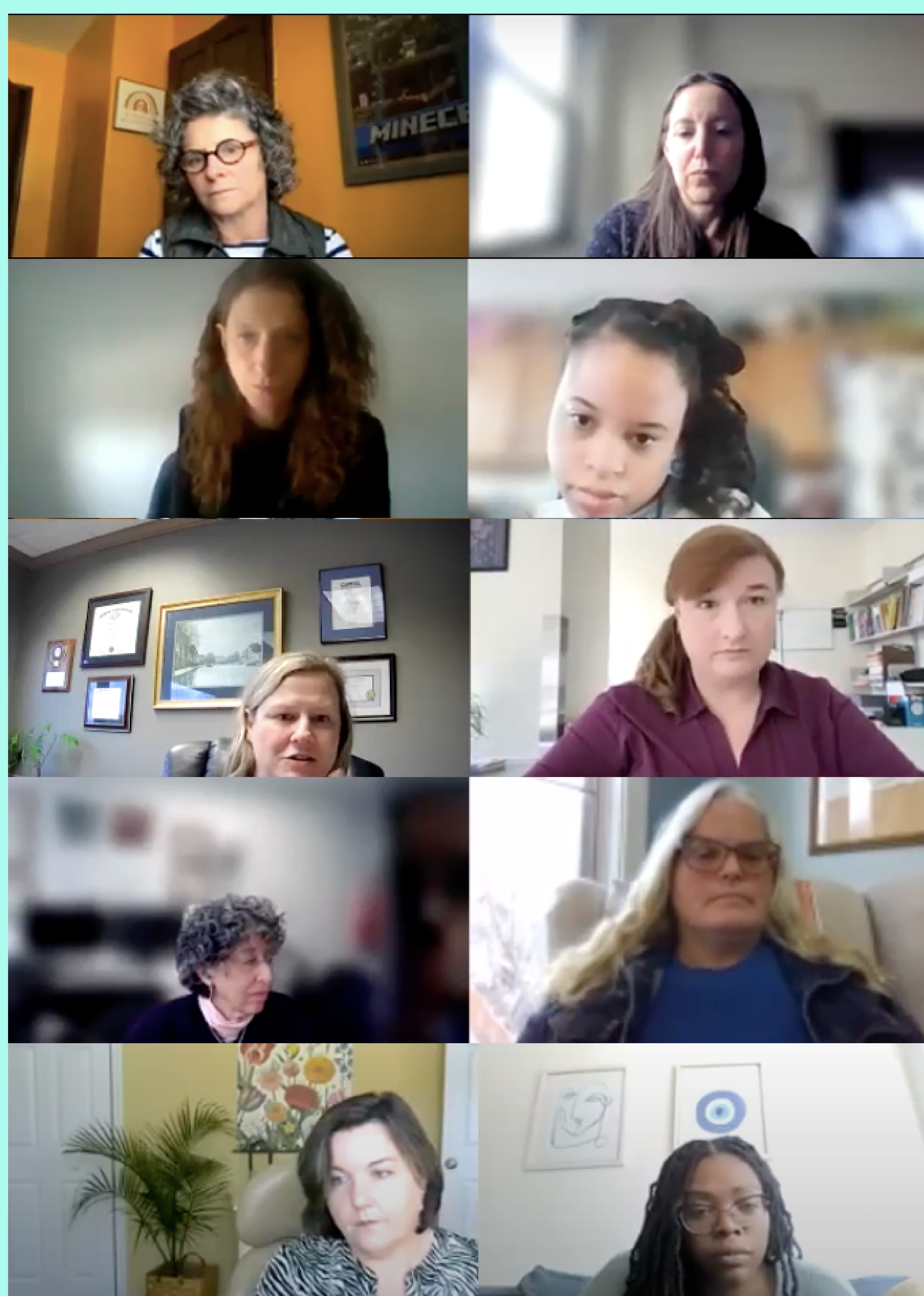


SDM AND TRANSITION PLANNING: A PROMISING NEW INITIATIVE



In the many information sessions we've conducted for families over the past 6 years, we have been asked, again and again, "Why didn't anyone tell me there was an alternative to guardianship?" or "Why isn't SDM included in transition planning?" It's clear that guardianship has been the default position for a very long time, and, that those charged with transition planning in the special education arena are not be familiar with SDM. Now, as part of our OPWDD grant, we're going to do something about it!

On April 29, SDMNY's new Director, Naomi Brickel, convened a working group, comprised primarily of members of our wonderful and talented Advisory Council, and some additional experts and advocates on special education issues. Among the members, there's a special education attorney who works across the state, a member of the Governing Council of the New York State Special Education Task Force, a Youth Transition Specialist at an Independent Living Center, a High School transition teacher from a Capital region high school, a Professor of Special Ed at the Hunter School of Education, as well as members of our SDMNY team with special ed expertise. Naomi is the perfect person to lead this initiative because of her long involvement in special

ed, both as a parent and professional, beginning way back as a "SEPTA (Special Ed PTA) mom" and, since, developing her expertise working with families and educators to improve student engagement and improve the transition planning process, including such innovative projects as developing an on-line tool to enable students to participate in their IEPs (Individual Education Plans. This is an area she's always been passionate about.

The Working Group is developing an exciting and ambitious agenda, including getting the word out about SDM through presentations at major conferences, engagement of state agencies like the New York State Education Department and Office of Children and Family Services, educating transition specialists in the field, outreach to professional development specialists around the state and country, and so much more. There's also a real argument to be made (gently, of course) that the sole focus on guardianship and the omission of SDM as a now well recognized and viable alternative in transition planning violates the IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that has been made by another of our Advisory Council members, Professor Arlene Kanter (to read her article on this, click on the link below). There is not only much to be done, but many resources that this exciting new initiative can bring to the conversation.

STAY TUNED!