

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Freedom for Ryan King

In a landmark Court victory, Ryan King won the right to direct his own life, with the support of his family, finally free after 15 years under a guardianship he never needed. When Ryan turned 18, his parents were told they had to become his guardians in order for him to receive services from the District of Columbia. Even though they had raised Ryan to be independent, believed he could make his own decisions, and had always supported him to do so, they reluctantly agreed. But, Ryan and his family never stopped hoping that, one day, he would be legally free to make his own decisions, the same as every other citizen. Then, inspired by the “Justice for Jenny” case and the work of the Jenny Hatch Justice Project (www.JennyHatchJusticeProject.Org) and the National Resource Center for Supported Decision Making (www.SupportedDecisionMaking.Org), partnerships between Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities (QT) (www.DCQualityTrust.Org) and the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University (BBI) (www.BBI.Syr.Edu), they decided to ask the Court to end Ryan’s guardianship.

Working with attorney Jonathan Martinis through a legal clinic established by QT and BBI, Ryan and his family told the Court that Ryan uses Supported Decision-Making (SDM) to make his own decisions. When people use SDM, they work with trusted friends, family members, and professionals to help them understand the situations and choices they face, so they can make their own decisions without the “need” for a guardian. They presented evidence of Ryan’s history of making decisions and directing his life using SDM, as well as research showing that people with disabilities who exercise more control over their lives – who have more *self-determination* – have been found to have better life outcomes. After reviewing this material and hearing from Ryan and his family, the Court terminated the guardianship.

Ryan and his family, who will be supporting him as he directs his own life, are elated by the decision. “It feels good not to be under guardianship, because I have always made my own decisions,” said Ryan King. “As a family, we are thrilled with the Court’s decision,” said Ryan’s Mother, Susie King. “We hope that this is just the beginning of Supported Decision-Making being recognized in the District of Columbia and beyond.”

“Ryan and his family demonstrate the promise and the practice of SDM,” said BBI Chairman and University Professor at Syracuse University Peter Blanck. “Research shows that, when people with disabilities, like Ryan, are given the chance to make their own decisions and control their own lives, they can lead better and richer lives.”

“Defending the right of people with disabilities to direct their own lives is a core value for our work at QT,” said QT CEO Tina M. Campanella. “QT has been proud to know and work with Ryan and his family for years, and we are so pleased with this outcome. Through his fight to restore his legal rights, Ryan is a living example of how people with disabilities make the most of their abilities.”

Contact:

Jonathan G. Martinis, BBI, 571.247.6174, JGMartin@Law.Syr.Edu
Tina M. Campanella, QT, 202.448.1450, TCampanella@DCQualityTrust.Org

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities

[Quality Trust's](#) vision is a community where everyone is respected, belongs, contributes, is valued and shapes his or her own present and future. Quality Trust's mission is to be an independent catalyst for change in the lives of people of all ages with developmental disabilities. Quality Trust partners with people and their families so they can succeed, thrive and experience full membership in the communities they choose. Quality Trust works with individuals and family members to solve problems, identify opportunities for learning and contribution and find creative ways to minimize "differences" and make the most of each person's abilities.

The Burton Blatt Institute

The [Burton Blatt Institute \(BBI\) at Syracuse University](#) mission is to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of persons with disabilities in a global society. BBI builds on the legacy of Burton Blatt, former dean of SU's School of Education and a pioneering disability rights scholar, to better the lives of people with disabilities. BBI has offices in Syracuse, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. Given the strong ties between one's ability to earn income and fully participate in their communities, BBI's work focuses on two interconnected Innovation Areas: Economic Participation and Community Participation. Through program development, research, and public policy guidance in these Innovation Areas, BBI advances the full inclusion of people with disabilities.

The National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making

The [National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making](#) (NRC-SDM) builds on and extends the work of [Quality Trust's Jenny Hatch Justice Project](#) by bringing together vast and varied partners to ensure that input is obtained from all relevant stakeholder groups including older adults, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), family members, advocates, professionals and providers. The NRC-SDM partners bring nationally recognized expertise and leadership on SDM, representing the interests of and receiving input from thousands of older adults and people with I/DD. They have applied SDM in groundbreaking legal cases, developed evidence-based outcome measures, successfully advocated for changes in policy and practice to increase self-determination, and demonstrated SDM to be a valid, less-restrictive alternative to guardianship.