and ICOF

Supported Decision Making is the foundation of ICOF. Each participant receives his/her funding each month and has many decisions to make about who to hire, what to ask them to do, how to supervise, how to budget, what to have for lunch and how to save up for something. There are dozens of decisions that need to be made when a person is self-directing and managing his/her life each and every day.

The challenge is that most people who receive ICOF funding do not have much experience with decision making.

In ICOF, Support Networks are there to provide the guidance and assistance to the individual. They put the "support" into Supported Decision Making.

We know that:

- People receiving ICOF funding will need a lot of support and time and patience to begin learning to make decisions.
- Some Support Network members have always made decisions for people and they have never had to step back and help people actually make decisions for themselves.

**Both the participant and his/her Support Network will need to learn, practice and gain experience and skills in how to truly understand and follow the principles of supported decision making.**

# Who does Supported Decision Making?

Supported Decision Making isn't just for individuals with an intellectual disability? In ICOF, the focus around Supported Decision Making is on people with intellectual disabilities, but Supported Decision Making also applies to all of us.

## Decision Making Involves Enrolling People that we Trust

Although it may appear that we make choices alone, the fact is we do not! We seek advice and information from other people and resources that we know and trust. How often do we listen to the weather report before we choose our outfit for the day? How often do we ask a friend or family member when we are making a large purchase or decision?

We all ask for help, support and advice from others when making a decision. We talk to family and friends and sometimes we pay other people such as lawyers, financial advisors or accountants to help us make decisions. With most people, Supported Decision Making is informal and just part of making decisions.



For people receiving ICOF funding, Supported Decision Making needs to be a more intentional and deliberate tool.

## How do we make Decisions?

Everyone has their own way of making decisions. Some of us make decisions quickly, some procrastinate and some only decide what to do at the last minute. Others seek out advice from many people and there are some, who never ask for advice. Some leave it to chance. In reality, we probably use a combination of these. There is no one way or "right" way to make decisions.

Support Network members must learn how the person they support makes decisions and work at that pace. In addition, they must identify how the individuals on the network each make decisions and then how the group as a whole will do it!

In starting to think of this process more intentionally, that might be a good starting place for each participant and network member. Here are some things to think and talk about together:

- **How does each person make decisions and how does the group as a whole work together?**
- **What happens if the decision that the participant makes is not one that everyone agrees with?**
- **What happens if there is disagreement between network members?**
- **How will decisions be made? Will a vote be taken and the majority will rule or will there be a consensus?**

## There are four essential components of the Supported Decision Process. They are:

1. The decision making process
2. The relationship between the decision maker and whoever is supporting them
3. Values and principles of supported decision making (the most important)
4. The decision

### Capacity should always be assumed.

Start with the belief that the participant is able to begin making decisions every day.

The steps in the **decision making process** include:

- **Identifying what decision needs to be made**
- **Listing the possible choices**
- **Getting any information needed to make the decision**
- **Considering the pros and cons of each choice**
- **Making the decision**
- **Evaluating the results of what was decided**

The **relationship** when someone helps another make decisions must be based on **respect** for that person and his/her values and wishes.

The **values and principles** of Supported Decision Making means that the person providing support believes in the following:

- **The value of making the person - center of the process**
- **The value of being chosen to support an individual**
- **That decision making is a process, not an outcome**
- **That the right to make decisions is not limited by disability, but is a fundamental human right**
- **That the right to make decisions includes the right to supports**
- **That we have a duty to help people achieve goals**
- **That Supported Decision Making is based on relationships of trust**
- **That we move away from the concept that there is a “perfect choice or answer”**
- **That we support a process where people come to their own conclusions, even when we don't fully agree**

## Risks and Benefits

As with anything in life there are risks and benefits to Supported Decision Making. Supported Decision Making looks at risks, failures and mistakes as part of life and as learning opportunities. Individuals benefit by assuring their rights and becoming more self determining. Families, friends and caregivers benefit by seeing the individual that they care for taking some control and having greater opportunity for success.

Supporting people to make decisions may be one of the most challenging issues for Support Network members and families in particular. No one wants to see an individual in a risky situation but the reality is it is part of life. What's important is when an ICOF participant makes a poor decision, the Support Network is there to help him/her pull themselves back up, step back and think about it and most importantly use it to learn and grow in confidence and competence. Maybe next time a better decision will be made!

There is an exception to think about. There are some decisions that people might make that may be just too dangerous or risky. It's important that the Support Network and participant talk in advance of how that will be handled. If a participant chooses to put his/her hand on a hot element, it would be silly to think about Supported Decision Making. We would respond as we would respond to anyone who might be hurting them self or others. But remember, there is a difference between making bad decisions and making decisions that may hurt the participant or someone else. Let's start by focusing on the dozens of smaller decisions that people need to make every day that will not cause bodily harm but will start the ball rolling.

**The ultimate benefit of Supported Decision Making is participants have the opportunity to learn how to live their lives the way they want and what can be better than that!**



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Providing Resources  
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# LIFE



## News from the Board of Directors

Congratulations to Clare Simpson, the Chairperson of the Board of LIFE for receiving an outstanding achievement award in her long time work in the disability movement. Clare has been an advocate and strong voice in the disability movement in Manitoba and across Canada and we are proud that she has been singled out and acknowledged officially. The Honourable Jennifer Howard, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities presented Clare with a plaque and a gift during Access Awareness Week. The presentation was made at the Manitoba Legislative Building.



LIFE Board President—Clare Simpson (left)  
The Honourable Minister Jennifer Howard (right)

## LIFE would like to welcome to the Board

Pat Gouldie and Gail Eichler

### Gail Eichler

Gail is a founding member of Teulon and Area Advocates for Active Living Inc. (1991), having served as a chairperson, treasurer and presently secretary. The advocacy group has brought key issues forward in her community over the years and facilitated community awareness events.

Gail and her husband Ralph have raised three children and currently reside in Teulon. One of their sons is an ICOF participant.

Gail's youngest son is a participant of In the Company of Friends.

### Pat Gouldie

Pat has been a volunteer advocate for 31 years starting with her work as a founding parent of Beginnings Preschool in 1979, followed by 25 years on the Community Living Brandon—Board of Directors as well as serving as Executive Director of ACL Brandon.

Pat and her husband Bob have raised three sons in Brandon.

Pat is the Mother of a participant of In the Company of Friends and is a Support Network member for her son.



## Halloween and Scrapbook Supplies for a smile!

We have a variety of Halloween and scrapbook supplies in our office that we are giving away and all you need to do is smile!

If you are interested, please contact Lauren @772-3557 or toll free 1-866-516-5445.

LIFE's AGM will take place on:

**Saturday,**

**June 4, 2011**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

