



WESTCHESTER GAL TRAINING FEATURES SDM

Guardians ad litem (GALs) are often appointed by Surrogates in guardianship proceedings to investigate whether a person for whom guardianship is sought needs a guardian or whether there is a “less restrictive alternative” to taking away all of the person’s legal and civil rights.

The Westchester Surrogates Court has been in the forefront of understanding how SDM can be exactly that “less restrictive alternative” for many people with I/DD. The Court has written important decisions denying guardianship where there is an informal SDM system in place, and referred parents who had petitioned for guardianship to SDMNY partner ARC Westchester. Nancy Succoso, one of the very first facilitators trained by SDMNY, reported that the first of those referrals is just about to sign his SDMA!



This week the Court and the Westchester County Bar Association sponsored a 2-hour training for lawyers who may serve as GALs in Article 17-A guardianship proceedings. The training educated them about SDM as an alternative that should be attempted before guardianship is imposed, especially for transition-age young adults, whose parents often seek guardianship because they are told to do so by educational authorities.

Joy Beane, Court Attorney/Referee speaking about the importance of SDM

More than 75 attorneys in attendance heard the Surrogate tell them that 17-A proceedings are the “most important” cases he hears, and learned about SDM and SDMNY from SDMNY Project Director Kris Glen and Nancy Succoso. We were honored to be invited to participate in this groundbreaking training, and thrilled at the way in which our friends in Westchester are embracing SDM as a viable and “less restrictive” alternative to guardianship which, as many of the presenters emphasized, may unnecessarily deprive people with I/DD of all their legal and civil rights.

THANKS TO THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION AND THE WESTCHESTER SURROGATES COURT FOR THIS IMPORTANT TRAINING