



TRULY GREAT GOOD NEWS: SDMA LEGISLATION PASSES!

When we first got our grant from DDPC, one of the goals was to create an evidentiary base for SDM legislation; that is, we needed to show that SDM facilitation could work so that our legislators could pass a law that said

If you have an SDMA made through a process of facilitation that we believe and approve of, then we will make sure that no one can question your ability to make a decision, and that you will be treated like everyone else, regardless of your disability.

We've spent the past 6 years showing that people with I/DD have the ability, as well as the right, to make their own decisions, with the support of trusted persons in their lives. More than 100 Decision-Makers have gone through our SDMNY facilitation process, and proved what we always knew was true. Decision-Makers, their families and supporters agree that the SDMNY facilitation process is transformative, and that it works.

Based on our experience, we created "Principles for SDMA Legislation" through a 2-year process that engaged our amazing Advisory Council, stakeholders, and especially self-advocates and parents. OPWDD saw what we had done, believed in the validity of our work, and wrote a bill they introduced in the legislature, essentially tracking our "Principles." Last session the bill passed the State Senate, as it did again last month (kudos to Sen. John Mannion, the Senate sponsor!) On Wednesday, just a little after 5 PM, it passed the Assembly, with only one vote against, and now it goes to the Governor's desk for her signature.

This is an amazing achievement, and there are so many to thank, from the folks at OPWDD to Assembly sponsor JoAnne Simon, co-sponsors including Aileen Gunther and Danny O'Donnell, to the many organizations that supported the bill, including Parent to Parent NY, The NY Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation, the NYS Surrogates Association, the Mental Health and Disability Law Committees of the NYC Bar Association, the Cerebral Palsy Association of New York, NY ARC, Project Guardianship, the NYCLU, the Brookdale Center on Healthy Aging, Prisoners' Legal Services, Disability Law Clinics at Brooklyn, Cardozo and CUNY Law Schools, and so many more, including letters from healthcare providers, economists, human rights activists, teachers, etc. And of course we owe a debt of gratitude to our funders, including DDPC, The New York Community Trust, The J. Peter Hoguet Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The FAR Fund and The Taft Foundation, and President Jennifer Raab and The Hunter College Foundation for allowing us to do this work and celebrate this amazing accomplishment.

But most of all, we owe this victory for the *human right* of legal capacity, to our Decision-Makers, their families and supporters, who Assembly Member Simon acknowledged in her brief remarks before the vote on the bill. We'll be telling you more about exactly what this means in the weeks to come, but for now it's time to celebrate an extraordinary accomplishment, one that has been watched by advocates around the country and around the world. Coupled with the grant that allows us to build and test a service delivery system to bring SDM and SDM facilitation to everyone in NY who wants it, we've done something that no one else in the world has been able to do. So, as we head into this holiday weekend, remembering the sacrifices others have made for our most basic values of freedom and equality for all,

HOORAY FOR NY'S GROUNDBREAKING LEGISLATION AND THE RIGHT OF EVERYONE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS, REGARDLESS OF DISABILITY!