

## Decision Making

This brochure will help you learn about being a substitute decision maker (SDM).

A substitute decision maker is a person who makes health care decisions for a patient when they cannot. Patients can appoint a proxy to make decisions for them when they are not able to and create a Health Care Directive (HCD) to let people know their wishes and inform SDM decisions.

If a patient cannot speak for themselves, Saskatchewan law says decisions will be made for you by the following:

- a proxy you have appointed;
- if a proxy is not appointed, but there is a legal guardian, they become SDM;
- if no proxy or personal guardian exist, your nearest relative becomes the SDM; and
- if none of the above, two health care professionals can make the healthcare decision.

## Types of Decisions

No one can predict the future. As a SDM, you have an **important role** in making health care decisions for the person you are speaking for when they are too sick or hurt to speak for themselves.

Their written instructions in their health care directive might not include everything that might happen to them. But, as their SDM, you will know their values, what is important to them, and be able to tell the health care team what they would want.

**You are their voice when they cannot speak for themselves.**



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**Just because we can does not mean we should.**

**Aggressive treatment is not always best.**

**It is good to make decisions that will not make your person feel worse.**

**Always use the health care directive as a guide**



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The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.



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*Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan*



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## Being a Substitute Decision Maker (SDM)



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## Joys and Values

What we value is seen in what makes us happy, what is important to us, and brings us joy.

Think about what makes the person you are speaking for person happy every day and how they like to live their life.

As their SDM it is important for you to know what is important to them. You might have difficult feelings when you make health care choices for them. That is normal. Focusing on what is important to your person will help you make the right choices.

Some things to talk about might be:

- Would they suffer for a chance to live longer? If so how much?
- What if they need someone to care for them like: feed them, to get dressed, or go to the bathroom?
- What if they can't recognize or talk with people important to them?
- What if they can't go home?
- Would they agree to a feeding tube if they can't eat or swallow? Would they agree to a feeding tube for a short time or long time?

## SDM Role

You can talk with other important people to help you make decisions. You do not have to do this alone. It is normal to feel overwhelmed at times.

## Clear Communication

It is important to feel good about the choices you are making.

The health care team will talk with you about the health and what decisions you may need to make for the person you are speaking for.

- Ask questions so you understand everything about the treatment before deciding.
- The Social Worker or First Nations and Métis Health Educator can be good resources and supports too.

## Shared Decision Making

A doctor will talk with you about the different types of medical treatment the person you are speaking for will need. Based on what the doctor tells you and what you know is important to them, you will be agreeing or disagreeing to medical care. This is shared decision making.

Some things to think about:

- Risks and benefits of the treatment
- Purpose of the treatment
- What are the side effects
- Are there any other options?
- What if the treatment is not done?
- Will it reverse any symptoms?
- Would the person your are speaking for agree?

## SDM Rules to Follow

A Substitute Decision Maker you will agree to or refuse medical care for your person based on:

- The person's health care directive
- What is important to them and brings them joy
- What you, as the SDM, thinks is best for them if you don't know what they want
- You must focus on the person and what they want not what you would want for you.

## Types of Proxies

Proxies can be asked to work together or separately. (Jointly or in Succession)

- **Jointly:** Proxies work together to make decisions. If they cannot agree, there are rules about what happens.
- **Succession :** The first person in the list makes choices until they are no longer able or willing to.

**Being a SDM can be overwhelming**

**Remember.....  
It is okay to ask for help if you need to.**