

The Arc Tank

DISRUPTING THE GUARDIANSHIP PIPELINE: THE MASSACHUSETTS SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING INCUBATOR



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INTRODUCTION

People under guardianship experience a kind of “civil death” because they have no rights to make their own decisions about their health care, their finances, their relationships, and other day-to-day decisions. Further, guardianship can be isolating and exclusionary. People under guardianship are *less likely* to live in their own homes or apartments, *less likely* to have jobs in the community, and *less likely* to have friends. Yet, guardianship is often viewed as the only option for individuals with I/DD.

The Supported Decision-Making Incubator will demonstrate how SDM disrupts the status quo and provides an effective alternative to guardianship.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Building on its innovative Western Massachusetts SDM pilot — the first demonstration in the nation to promote and operationalize this positive disruption to guardianship — the Project will establish “incubator” sites where providers, advocacy groups and family organizations can offer SDM opportunities to people with I/DD. Under this model, individuals with disabilities identify areas where they need decision-making support — health, employment, finances, relationships — and designate people to provide that support. The individuals and their supporters enter into an agreement to work together to make decisions.

This statewide Project will provide training and technical assistance to five Massachusetts organizations that will help 25 persons with disabilities adopt SDM instead of guardianship. At least two programs will focus directly on disrupting the school to guardianship pipeline that deprives young adults of their fundamental liberties as they stand to benefit most from this cultural change.

The incubator approach will enable the Project to advance self-determination as a mainstay in the lives of a significant number of individuals with disabilities across Massachusetts. Also, through workshops, conferences and webinars, the SDM Project will reach hundreds of individuals, families and community leaders, including legislators, who are likely to vote on SDM legislation within the next two years. Data from this Project will be utilized by CPR’s offices in Washington, D.C. to provide national impact.