

The Fine Art of Balancing Protection with Self Determination

Research shows that empowering individuals to actively participate in personal decision making improves life outcomes and can reduce the risk of abuse and exploitation. There is a risk of abuse and exploitation in all models of decision making for persons with differing abilities. An overly protective response to situations where a person with varying levels of capacity may be at risk can stifle self-determination and empowerment. Protection needs to be carefully balanced with protecting human and constitutional rights. Adults have a basic right to make choices, good or bad, and determine the course of their lives. An overly aggressive, or inappropriate protective response to limited capacity can itself be a form of abuse. This session will talk about recognizing the signs and signals of abuse, neglect (self-neglect) and exploitation, tools to maximize communication with persons with differing abilities, and promoting self-determination and choice through supported approaches that mitigate against risk and empower individuals. The session will explore the application of the Supported Decision Making model to assist persons in making choices, increase access to positive life outcomes, and reduce the risk of harm.

Presenters: **David Godfrey** (Senior Attorney, American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging) and **Jonathan Martinis** (Legal Director, Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities)

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