Sad, but also good news: Remembering Ruth Bader Ginsburg, “Notorious RBG” for her contributions to Disability Rights

As the whole country mourns the passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and celebrates her enormous contributions to the law, and to equal rights for all, we at SDMNY want especially to remember how important she has been to the rights of our community.

Perhaps you’ve heard of “the Olmstead decision,” a 1989 Supreme Court case that extended the protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to people with developmental disabilities. The decision said that it was unlawful to keep people with mental illness and DD in institutions if they could live successfully in the community with appropriate supports and services, as long as community placement could be “reasonably accommodated.” Over time, Olmstead has become shorthand for “less restrictive alternative”, and SDMNY’s mission, thanks to the grant from the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council that funds us, is exactly that: to show that SDM is a less restrictive (not to mention more empowering) alternative to guardianship.

Who else would have written that ground-breaking decision but Notorious RBG!

Of all the pictures that have been in the media since Justice Ginsburg’s passing, we’ve chosen this slightly fuzzy black and white picture from the archives of CUNY Law School in part because of a lovely connection to SDMNY. It shows RBG receiving flowers from the children at the Law School’s daycare center when, in 2003, she helped celebrate the Law School’s 20th anniversary at the invitation of her friend Kris Glen, then Dean of the Law School, who is now SDMNY’s Project Director!