

ONE ANNIVERSARY, SUPER STORM SANDY, REMINDS US OF ANOTHER, THE BEGINNING OF SDM IN THE U.S.

News reports remind us that next week is the tenth anniversary of the hugely destructive Super Storm Sandy, hardly a cause for celebration. But just as that terrible storm approached landfall, a meeting was taking place in a courtroom in Surrogate's Court in lower Manhattan that may well be considered the first national conversation about SDM. It was also, although we didn't know it then, the catalyst for SDMNY and all we have accomplished in the past ten years.



Super Storm Sandy, October 2012



Signing the SDMA Law, July 26, 2022

Convened by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) of the American Bar Association with funding from the New York Community Trust and the federal Department of Health and Human Services, 26 participants from around the country represented a variety of stakeholders and disciplines—law, education, service providers, state agencies, academics, human rights advocates and, of course, self-advocates (for a list of attendees, see attached). The kick-off speaker was Canada's Michael Bach, who, not coincidentally, had the same role at SDMNY's first Advisory Council meeting!

Thanks to Amy Allbright of the DRC, we were able to recover the notes/transcript of that meeting, (to view, see attached) and it is inspiring to see how so much of what was only imagined there has actually happened, largely through SDMNY's leadership and hard work. A list of the issues to be considered:

- *Bridging the gap between the existing guardianship system and full SDM*
- *Educating stakeholders, including people with I/DD, families, professionals and others interacting with people with I/DD and the disability community*
- *Finding the resources necessary for SDM*
- *Developing pilot projects that "have stories to tell"*
- *Protecting the integrity of the decision-making process*
- *Creating a mechanism to resolve disputes growing out of SDMA's*
- *Mobilizing support for legal change*

matches closely with the goals we set for ourselves, many of which we have accomplished. Some need more work, but we're definitely on our way.

Happily, it's a beautiful, crisp Fall Friday, with no storm in sight, so we can celebrate the amazing progress we have made since that historic meeting. Promoting and advancing everyone's right to make their own decisions, regardless of disability isn't just a dream; together we are making it a reality!