

Deciding Together Guide: What It Is and What It Isn't



This resource is for families and SSCs.

The Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program uses a team approach to decision-making. It's called Deciding Together. The team includes the child, the family, the support and service coordinator (SSC), and anyone else that the family wants to be a part of the team. This approach supports each family and child. In this approach, the family is the expert on their goals, strengths, and needs.

Deciding Together believes the family knows what is best for them, their culture, and their values. The SSC knows of available programs, tools, and services that help children and families achieve their goals. The team works together anytime they have a new goal or problem and to make sure services and supports are helping.

Deciding Together helps the team:

- Address and work on the problem
- Meet the goals and outcomes
- Make sure the supports and services are working

Deciding Together Steps



This is a supporting resource to the already published Deciding Together materials located here: dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02246.htm

Step 1: Goals and Issues

The team identifies the family's concerns, problems, and goals.

Deciding Together is...

- Starting with information the child and family feel comfortable sharing.
- Starting with the goal or problem and working through the service or support later.
- Talking through the goals and problems the family has identified.
- Sharing information about the child's challenges and how they affect the child's health, safety, family life, and activities.

Deciding Together isn't...

- One team member telling the family what the goals or problems are without input from the family.
- Starting with a service and then finding a goal to meet that service.

Helpful Questions for Families and SSCs

- Which parts of the day or week are most challenging?
- Which parts of the day or week are easier?
- What causes harder times and helps easier times? What might help with activities that are more difficult?
- How does your family have fun?
- What does the child enjoy the most? What makes them happy? What makes them smile or laugh?
- What is something your family wants to do in the future (next month, next summer, or next year)?
- What are your dreams for your child and what do you think will help make those dreams possible?

Step 2: Think Creatively

The team suggests services and supports that could help the family reach a goal or solve a problem.

Deciding Together is...

- Every team member brainstorming ideas and thinking "big."
- Valuing every idea!
- Getting ideas from the family and the SSC. It's okay if you don't have ideas right away or need to do some research together.
- Getting ideas from other people in your family or community.
- Finding support outside of the CLTS program to help reach a goal or solve a problem. This can be in place of or in addition to program services.

Deciding Together isn't...

- Thinking of one possible solution and stopping there.
- Relying on one team member to think of all the possible solutions.
- Ignoring ideas because we've never done it that way before.
- Saying no to considering suggestions or options.

Helpful Questions for Families and SSCs

How might this goal or need be addressed for any child, no matter what abilities or challenges they have?

- Which family members and friends in the child's life could help?
- What interest or skills could you build on?
- Would making a plan about the child's safety or what to do in a crisis help make sure the child is safe?
- What ideas have been tried and what could have made them more successful?

Step 3: Weigh the Options | The team thinks through which options will work well.

Deciding Together is...	Deciding Together isn't...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking about short-term and long-term needs and goals. Figuring out which options will help solve the problems and reach the goals from Step 1. Looking at options that are important to the family and fit their culture and values. Determining if different options have different costs, which option is most likely to be effective in meeting the outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only considering a CLTS service that is used often with other families. Only considering options that are paid for by the CLTS Program. Only considering options that give a short-term break to the family without thinking about long-term solutions. Only considering the least expensive options.

Helpful Questions for Families and SSCs

- Which option(s) help meet the goal or outcome for the child? Are you thinking about both short-term and long-term needs?
- Which of the ideas might best help develop skills? For example, does it help the child learn to play without help or to make a snack or meal by themselves?
- Is this option practical for your family? For example, does it work with your life and family schedule?
- Does it fit your family's goals, values, and culture? For example, if a family wants to spend more time together, do your options include a group activity?

Step 4: Develop the Plan Together | The team decides on supports and services.

Deciding Together is...	Deciding Together isn't...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding on supports and services. Assigning roles and tasks. Deciding together how often supports and services will happen. Deciding together when services and supports will start. Picking supports, services and providers that fit the family's cultural preferences and values. Talking about what the family can do if they disagree with a decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing the same supports and services for the child because they have a similar challenge or goal as another child. Developing the plan without the family or without using the Deciding Together approach. Designing an unchanging "forever plan."

Helpful Questions for Families and SSCs

- Who will deliver a service?
- Where and how often will the services be delivered? (For example, will services be delivered more than once a week?)
- When will the services start?
- Who will contact a provider to set up services?

Step 5: Evaluate Effectiveness

The team talks about what is and isn't working.

Deciding Together is...

- Sharing thoughts and talking about what is working well and what isn't working well.
- Talking as a team at any time, as often as needed.
- Asking if the family's problems are getting better and if we are meeting the child's goals.
- Understanding that families will have new goals and different ideas over time.
- Keeping the family's experiences and preferences at the center of decision-making.
- Starting again at Step 1 if a goal is not being met or a problem is not getting better.

Deciding Together isn't...

- Focusing only on the end results instead of how well the plan is working.
- Talking at certain times only (for example: at the beginning of or during renewal).
- Going over the entire plan every time.

Helpful Questions for Families and SSCs

- **Does the child have different needs or interests now?** For example, a teenager is being coached on how to manage money. Now they are finishing high school and need help finding a part-time job or filling out college applications. The supports and services can be changed to meet the new goals.
- **Have goals been met and are new goals needed to continue improving the child's and family's daily lives?** For example, the child has met the goal of being able to prepare cold snacks without help. A new goal might be for them to learn to use the microwave.

