



SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING AND EMERGENCY PLANNING



In Case of an Emergency...

How will you connect with your doctors, case managers, and other people you depend on?

What will you do in blizzard or hurricane?

What if your power goes out for days?

What if you're stuck in your home or have to leave it and go to a shelter?

How will you make sure you have the medicine and supplies you need?



In the last few years, Connecticut has had nor'easters, hurricanes, ice storms, floods, fires and power outages. Some people lost their homes and cars and had to evacuate to shelters. Others had trouble finding food and medicine.

If you have disabilities, emergencies can be even harder. You may need help finding a place that is accessible to you or where you can use your equipment. You may have trouble getting the health care and personal support you need.

The next emergency can come at any time. In this brochure, we'll show you how you can use Supported Decision Making to make a plan to keep you as safe and healthy as possible when it does.

Supported Decision Making (SDM) is getting help when you need it, from people you choose, so you can make your own decisions¹. That's how we all make decisions.

EVERYONE.

Think about what you do when you need to make a tough choice, or a decision about something you don't know a lot about, or just want to "talk it out." You may ask a friend for advice or a professional for information, or you may have "go-to" people you talk to about specific things. They help you "think through" the issues and discuss the "pros and cons" of your choices. That way, you can understand your options and choose the one that's best for you. When you do that, you're using SDM. People give you support, so you can decide. That's it. People with disabilities use SDM, too!

SDM can help you make more decisions and be more in control of your life — more self-determined. It's good to be self-determined and it's good for you! Studies show that when people with disabilities are more self-determined, they have better lives: they're more likely to be healthy, independent, and safe.² So, SDM can help you live your best, healthiest life!

Using Supported Decision Making to make Emergency Plans³

Emergencies can be scary and confusing. Your power and telephone service may be out. Roads may be flooded or blocked. You may need to leave your home in a hurry and go somewhere you've never been for shelter, food, and health care. Those are things you can't control. But, you can use SDM to make a plan for what to do in an emergency. Here are some things you can do and ways you can use SDM to get ready for emergencies.

Make a List of what you Need in an Emergency

First, think about what you'll need to get through an emergency. What are things you absolutely must have to get by in your home or if you have to evacuate to a different location.

We recommend that you use SDM with people you trust to make a list of things you need to stay healthy and safe. This could include:



Food and bottled water to last at least a week



A charger and battery pack for your cell phone, if you have one



A radio and batteries so you can listen for news updates



A first aid kit



Any assistive technology or equipment you need, like a wheelchair, glasses, hearing aid, or communication devices, and supplies like batteries to keep them working



Your medicine and a list of the medicines you take, what you take them for, how much you take, and how you can get refills



Supplies for your service animal, if you have one, for at least a week



A copy of your identification and insurance cards

Once you've made your list, make sure that you have those things in your home at all times. That way, you'll have what you need in an emergency and can get by in your home until it is safe.



Make a List of your Supporters

Your supporters are people you trust, who help you live your best and healthiest life. They can be family, friends, neighbors, or professionals you work with like doctors, case managers, counselors, job coaches, or personal care attendants.

We recommend that you use SDM with your supporters to make a list of who they are, how they help you, and how you can reach them in an emergency.

For example: your doctors provide medical care and prescribe your medication. Your friends and family members help you do things in the community and in your day-to-day life. Your personal care attendant helps you take care of yourself around the house and in the community. Your case manager helps you set up and access supports.

Your list should include their name, address, telephone number, cell phone number and email.

For example, a person's list might look like this for her doctor and personal care attendant:

Dr. Jane Smith

Gives me medical care and prescribes my medicine

Address: 555 Main Street, New Haven, CT.

Email: JaneSmith@DrSmith.com

Office phone: 555-555-5555

Cell phone: 333-333-3333

Thomas Jones, Personal Care Attendant

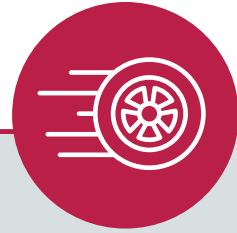
Helps me take care of myself in my home and in the community

Address: 111 South Street, Stamford, CT.

