

## A LONG JOURNEY LEADS TO AN “IDEAL” SDMA SIGNING

We have found that most SDM facilitations take around 12- 14 meetings, usually spread out over 6-9 months, although when we started, and meetings were in person, the facilitation often took longer. Volunteer facilitators (or the Decision-Makers) had to travel, sometimes considerable distances, and getting supporters together could be a logistical nightmare. One silver lining from the pandemic has been that we have learned how to facilitate remotely and to do it well; needless to say, it's also much easier to convene supporters who may not only live in different parts of a town or city, but may be in different states, or even countries.

Last Sunday Decision-Maker Laura celebrated her SDMA signing at her home on the Upper West Side of Manhattan where she lives “with [her] mom Tracy, her younger brother, her cousin and her cousin’s dog.” Two of her supporters were present and the other five participated by Zoom, one from Florida and one from California!



From top left: Laura with her mom Tracy and cousins Karolina and Catherine, supporters Lucyna, Jennifer, Kristen, Alison, and Sarah

Laura loves to write songs, and her favorite thing to do is to “watch Bridgerton with [her] babysitter curled on the couch with thick blankets and a good soda” (sounds great!) She’s not working yet, but hopes for a job at Hot Topic. She plans to use the decision-making skills she has learned in the future when she “lives alone, or with friends.”



Facilitator Debby

What’s a little unusual about her signing is that Laura started with SDMNY more than 2 years ago. There were several reasons why it took so long to complete the facilitation process, but mom Tracy thinks that, in the end, it was a good thing, because it enabled Laura to really grow as she learned how to make decisions and even to practice some “hard” ones with her supporters. Facilitator Debby (who was thanked for her patience) called Laura “a shining star” and remarked on how “diligent” Laura was during the facilitation, which Debby says she “aced.” And all the time and effort Laura, her supporters and Debby put in really shows in the SDMA she just signed.

After a Decision-Maker, their supporters and facilitator complete a draft SDMA, it is reviewed by the mentor, and then by either Founding Director Kris Glen or Former Project Coordinator Hezzy Smith, both lawyers. Hezzy was assigned to Laura’s SDMA, and remarked that it was one of the most thoughtful and nuanced agreements he has seen, carefully considering the areas in which Laura wants support, the particular supporters (there are 7) from who she wants that support, and just what kinds of support she wants in each area, from each supporter. Not surprisingly, Laura thanked each supporter by name, naming the areas in which they had already provided support and agreed to do so going forward.

Did we mention that Laura was a student at the Ideal School in Manhattan, our second Decision-Maker from that ground-breaking, intentionally inclusive institution? So, though long in coming, given the quality of her SDMA and the commitment of her supporters, it’s fair to say that Laura’s SDMA signing was truly “Ideal”!

**CONGRATULATIONS TO LAURA, HER SUPPORTERS AND FACILITATOR DEBBY!**