

This resource provides tips and ideas for Wisconsin CLTS support and service coordinators (SSCs) as part of the **Early Choices Matter** learning materials.



### Your Role in Supporting Children to Increase Choice-Making

CLTS SSCs can encourage children to build their choice-making and decision-making skills. Increasing active participation by children is an essential part of their growth and development. By understanding what choice-making is, and practicing it at an early age, children can become more self-determined and independent adults. SSCs can also show their parents and caregivers ways to incorporate choice-making into their child's everyday life.



### Starting the Conversation on Choice-Making

Supporting a child to be an **active participant** and make their own choices may be a new concept for some families. To start, SSC's can make choice-making part of the conversation during annual service plan review meetings. Encourage the child to share their preferences, their ideas and opinions on what will make their life better and how they want to spend their free time.

#### Watch and Reflect

Listen to the child and include time for them to share their choices. Then reflect back, or repeat the ideas, so parents and all of a child's team members hear and understand the child's ideas.

#### How to Practice

As SSCs talk with families, they can make suggestions for how a child can continue to build their confidence in sharing their views and their choices in every day life—at school, at home and while they are out in their community.

See the **Early Choices Matter Worksheets** for more ideas. These materials offer easy ways to build choice-making skills. The worksheets also remind parents how often choices are made in everyday life and how they can help their child practice as they go about their day.

#### Services and Supports to Enhance Choice-Making

SSCs can also guide families to find programs and services that allow a child to increase their choice-making and decision-making skills. Parents and caregivers may not know what their child's CLTS can cover and don't realize that they should be thinking **broadly** about the pieces of the service plan. A SSC can make suggestions and find examples to educate families about how programs or services available through CLTS can help their child be ready to lead a more independent life as an adult.



## Supports that Can Promote Choice-Making: Ideas to Offer Families

People are more successful in making choices when they have a variety of experiences to draw from. Children should be encouraged to explore all kinds of interests and opportunities while growing up. Promoting opportunities to develop independent skills should always be age appropriate. Here are some activities to consider:

### Promoting Independence and Safety

**Transportation and Mobility:** Take a ride on the bus, practice riding your bike to school or to other activities. These are skills to do together with your child at first and then gradually progress to more independence when it's appropriate.

### Promoting Community Employment

**Job Exploration:** Spend time watching employees at their workplace: store clerks, restaurant workers, grocery stores, etc. Explore and discuss which tasks they like to do and the ones they would not like to do. Volunteer at local business when your child is older.

### Promoting Empowerment and Self-Determination

**Self-Advocacy:** Provide opportunities to experience inclusive school and summer activities like attending youth conferences that focus on advocacy and developing self-determination skills.

### Promoting Extracurricular Activities

**Counseling and Therapeutic Services:** Explore summer music, art or horseback riding camps, learn a craft, attend local community fairs or other events.

### Promoting Health and Wellness Services

**Physical and Emotional Fitness:** Take a swimming class or signing up for youth soccer club, learning relaxation and calming techniques.

### Wisconsin Department of Health Guidance Aligns with Choice-Making

Support and Service coordinators are familiar with the [Deciding Together](#), a step-by-step guide to decision-making. The ideas in Deciding Together lend themselves the concept of choice-making.

This guide, created by DHS, states,

**"We all need to develop skills in making choices in order to have new experiences and accomplishments."** —*Deciding Together Instructions, p. 6*



### Information and Resources

- Early Choices Matter: Responses to Parents Questions, \* [youtube.com/watch?v=ZRBcUPi00Rg&t=233s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRBcUPi00Rg&t=233s) (15 minutes)
- Early Choices Matter: A Resource for Children's Long-Term Support Program Support and Service Coordinators, Partners in Choice-Making, \* [youtube.com/watch?v=j8EVXi0lhXE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8EVXi0lhXE) (13 minutes)

\***Molly Murphy, PhD, BCBA-D**, is a special education teacher, behavior analyst and Director of the University of Wisconsin's Waisman Center Autism Treatment Programs, who has supported families with children with special needs for many years.



Learn more on the Family Voices website's [Learn page](#).