Email: TommyJones@email.com

Office phone: 555-444-3333

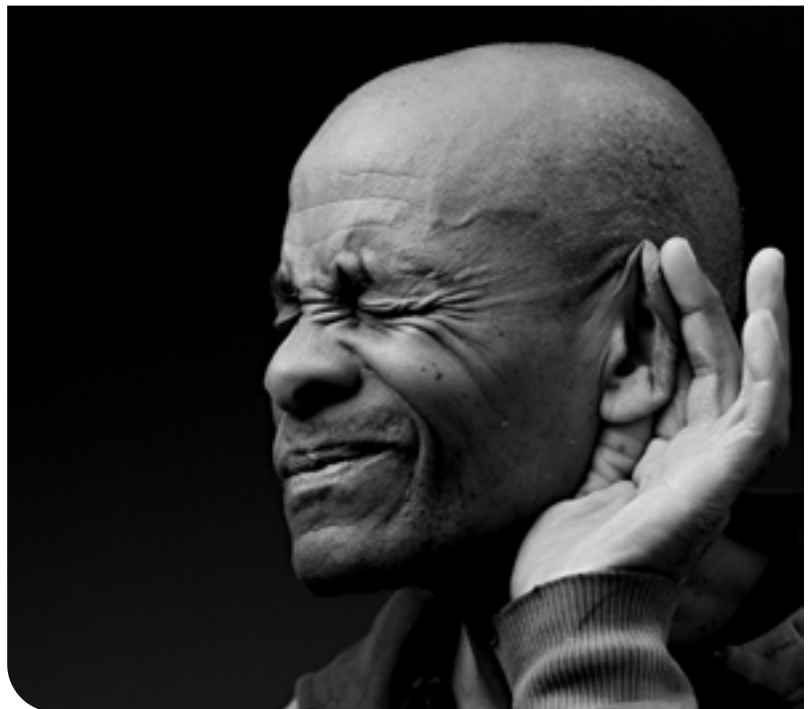
Cell Phone: 444-333-2222



Setting the Wheels in Motion

The “Setting the Wheels in Motion” guide⁴ has worksheets that can help you make your list by thinking about the kinds of help you want, when you want it, and who you want to help you. The guide was designed to help parents work with their children with disabilities, but you can also use it to work with the people in your life.

When you are planning your budget, your supporters can help you plan for an emergency including thinking about what to buy have ready for an emergency and setting aside some money in your budget to keep in case of emergency.



Make a “Go Bag”

In an emergency, you may have to leave your home in a hurry and go to a shelter or somewhere else. To prepare for those times, you should pack a bag or suitcase you can take with you that has the things that are the most important for your health and safety. We call this a Go Bag.

This is another time to use SDM. Talk to your supporters about what you should have in your Go Bag. Your doctor can tell you the most important medications you take and might give you an extra prescription for emergencies. Your counselors or case managers can help you make a list of the things you need to stay in touch with them, like an extra cell phone battery pack or a list of people you can contact.

We recommend that your Go Bag have, at least:

- ✓ **Your medications and a list describing what they’re for and how you can refill them in an emergency if you can’t reach your doctor**
- ✓ **A copy of your insurance card and identification material like a driver’s license or some other form of ID**
- ✓ **The list you made of your supporters and how to contact them**
- ✓ **The list you made of the things you need for your health and safety**
- ✓ **Communication devices, if you use them**
- ✓ **Extra hearing aids, batteries, and glasses, if you use them**
- ✓ **An extra cell phone charger or battery pack, if you use one**
- ✓ **Some cash or credit cards. Your supporters can help you decide how much you should have in case of an emergency**
- ✓ **Extra clothes and personal hygiene supplies**

- ✓ Supplies for your service animal, if you have one
- ✓ Be sure to place items in waterproof bags to protect them - items such as batteries and paperwork

After you've worked with your supporters to make the list of what you need for your Go Bag, make sure you have those things in your home either packed or kept in a place where you can pack them in a hurry. Also, you should review what you need for your Go Bag at least once a year to make sure you always have what you need.



Make an Emergency Plan and Practice It!

As we said, emergencies are confusing and scary times when it may be hard to think or figure out what to do. That's why you should make a plan for emergencies and practice it with your supporters.

You can use SDM to talk with your supporters about what they will do to help you in an emergency and how you'll be able to contact them. You should also work with them to develop back-up plans to make sure you'll be able to get what you need for your health and safety if you can't get in touch with them. For example, ask your doctors for the name and telephone number of another doctor in case you can't reach them and need a refill of your medicine.

