

## SDMNY: SPREADING THE WORD

While we are always ready to provide information on SDM, our facilitation process, the new SDMA law, or the human right of everyone to make their own decisions regardless of disability, this week has been an especially busy and rewarding time. SDMNY staff and members of our community presented in three different venues (although, of course, we were mostly remote) to three different audiences, all of whom responded enthusiastically to our message.

The first, on Monday, was for participants in the LEND (Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities) program at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island. The LEND participants were largely medical students, residents and other providers, so it was a great opportunity to get the word out to the health care community, consistent with our OPWDD grant objective of educating that sector about SDM. SDMNY was represented by one of our Mentors, Jenna Lamm (herself part of the LEND program) who presented in person to her peers, and was joined remotely by SDMNY Director Naomi Brickel, Associate Director Joan Cornachio, and Decision-Maker and Advisory Council member Trina Hazell who, as always, was compelling in bringing our message to life. The event was also a wonderful reunion with Michelle Ballan, one of SDMNY's original Faculty Associates from the Hunter School of Social Work. She's now an Associate Dean at the Stony Brook Social School of Social Welfare and the Director of the LEND Program there. It was great to see her, share our accomplishments over the last 6 years, and explore ways that we can work together again.



LEND Presentation



Michelle S. Ballan



Westchester County Surrogate Brandon Sall

Also on Monday night, Naomi, Facilitator Janine Belfast, and Mentor Karen Rosenthal explained the SDM facilitation process and SDMNY's work and goals under our current OPWDD grant to a diverse audience of more than 60 stakeholders at a program sponsored by the Lower Hudson Special Education Task Force. Naomi previously served on the organization's Board, so it was a another opportunity to build on prior relationships to spread the word about SDM.

And finally, on Tuesday morning, SDMNY Founding Director Kris Glen joined Westchester Surrogate Brandon Sall and two Court Attorneys from his staff to educate more than 80 educators and family members on laws relating to SDM, including New York's new SDMA legislation, guardianship, and the increasing emphasis on SDM as a "less

restrictive alternative" that should be tried before guardianship can be imposed. Judge Sall described the process used in his court to avoid unnecessarily depriving people with I/DD of all their legal and civil rights and the positive response the court often receives from offering an alternative to families who were otherwise unaware of SDM. It was inspiring to hear how, at a recent event he was attending, a parent approached him to say how the Court's referral for SDM facilitation had been the best thing that ever happened to his family!

As we continue to "spread the word", we not only increase the choices for families, we change society's way of thinking about the capabilities of people with I/DD, and, most importantly, we promote the legal and human rights of people with I/DD to make their own decisions without regard to their disability!