We recommend that you include the following things in your Emergency Plan:

- 1** Where you will go in an emergency and how you can get there
- 2** What you will take with you
- 3** The place where you and your supporters will meet in an emergency. If you're not able to go there, how you'll contact your supporters to tell them where you are and to find out where they are
- 4** How you'll make sure your supporters have up-to-date versions of the lists you made of the things you need and the contact information for your other supporters
- 5** The names and contact information of people you can contact for support if you can't reach your supporters
- 6** A list of the things you'll need if you have to evacuate to a shelter and where you keep them or can find them. Be sure you understand your rights as a person with a disability in a shelter

7 How you'll get medicine, food, and other supplies while you're out of your home.

8 How you can take care of your service animal, if you have one, while you're out of your home.

Once you've developed your Emergency Plan, practice it! Work with your supporters to set up "dry runs" where you pretend it's an emergency and you have to go to a shelter, or you're stuck in your home. Make sure you have the supplies for your Go Bag and practice packing it. Review the list of the things you need to confirm that it's up to date and that you or your supporters have them.

We recommend that you practice your Emergency Plan regularly and take part in any emergency exercises in your community. You should also review your Plan and update it whenever you've had a change in your life or health. That way, when the next emergency happens, you'll know that your information is up to date and that you and your supporters know what to do and how to do it!



Learn About and Contact Emergency Services in Advance

In an emergency, first responders will be very busy rescuing and helping people. Shelter staff and volunteers will be setting up and making sure they have supplies. Paramedics and hospitals will be working overtime to take care of people. So, they may not have the time to learn the best ways to support you.

Therefore, we recommend that you use SDM to learn about and reach out to emergency workers in advance to make sure they know who you are, what you need, and the best ways to work with them. You can enter your name into your area's Special Needs Registry at https://www.211ct.org/search?terms=Special%20Needs%20Registries&page=1&location=Connecticut&taxonomy_code=6436&service_area=connecticut to let first responders know about you and the supports and services you'll need in an emergency.

We also recommend you contact your local fire department, ambulance services, and the Red Cross. You can find the Red Cross serving your area here: <https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html>. If you need accessible transportation or have a service animal, let them know. Give them the lists of your supporters and the things you need in an emergency.

Finally, you should learn about and plan to use the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Case Management Program. When the President declares that an area has been in a disaster, the program helps people in those areas work with case managers to set up a recovery plan. You can learn more about the Program here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnjmTi0LC7o>





We Can Help!

Wherever you are on your SDM journey, whether you're just gathering information or you're ready to write a plan, we can answer your questions or connect you with people and organizations that may be able to help. Feel free to contact us at: info@ctsilc.org or visit ctsilc.org

References

This brochure was adapted, with permission, from material published by the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council. This document was developed in partnership with Jonathan Gerald Martinis, LLC (jgmartinisllc@gmail.com).

¹Blanck, P. & Martinis, J. (2015). "The right to make choices": The national resource center for supported decision making. *Inclusion* 3(1), 24-33.

²e.g. Wehmeyer, M.L., & Schwartz, M, (1997). Self-determination and positive adult outcomes: A follow-up study of youth with mental retardation or learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63(2), 245-255; Wehmeyer, M. L., & Palmer, S. B. (2003). Adult outcomes for students with cognitive disabilities three-years after high school: The impact of self-determination. *Education & Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 38(2), 131-144; Khemka, I., Hickson, L., & Reynolds, G. (2005). Evaluation of a decision-making curriculum designed to empower women with mental retardation to resist abuse. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 110(3), 193-204.

³There are many guides that can help you prepare for an emergency. These include:

- 2-1-1- of Connecticut (n.d.). Emergency/Disaster preparedness guide. Retrieved from: <https://uwc.211ct.org/emergency-preparednessdisaster-preparedness/#:~:text=If%20you%20have%20immediate%20needs,informed%20and%20have%20a%20plan>
- Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council. (n.d.) Preparedness begins with you. Retrieved from: <https://moddcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Preparedness-Begins-with-You.pdf>
- FEMA. (n.d.) Preparing for disaster for people with disabilities and special needs. Retrieved from: https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/Preparedness___Disaster_Recovery/General_Preparedness___Recovery/Home/A4497.pdf
- American Red Cross. (n.d.) Disaster safety for people with disabilities. Retrieved from: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/inclusive-preparedness-resources.html?srltid=AfmBOor738o3oWrIbqGGPDD6cwRtsAHSkizvMLZaLzECCTejToqosvP>

⁴Francisco, S. & Martinis, J. (n.d.) Supported decision making teams: Setting the wheels in motion. Retrieved from: <https://supportmydecision.org/assets/tools/Supported-Decision-Making-Teams-Setting-the-Wheels-in-Motion.pdf>

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**SUPPORTED DECISION
MAKING COALITION •
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